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Archwilydd Cyffredinol Cymru  
Auditor General for Wales

# Housing Adaptations Summary Report



WALES AUDIT OFFICE  
SWYDDFA ARCHWILIO CYMRU



- 1 This is a report by the Wales Audit Office. We support the Auditor General, who checks how public money is spent. This report looks at how people receive housing adaptations in Wales.
- 2 People in society are now living longer, and can also have disabilities and complex needs. The Welsh Government, councils and housing associations need to design homes that help people live independently. The right type of housing means everyone can live healthy lifestyles. It also means they have the chance to contribute to society and the economy. To do this public bodies need to build new specialist housing. They also need to improve the houses that we currently live in.

### What it all means

- **Housing Adaptations:** Changes to help people in their homes. For example, ramps, handrails and specialist equipment.
- **Councils:** Your local government who runs key services. For example housing adaptations, social care and organise local housing.
- **Housing associations:** Not-for-profit organisations that provide affordable homes for people in need.
- **Public bodies:** A term for councils, housing associations and other organisations. An example would be health organisations.

- 3 When adaptations are made, they can help people live a more independent life. They will also help give people confidence, privacy, and dignity. Examples of adaptations include ramps, extensions and specialist equipment. If a home is suitable and adapted, it can improve a person's life making them happy and independent. Adaptations are cost effective for public bodies. They also help the health care system by allowing people to live at home.

- 4 We've looked at public bodies who deliver housing adaptations. We want to see how well they are working and whether money is being spent as well as it could be. We surveyed people who have received a housing adaptation. We asked about their experiences, what worked well and what could be improved. We looked at lots of data such as:
- how much money is spent and by whom;
  - the range and quality of public information; and
  - documents about housing adaptations.

### Did you know?

About 70 organisations deliver adaptations in Wales.

- 22 councils
- 33 housing associations
- 13 care and repair bodies

These organisations spend over £60 million every year helping roughly 32,000 people.

We also talked to people from many organisations on their work.

- 5 After looking at all the information, the Auditor General came to a conclusion. People are happy with the housing adaptation services. But this hides a complicated, reactive and unfair system. This system does not help everyone that may need it. He also concluded that public bodies are not spending money as well as they could. This isn't delivering value for money.

## Summary of our findings

- 6 The funding systems for adaptations are complex. There is also a complicated system for carrying out the adaptations. People with similar needs often receive different standards of service. The service is different depending on where people live and who provides the help.
- 7 Most public bodies have seen more demand for adaptations in recent years. More people will need help in the future because of old age and disabilities.
- 8 There are many routes to apply for adaptations. Organisations need to make the application system easy to use. But many local authorities and housing associations don't have systems that meet people's needs. For example, information is often not easy to read. It is not available in large font or in audio versions.
- 9 If they deliver housing adaptations, then people can stay in their homes for longer. If not, people might have to go into hospital or move to specialist or residential homes. The assessment process for adaptations are not easy to use and can result in delays. Because of this, people and organisations are not making better use of adaptations.
- 10 Organisations that carry out the adaptations must balance different things. They must carry out the building work quickly. They must also make sure there is good value for money with the cost and quality of the work. Most organisations check that the builders are doing a good job. For example, most will have regular meetings to talk about the building works carried out. They will sort out problems they identify. But, not all organisations are checking the performance of the builders that do the work. Or how builders are selected, which is not always good enough.
- 11 Public bodies are clear that adaptations help people live independent lives. But there are opportunities for organisations to do more to help people. This will help money go further. For example, few organisations are good at helping people move to an already adapted home.

- 12 Some councils have created joint teams. They draw together all the people who need to deliver an adaptation to work together. But, too many continue to focus on their own work, rather than work with others to improve how they can help people.
- 13 We did a survey of people who have had housing adaptations. The survey showed:
- about 7 out of every 10 people who recently received an adaptation have a good experience;
  - 9 out of every 10 people are satisfied with the time it took to deliver their adaptations;
  - almost 9 out of every 10 people felt the work to their home allowed them to undertake everyday tasks;
  - people who own their home were more satisfied than those who rent from a landlord on the quality; but
  - most disabled and older people had little choice in the adaptations made to their home.
- 14 Checking how good organisations are at delivering adaptations is poor. There are many different sources of funding for adaptations. Only councils' Disabled Facilities Grants are publically reported. This helps us all see how well things are working. This reporting covers only 14% of people who receive adaptations. The Welsh Government collects some extra data, but that data is not made public. This makes it difficult to judge how well organisations are working. It also makes it difficult to know if adaptations are helping people.
- 15 The Welsh Government are trying to fill the gaps in information. They have introduced a new system to check and report on housing adaptations. This will help to fill some gaps, but does not always report on how adaptations have helped people. While organisations say equality is important, there isn't enough data to show everyone has fair and equal access.

## Recommendations

- 16 We have made recommendations for improvement. This will ensure money is spent wisely and help people who need help get a good quality service. These include:
- setting good standards for all adaptations;
  - make sure everyone receives the same service;
  - public bodies improving how they work together to help more people and spend wisely;
  - having information on housing adaptations in both Welsh and English and accessible formats. For example braille, large fonts, audio versions and other languages;
  - organisations create one simple application systems and forms;
  - organisations improving how long they take to make decisions and deliver works;
  - organisations checking builders and contractors and the work they do; and
  - organisations managing performance and check the impact of adaptations.

Read the full report with [our detailed findings at our website: audit.wales/publications](#)



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