

# ***ENABLE***

*Support for Independent Living*

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## **An Enhanced System for Delivering Home Adaptations**

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Guidance for all adaptations providers

February 2017

## **Introduction**

*ENABLE – Support for Independent Living* is the result of discussion with the key organisations involved in helping people to live safely and independently in their own homes for as long as possible. It is an enhanced system for delivering the help people need to adapt their home to whoever needs it.

ENABLE brings together the current arrangements for delivering adaptations by building on the current range of individual programmes and funding streams. It harnesses the benefits of a number of individual programmes, utilising them in a way which will make it easier for people to access help with streamlined processes for the delivery of adaptations. It is designed to deliver the same simplified adaptations and a standardised service to individuals irrespective of their tenure.

It does this by approaching the concept of delivering home adaptations to the user/client as falling into three broad categories or types – small, medium and large. Irrespective of tenure or how the adaptations are funded, the basic way in which the user will experience the delivery of their needed adaptations will follow one of these categories.

The enhanced system will meet the needs of most people. However, it may also sometimes be necessary for advice and assistance to be given to help people to find a suitable alternative home, which meets their needs. Where an adaptation is being made to a privately owned home, some people may need to contribute to the cost where means-testing arrangements already apply. However, the enhanced system will make it easier for everyone to access the advice, information and services they need.

Additional funding has been made available to local authorities to help support the roll-out of the system, which will boost the help available for people in need. In addition, performance monitoring and reporting arrangements are being developed to ensure accurate information is collected on how the system is delivering.

The implementation of the enhanced system will be subject to evaluation and will also be closely monitored by all the key stakeholders, which will inform further developments and improvements.

## **Background**

Adaptations to people's homes improve their quality of life and also help to reduce avoidable demands on the NHS and social care services. Simple adaptations such as a stair rail or grab rail, which cost relatively little, can prevent falls and serious injuries and significant cost e.g. the £28,000 or so it costs to treat a hip fracture. Such injuries are also a significant factor in someone having to move into residential care.

Adaptations to homes not only prevent emergency or unplanned admissions to hospital but can also facilitate earlier discharge from hospital, by making the changes needed to someone's living environment e.g. a stair lift or walk-in shower, to enable them to live safely and as independently as possible.

More than £50 million is spent each year on adapting people's homes by Local Authorities, Housing Associations and the Welsh Government itself. The current system delivers a significant amount of help to people. For example, in a typical year, 4,500 Disabled Facilities Grants are approved by Local Authorities and some 6,000 tenants of Housing Associations receive an adaptation to their home. More than 17,000 people are helped by the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme and Care & Repair Agencies help more than 30,000 people.

However, there is scope, and need, for further improvement. The prime focus of the enhanced system will be the person who needs help and getting the right help delivered as quickly as possible. The various programmes and budgets operated by different operations will be very much in the background.

## **Review of Independent Living Adaptations**

In 2014, the Welsh Government commissioned a review of the provision of independent living adaptations within Wales. It was published in January 2015. One of its key aims was testing the feasibility of options for change to the existing adaptations arrangements.

It identified an often fragmented service delivery system with many points of access and a variety of funding streams, leading to complexity in understanding how it all works, as well as inconsistent eligibility criteria.

Although DFG delivery times have improved in recent years it still found some unacceptable delays within the system. Means testing is viewed by many stakeholders as being time consuming, inequitable in relation to other funding streams and not necessarily cost effective. In addition, it found a lack of consistency around what is classified as a minor or major adaptation with different providers offering differing thresholds. Although many providers have developed a fast-track system for small adaptations, there is a tendency for some small-scale adaptations to still be delivered through the DFG process. This makes them subject to means testing and possibly other avoidable delays such as Occupational Therapist assessments.

It also found that there was a lack of consistency in how performance or outcomes for delivering adaptations was measured.

The review recommended that a three tier approach to how adaptations are delivered should be developed. It set out a broad vision of what this might look like with the smallest adaptations being fast-tracked so that delays were avoided.

It recommended that a single system for measuring how providers delivered their adaptations be developed based on a three-tier system.

It also recommended that the information available to service users should be simplified and advice on how to access adaptations should be more clearly signposted.

An implementation group was established to look at how best to implement these recommendations within the existing financial and legal frameworks working with providers to develop the best approach.

Enable introduces a new consistent way of categorising adaptations which will help provide that consistent approach across tenure and funding streams and provide a structure to measure outcomes and performance in a meaningful way.

