

Housing adaptations

Caerphilly County Borough Council

October 2026



We have prepared and published this report under section 17(2)(d) of the Public Audit (Wales) Act 2004

© Auditor General for Wales 2026

You may re-use this publication (not including logos except as an integral part of the document) free of charge in any format or medium.

If you re-use it, your re-use must be accurate and must not be in a misleading context. The material must be acknowledged as Auditor General for Wales copyright, and you must give the title of this publication. Where we have identified any third-party copyright material you will need to obtain permission from the copyright holders concerned before re-use.

If you need any help with this document

If you would like more information, or you need any of our publications in an alternative format or language, please:

- call us on 029 2032 0500
- email us at info@audit.wales

You can use English or Welsh when you get in touch with us – we will respond to you in the language you use.

Corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay.

Mae'r ddogfen hon hefyd ar gael yn Gymraeg.

Audit Wales follows the international performance audit standards issued by the International Organisation of Supreme Audit Institutions (INTOSAI).

Contents

Audit snapshot	4
Key facts and figures	6
Our findings	7
Recommendations	13
1 About our work	14
2 Key terms in this report	16
3 About us	18

Audit snapshot

What we looked at

- 1 We looked at how Caerphilly County Borough Council (the Council) plans, delivers and monitors housing adaptations to help people stay in their homes.

Why this is important?

- 2 Housing adaptations are changes to a home that make it easier for people to get around or do everyday tasks. Adaptations may prevent falls and admissions to care settings. Examples of housing adaptations 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.
- 3 The Council assess people's needs to decide if they are eligible for support. If they are, the Council has a legal duty to arrange or provide services, such as home adaptations or equipment to help vulnerable people stay at home.
- 4 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.
- 5 It is key that adaptations are delivered as quickly as possible to help people stay living at home safely and independently. Delays may mean people are unable to undertake daily tasks or at risk of falls and needing to access other public services.

What we have found

- 6 The Council understands demand for older people and has a clear application process and person-centred assessment for adaptations. The Council has used resources flexibly and monitors delivery and the quality of adaptations. However, wait times are significant and the Council is not monitoring the impact of its adaptations and using its data to plan its future workforce and show the value for money of its adaptations.

What we recommend

- 7 We have made two recommendations to the Council about:
- Evaluating impact and value for money.
 - Workforce planning to understand demand and resources in the longer term.

Key facts and figures

Caerphilly Council owns and manages approximately 11,000 Council homes.

Number of days taken to complete a Disabled Facilities Grant

- 2022-23 – 436 days
- 2023-24 – 473 days
- 2024-25 – 323 days
- 2025-26 – 229 days

Total budget (includes ENABLE, Housing with Care Fund, 50-day challenge fund and DFG Capital)

- 2022-23: £1.49m
- 2023-24: £1.49m
- 2024-25: £1.64m
- 2025-26: £1.94m

Our findings

What is working well?

Clear strategic aim

- 8 The Council sees housing adaptations as a preventative service and recognises housing adaptations can support residents to stay independent, remain at home for longer, and reduce pressure on health and social services. The Council sets out a clear direction for housing adaptations in its Corporate Plan 2023–28 under Objective Two, ‘Enabling Residents to Thrive’.
- 9 The Council want to make vulnerable residents’ homes more accessible and enable them to live safely and comfortably at home for longer. This is set out clearly in its ‘Private Sector Housing Renewal and Adaptation Policy 2024’.

Understanding demand for older people

- 10 The Council uses a range of information to understand current and future demand for older people. In 2025, the Council commissioned external research to strengthen its understanding of older people’s housing circumstances in Caerphilly. This includes life expectancy and the accommodation available. However, the Council’s understanding of current and future demand about children and young people’s housing adaptations is less developed. We discuss this later in the report.

Application Process

- 11 The Council provides clear information about the application process for housing adaptations on its website. Information includes who is eligible, what support is available, how to apply, and how funding works. Information is organised by council tenants, housing association tenants, and owner-occupiers. Applicants can also get help over the phone; this includes a dedicated telephone number for both children's and adults' assessments.
- 12 The Council makes complex information easier for residents to understand, simplifying the application process with a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Information Guide. This guide explains the adaptations process in a clear and easy-to-follow way. This includes funding routes and applicant responsibilities.

Assessment Process

- 13 The Council actively engages applicants and their families to create a person-centred assessment process. The Council's case records show staff stay in regular contact with applicants which helps the assessment remain relevant. This is particularly the case in more complex situations, palliative care and hospital discharge.
- 14 The housing adaptations assessment process for children and young people is also very person-centred. Assessments explore wishes, feelings, hobbies and interests, and how the proposed adaptation may affect the service user. The assessment also includes an action plan with timescales. This helps the applicant to understand and monitor progress.

