

Housing adaptations

Torfaen County Borough Council

July 2026



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Audit snapshot

What we looked at

- 1 Around 15 years ago, Torfaen County Borough Council (the Council), like many other Welsh councils transferred its housing stock to housing associations for them to manage. This means the process of delivering an adaptation to a home is different for people living in housing association properties compared to home-owners and people living in private rented homes.
- 2 We looked at how the Council provides housing adaptations for children, young people and adults living in their own homes and in private rented homes.

Why this is important

- 3 Housing adaptations are changes to a home that make it easier for children, young people and adults to get around. They can help prevent falls or reduce or mitigate the need for formal care and unnecessary admissions to care settings. Examples of housing adaptations might include:
 - installing ramps or grab rails;
 - adding a stairlift or wheelchair lift;
 - fitting a level access shower or shower seat; and
 - widening doorways for wheelchair access.
- 4 The Council assesses people's needs to decide if they are eligible for support. If they are, the Council has a legal duty to provide services, such as housing adaptations or equipment, to help children, young people and adults stay at home.

- 5 Audit Wales previously reported on [Housing Adaptations](#) in 2018. We found an overly complicated system which reinforced, rather than addressed, inequality in provision of adaptations.

What we have found

- 6 The Council has a clear approach to assessing housing adaptations, but its arrangements for delivering them are not documented. Information on the Council website about housing adaptations is basic, with no clear step-by-step guide or information about timescales.
- 7 The Council is taking positive steps to strengthen workforce resilience and its performance is improving. But it does not use data well enough to understand demand, inform budgets, or monitor and analyse performance.
- 8 The Council also lacks a clear understanding of the impact of housing adaptations and whether the service provides value for money.

What we recommend

- 9 We have made three recommendations to the Council which focus on:
- improving housing adaptations information on its website;
 - strengthening its use of data; and
 - understanding the impact of providing housing adaptations.

Key facts and figures

The number of Low Cost Adaptation Grants (LCAs costing between £1,000 to £8,000) completed by the Council was:

- 176 in 2023-24;
- 164 in 2024-25;
- 159 in 2025-26.

The number of Low Cost Adaptation Grants (LCAs costing between £1,000 to £8,000) for a Child or Young Person completed by the Council was:

- 7 in 2023-24;
- 2 in 2024-25;
- 3 in 2025-26.

The number of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs costing £8,000 or more) completed by the Council was:

- 25 in 2023-24;
- 11 in 2024-25;
- 18 in 2025-26.

The number Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs costing £8,000 or more) for a Child or Young Person completed by the Council was:

- 5 in 2023-24;
- 3 in 2024-25;
- 4 in 2025-26.

The combined number of DFGs and LCAs completed by the Council was:

- 201 in 2023-24;
- 175 in 2024-25;
- 177 in 2025-26

The average cost of delivering a Low Cost Adaptation and Disabled Facilities Grant in Torfaen:

- 2023-24: £7,671
- 2024-25: £7,706
- 2025-26: £8,150

The average cost of delivering a Low Cost Adaptation and Disabled Facilities Grant for a Child or Young Person in Torfaen:

- 2023-24: £12,314
- 2024-25: £11,521
- 2025-26: £18,790

Our findings

Planning

The Council has a well-documented approach to assess housing adaptations, but its approach to delivery is less clear

Housing Adaptations approach

- 10 The Council assesses referrals, manages delivery, and inspects housing adaptations for owner-occupied and private rented homes. For people living in housing association homes, the Council has a limited role. For:
 - Bron Afon Housing Association homes, a Bron Afon Occupational Therapist assesses referrals; and
 - for other housing association homes, a Council Occupational Therapist assess referrals.
- 11 Following an assessment, housing associations are responsible for arranging and completing adaptations. The Council does not monitor how quickly housing associations complete the work or if they inspect completed adaptations. As a result, it does not have a full picture of the timeliness and quality of adaptations across the borough.
- 12 For home-owners, landlords and their tenants, the Council has clear processes for assessing housing adaptations. The written procedures guide occupational therapists through the assessment process and can help the Council provide a consistent service.
- 13 However, the Council has no written guidance for housing surveyors who manage delivery of housing adaptations. Without clear procedures, there is a risk of inconsistent service delivery.

- 14 The Council website contains basic information on housing adaptations, including types of support, funding, and eligibility. However, there is no clear step-by-step guide and information about timescales. There is a more detailed factsheet explaining eligibility and conditions for different adaptation options, but this is hard to find on the website and it is not linked to the housing adaptations webpage. Clear and accessible information can help applicants understand the process at every stage and will better prepare them for an adaptation to their home.
- 15 There is support available to help people who need adapted housing in the borough. The Council, in partnership with housing associations, manages the Homeseeker Policy¹. All partners work together to meet housing needs including adapted housing. Under this policy, allocations for adapted homes should prioritise people who need them most, supporting them to remain in a home environment.