As such providers are required to continue delivering their adaptations service as before, but to identify which of the 3 categories each adaptation falls into, applying the standardised criteria for that category, and report on it as such using the standardised monitoring form. The approach to each category will help unify the way adaptations are delivered to those who need them.

## **Aims**

The aims of the enhanced system are:

- To simplify and standardise approval mechanisms and the process for delivering adaptations as quickly as possible.
- To significantly raise awareness amongst public, professionals and practitioners of the help available and how to access it.
- To operate one system under a single brand name “*ENABLE – Support for Independent Living*” and to achieve high public awareness and awareness amongst professionals and practitioners who help people to live independently in their own homes.
- To remove the expense and delays of undertaking means testing where the cost is disproportionate to the value of the adaptation.
- To remove the expense and delays of undertaking Occupational Therapist (OT) assessments where the nature of the adaptation work does not merit the need for an OT assessment.
- To measure the effectiveness of the new system and elements of it by better, more comprehensive, performance reporting and indicators.

## **Who will be helped and what can someone expect?**

It is designed to help everyone who needs it whether they own their home or rent it. It will provide more help for more people and will provide it as quickly as possible after the need has been identified. Individuals who need help to adapt their home and their families can expect:

- (i) Prompt assistance and the adaptations done with target delivery times bettered wherever possible.

- (ii) A seamless service which delivers the assistance irrespective of the first point of contact or identification of need.

Individuals will also be reassured there is a commitment to achieving high levels of satisfaction from those who are helped by the system, which will be measured and reported by the organisations involved.

## **What does the enhanced system look like?**

It is underpinned by several key principles, with the emphasis on the individual who needs help and their family. Who delivers the adaptation or who pays for it is secondary to ensuring people get the help they need when they need it.

- Simple, clear, system for help with just three broad levels of assistance.
- Help irrespective of age and tenure.
- Encompasses all adaptations programmes whatever the source of funding.
- A prudent approach based on needs identified in conjunction with the person who requires help, effective use of adaptations, and making the best possible use of public funding and staffing resources.
- Putting in place the adaptations needed to enable people to leave hospital as soon as possible to return to their home to live safely and as independently as possible is a particular priority
- Clear roles and responsibilities of all delivery organisations and staff.
- A standardised approach designed to ensure consistently good services in all areas, but with added flexibility to respond effectively when necessary.
- One set of performance monitoring information, including feedback from recipients to identify opportunities to further improve the service(s).
- A better and much stronger single identity (one system – one brand).
- Owned by all organisations and a commitment from all to play their part to the full in helping to meet people's needs.

## **How does the enhanced system fit with other services and developments?**

Adaptations to people's homes have typically been seen as a "housing" issue but in reality are an essential element of the whole system of public services and support which exist to provide whatever help people need at times during their lives. This encompasses health, care and quality of life more generally.

The enhanced system is set firmly with broader public services as a system which delivers timely adaptations which are used to:

- Help people to live safely in their own home for as long as possible and as independently as possible.
- Prevent people from needing unplanned hospital treatment as a result of accidents.
- Facilitate discharge from hospital as soon as possible and preventing the need for readmission by ensuring safety and unsuitable accommodation do not cause delays.
- Reduce the level of social care support needed and/or delay the need to enter residential care.

Prevention and early intervention is a major feature of the enhanced system and a principle which underpins it. It is designed to keep people out of hospital e.g. to prevent people from requiring hospital treatment as a result of a fall at home. Where people have been admitted to hospital, it is designed to help facilitate their earlier discharge thus freeing up beds for others and helping to reduce or prevent delays in the transfer of care and generally reducing the demands on the NHS.

The system supports the intent of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act, which is to ensure there is care and support in place to meet people's needs, with a specific focus on prevention and early intervention to reduce dependency and reliance on statutory services. It also requires Local Authorities and Local Health Boards work effectively together and with other partners to plan and ensure the delivery of integrated services, care and support to best meet people's needs in their area.

Awareness of the new system amongst the Third Sector, housing, social services and health professionals and practitioners, and amongst the public, is fundamentally important to identifying people in need and/or at risk, and meeting those needs.

The system will contribute to the further development of Accessible Housing Policies by delivering, where possible and cost effective to do so, adaptations to people's existing homes. It provides a simpler process for determining the most appropriate means of helping someone who needs adapted housing. In some cases, this could mean the provision of alternative accommodation

using Local Authorities' Accessible Housing Registers in line with improvements to be made on local policies to support the allocation of adapted social housing to people who need it.