Delivery

The Council is taking effective action to strengthen workforce resilience, but it does not use its data to understand service demand or to inform its budget

Understanding demand

- 16 The Council collects detailed operational data, but it does not use this to understand current demand or predict future need for housing adaptations or equipment for children, young people, and adults. Nor does the Council use external data to help it forecast future demand. Data-driven forecasting can help the Council to plan rather than react. It also supports improved financial planning.

¹ Homeseeker Policy July 2022

Resourcing

- 17 The Council has an annual capital budget of £1.1 million to provide housing adaptations. This amount has not changed since 2023-24 and the Council plans to retain this amount per year up to 2030-2031. There is no rationale for the figure as the Council does not use its operational data to inform its annual budget. This creates a risk that the budget will not keep pace with changes in service user needs and costs of delivering adaptations.
- 18 The Council is committed to making sure it has enough staff to assess and oversee delivery of housing adaptations. It supports staff to study part-time, which the Council hopes will improve succession planning in the medium to long term. It also introduced an apprenticeship role to help address a recruitment challenge when appointing a housing surveyor. These opportunities can motivate staff, help reduce staff turnover and improve succession planning.
- 19 The Council also increases its capacity to assess referrals by offering Occupational Therapist Assistant summer contracts. This provides additional capacity and helps cover periods when permanent staff are likely to be on leave.
- 20 The Council has an approved list of contractors to deliver housing adaptations. The Council also has a separate agreement with Care and Repair to deliver small-scale adaptations². Having enough contractors can help complete works in a timely way making it more likely that service users are able to remain safely in their homes.

² Care & Repair Monmouthshire and Torfaen

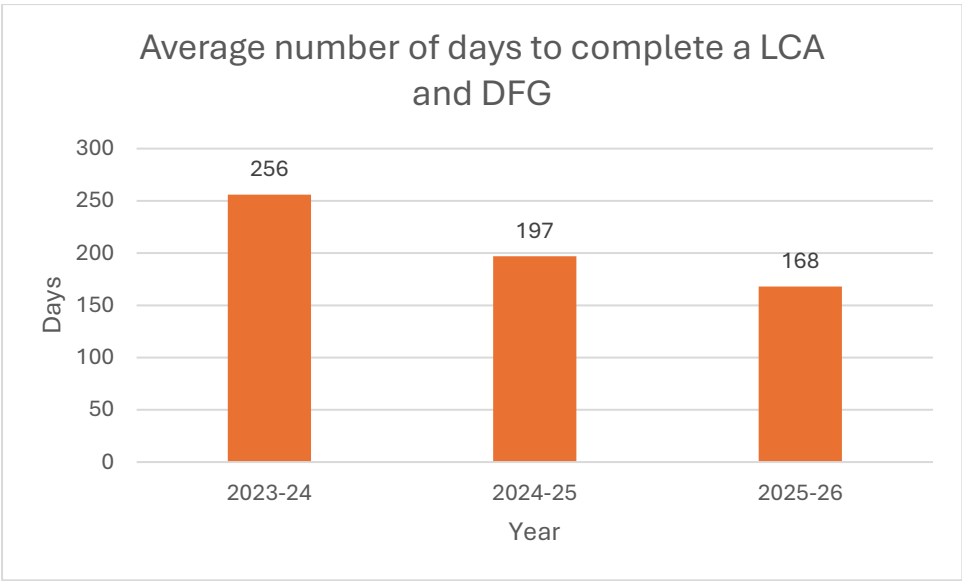
Monitoring

The Council is improving the time it takes to deliver housing adaptations, but it does not actively monitor, analyse, or report its performance

Performance Management

21 The Council has performance measures for housing adaptations but does not regularly monitor these. For example, as shown in **Exhibit 1**, the Council is reducing the time it takes to complete housing adaptations, but a lack of regular performance management means it does not understand what is driving this improvement.

Exhibit 1: Average number of days to complete a Low Cost Adaptation (LCA) and Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)



Source: Council data

22 Conversely, by not regularly monitoring performance, the Council risks not identifying emerging issues in a timely way. The Council could be slower to respond to problems as a result.

- 23 The Council has a target of 18 weeks to deliver a 'fast-track' application and 32 weeks to deliver a 'non-fast track' application. The Council has set timescales to complete the various stages of both. Despite having these targets, the Council does not monitor progress against them and its performance is not readily available.
- 24 The Council also has delivery targets based on the cost of delivering housing adaptations. Costs vary depending on service user needs. High-cost adaptations often take longer to deliver because they can involve major structural work. These are less common but can skew performance data. The Council has an 'ideal' timescale of less than 150 days to deliver a LCA (cost between £1,000-£8,000). We note the Council is improving its performance from:
- 42% delivered within 150 days in 2024-25; to
 - 59% delivered within 150 days in 2025-26.
- 25 The Council also has an ideal timescale of less than 220 days to complete a DFG (costing more than £8,000). The Council delivered:
- 11 DFGs in 2024-25, with one completed within 220 days; and
 - 18 DFGS in 2025-26, with five completed within 220 days.
- 26 Grouping delivery of housing adaptations by value (under and over £8,000) can allow for a more accurate understanding of the Council's performance. But the Council does not monitor this information so the reason for its improving performance is not known.
- 27 While the Council has performance measures with targets for housing adaptations, senior officers and members do not get regular reports containing housing adaptations performance. This limits opportunities for senior officers and members to challenge and scrutinise performance, which supports understanding and decision-making.

Impact

The Council does not evaluate the impact or value for money of providing housing adaptations

Strategic importance

- 28 Officers and members are clear that providing housing adaptations and equipment can help the Council deliver its preventative and early intervention priorities. However, the service has a low profile. The County Plan 2022-27 does not include housing adaptations nor does the relevant service plan. This omission from the service plan is deliberate. In the Council, service plans only include 'change activities' and the Council is not planning to change how it delivers housing adaptations. This approach makes it difficult for the Council to hold responsible officers to account for service performance and to show how housing adaptations and equipment contribute to its strategic aims.

Outcomes

- 29 There are no corporate outcomes for housing adaptations such as supporting wellbeing, independence, or prevention. Without a clear understanding of what it wants to achieve, the Council cannot assess the impact of providing housing adaptations.
- 30 The Council also does not understand if it is meeting the desired outcomes for individual service users. At the start of the process, it records the needs and desired outcomes of applicants. At the end, it gathers feedback on the impact of a housing adaptation, but the Council does not analyse or report this information. As a result, the overall impact of housing adaptations is not known.
- 31 The Council has not set out how it will evaluate value for money in delivering housing adaptations. Officers and members are clear that housing adaptations are important in keeping people living safely at home. They can mitigate or reduce the need for additional care support and can alleviate pressures on other public services. But the Council does not have an approach that supports officers to analyse and evidence value for money.

Recommendations

R1 Publicly available information

There is basic information on housing adaptations on the Council website but it does not contain sufficient information to prepare service users for an adaptation to their home.

1.1 Improve publicly available housing adaptations information to better inform and prepare service users **(paragraph 14)**.

R2 Use of data

The Council does not use data to understand its housing adaptations demand, to inform budgets, or to analyse and monitor its performance. The Council needs to strengthen its use of data to :

2.1 help it forecast housing adaptations demand for children, young people, and adults **(paragraph 16)**;

2.2 better understand its resourcing needs **(paragraph 17)**; and

2.3 analyse and monitor its performance **(paragraphs 21-23 and 26)**.

R3 Understanding impact

- 3.1** The Council needs to set outcomes for housing adaptations to help it demonstrate the impact of delivering them **(paragraph 29)**.
- 3.2** The Council needs to strengthen its arrangements to understand if service user outcomes are being achieved. This can help the Council demonstrate the impact of delivering housing adaptations for service users **(paragraph 30)**.
- 3.3** The Council should develop arrangements to assess the value for money of delivering housing adaptations. This would also help the Council understand and demonstrate the preventative impact of the service **(paragraph 31)**.

Appendices

1 About our work

Scope of the audit

This audit considered whether the Council's arrangements for housing adaptations support service users to remain at home. This included reviewing the Council's approach, delivery and monitoring arrangements.

The audit did not include interviews with other stakeholders who are involved in the delivery of housing adaptations. Neither did we contact service users to obtain their feedback on the service they received.

We completed the fieldwork for this audit in April 2026.

Questions

The audit used the following high-level questions:

- Does the Council have an informed and clear approach to housing adaptations which supports people to remain at home?
- Is the Council delivering its approach to housing adaptations to support people to remain at home?
- Does the Council have arrangements to monitor the progress and impact of housing adaptations to support people to remain at home?

Criteria

We considered the Audit Wales's 2018 report on Housing Adaptations to develop the audit criteria. We also had discussions with councils to understand Housing Adaptations further.

Methods

We reviewed documents relating to housing adaptations process. We interviewed key officers and elected members involved in the housing adaptations process.

2 Key terms in this report

What we means by a Low Cost Adaptation grant (LCA)

1. A Low-Cost Adaptation Grant helps pay for small but important changes to a home so residents can live there more safely. The grant is for adaptations costing between £1,000 and £8,000.

What we mean by Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

2. A Disabled Facilities Grant helps pay for major and important changes to a home so residents can live there more safely. The grant is for adaptations costing between £8,000 and £36,000.
3. Councils in Wales are legally obliged to provide this grant and it applies to homeowners, tenants, and landlords.

What we mean by value for money

- 5 Value for money means spending money in a way that gets the best possible results for the cost. Value for money is commonly associated with the 'three E's' of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. We have summarised these as:
 - Economy: buying what is needed at the lowest sensible cost to help achieve intended outcomes.
 - Efficiency: using resources well to help achieve intended outcomes.
 - Effectiveness: achieving the intended outcomes for the short and longer term.
- 6 Councils have a legal duty to check whether they are using money and resources economically, efficiently, and effectively.

- 7 Councils must also think about both short-term and long-term needs when making decisions. Sometimes the best value for money is not the cheapest immediate option, but the one that prevents bigger problems and costs later.

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