The role of professionals and practitioners across the range of housing, health and social care services, including Third Sector organisations, will be clarified as part of implementing the process. This will also inform the need for information and awareness raising activities.

## **Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015**

The enhanced system fits well with, and contributes to, the goals of the Well-being of Future Generations Act.

### A prosperous Wales

Over than £50 million is typically invested each year in housing adaptations work. Adaptations are installed by large and small firms, with both often using local craftspersons. The funding enters the local economy in which small building firms play the core part. As it used for direct works, it fuels the local supply chain, supporting firms' existing employees, including trainees and apprentices, which in turn assists local economies.

### A healthier Wales

Adaptations help people to live in their own homes for as long as possible and as independently as possible, improving their safety and quality of life more generally. As a preventative programme, the system helps to reduce the demand on the NHS and social care services which in turn can help to free up bed space for, and reduce delays to, the treatment of others. It can also allow individuals to undertake more activities and to take back more control of their life, which can help to improve physical and mental health and well being.

### A more equal Wales

Adaptations to people's homes help people who for one reason or another are vulnerable and groups of people with protected characteristics. This includes older people, people with disabilities and health problems and also others who need to be prevented from becoming disabled e.g. through serious injuries from falls. The programme will help people below retirement age where a disability or health problem requires their home to be adapted.

## **How will people be helped?**

The system is designed to be simple in terms of how adaptations of different types are delivered.

1. Need identified and help sought
2. Advice and information
3. Need(s) determined

4. Action planned and taken
5. Performance information collected, including feedback from the individual.

There will be just three broad categories of help:

- (i) Small.
- (ii) Medium
- (iii) Large.

### **Small adaptations**

Adaptations which fall into the “small” category are, for example, the installation of grab rails and stair rails. They will be characterised by:

- A rapid response, with a very short delivery time target.
- No requirement for the involvement of an Occupational Therapist (but it is possible one may have made, or been involved in, the referral and/or identification of need).
- An approach which follows the “Minor Adaptations without Delay” guidance, which has been produced by the College of Occupational Therapists.
- No means test will be applied
- As a guide, these are expected to cost up to £1,000.

### **Medium adaptations**

The “medium” category will typically include adaptations such as the installation of walk-in showers, stair lifts and ramps. In some cases, this category may include a package of adaptations which includes these items as well as very small items such as stair rails and grab rails. They will be characterised by:

- Being fast tracked.
- The use of skilled referrers and Trusted Assessors, with supervision for any non-Occupational Therapy staff who are required to make a judgement.
- Some may not require a means-test or OT assessment.
- As a guide, these are expected to cost between £1,001 and £10,000.

### **Large adaptations**

The “large” category will typically be adaptations which require major structural changes to a property and/or extensions to it. They will be characterised by:

- Prompt action at all stages but recognising such adaptations can take time and there are risks to rushing without careful consideration, assessment and planning



- An assessment by an Occupational Therapist.
- Securing other expert assistance where necessary, and finance, to address any specific technical problems
- “Whole system” thinking which, in some cases, will include the consideration of alternative accommodation.
- These will be adaptations costing over £10,000.

Individuals who rent their home from a Local Authority or Housing Association will be exempt from means-testing for the costs of adaptations. Means testing, which is a statutory requirement for Disabled Facilities Grants by Local Authorities, will continue to apply for people who own their own homes. This reflects the need for those who can afford to contribute towards the cost of work to do so. Means testing will not apply to adaptations which fall into the “small” category and may not apply to the “medium” category.

## **Outcomes**

The main outcomes of the enhanced system will be

- (i) Improved quality of life
- (ii) Reduced risk of falls
- (iii) Reduced demand on health and social services
- (iv) Accommodation which is suitable for people

## **Measuring the effectiveness of the system**

### Evaluation

An independent evaluation of the enhanced system will be commissioned. This will supplement, and utilise, a considerably better collection of data on adaptations delivered and the impact, including customer satisfaction feedback from those who receive assistance.

### Monitoring

Common data will be collected from providers irrespective of the programme or funding they use to deliver the adaptation(s). A monitoring form is required to be completed for each adaptation package provided. This performance measurement and reporting will be used for the evaluation of the system and any further developments or refinements required to further improve the system for those who need help.