Short-term resource management

- 15 The Council is one of only two councils in Wales that still applies a means test to the DFG for applicants aged over 19. The Council believes this increases the availability of funding for those who are most in need.
- 16 The service delivering adaptations has clear operational oversight of its budget and financial commitments. The service monitors finances monthly and meets with finance colleagues quarterly. The total DFG budget has increased each year from £1.13m in 2022-23 to £1.28m in 2025-26 (this excludes external funding which is not guaranteed). This has enabled the Council to respond to demand pressures and maintain delivery. The service also uses resources flexibly drawing on different funding sources such as grants where relevant.
- 17 The Council reallocates staff resources to meet demand in the short-term. This includes monitoring the capacity of staff involved in delivering adaptations and how workload pressures affect delivery timescales. The service has historically redeployed surveyors to help address the backlog of adaptations which developed post Covid-19. While this flexible approach helps manage immediate pressures, it may not be sustainable and could create risks for future delivery if surveyor workloads increase more generally and redeployment becomes difficult.

Monitoring of delivery and quality

- 18 The Council monitors delivery of adaptations through operational reports and Cabinet's annual Directorate Performance Assessment (DPA). The DPA includes a service priority to 'Deliver adaptations to support the health and wellbeing of residents, enabling them to live well at home'. Measures include:
 - Satisfaction relating to adaptation delivered (%)
 - Number of respondents relating to satisfaction by workstream
 - Adaptations delivered to enable residents and tenants to remain independent and on their own home (by funding type)

- Adaptations delivered to enable residents and tenants to remain independent and in their own home (minor works)

- 19 The DPA also includes the performance of occupational therapy assessments to support adaptations. This includes the number of referrals received and whether they were assessed in or out of target times.
- 20 The Council undertakes adaptation quality inspections at the survey, delivery and completion stages with formal sign-off against agreed standards and specifications. If work does not meet required standards the Council escalates it through its internal quality assurance process. The Council asks for customer satisfaction surveys for each job, and negative feedback or complaints lead to follow up action.

Learning and continuous improvement

- 21 The Council can show how it learns from customer complaints and feedback. For example, it has reintroduced providing direct support to help private homeowners as they apply for an adaptation following feedback and a reduction in applications.
- 22 The Council shares practice, learning and information through its involvement in regional and national networks such as the South Wales Regional Adaptations Group. This includes discussing how other Councils are dealing with means testing and more practical discussions about better ways to provide adaptations and options such as modular ramps.

What needs improving?

Waiting times

- 23 The Council has a significant wait time for those who apply for a DFG. The Council developed a backlog of cases after Covid-19. However, performance to complete a DFG is significantly improving as follows:
 - 2022-23 – 436 days

- 2023-24 – 473 days
- 2024-25 – 323 days
- 2025-26 – 229 days

24 The Council understands the reasons for its waiting times. In 2023, it introduced a new Public Sector Framework Arrangement to increase contractor capacity, reduce backlogs and improve timeliness. Wait times for Council home medium scale adaptations currently average 6 months or less. Performance for DFG wait times improved in 2024-25 and 2025-26, but applicants still wait over 7.5 months for an adaptation. Having to wait a long time for a housing adaptation may mean people are unable to do daily tasks. Delays may also increase the risks of falls, leading to need to access other public services.

Impact and value for money

25 Officers and members recognise that adaptations can help people live safely at home and reduce the need for care and support. The Council reports against the relevant priority indicator in the relevant Well-being Objective in its DPA. The Council reports the;

- increase the number of adults who are supported to live independently; and
- increase the percentage of people whose care and support has helped them have a better quality of life.

26 Whilst this information is helpful the Council could strengthen how it evaluates this data to understand how it achieves its well-being objective and what difference this makes to service users.

27 Officers and members recognise that adaptations can help people live safely at home, reduce the need for care and support, and ease pressure on other public services. However, the Council has not set out how it will know if it is achieving value for money from its housing adaptations.

Using demand to inform workforce planning

- 28 The Council does not have a detailed understanding of future demand for adaptations for children and young people. Although the Council recognises that adaptations needed by children and young people are changing, it does not separate its performance data by age group. This limits its ability to analyse demand and trends and plan its resources for the level and type of need for this group.
- 29 As noted earlier, the Council has reallocated staff, particularly surveyors, to respond to short-term demand. This flexible approach has helped address backlogs. However, competing service demands and increasingly complex adaptations may reduce capacity in the medium to longer term. Without a workforce plan that reflects demand trends, the Council cannot show that it is future proofing the service.

Recommendations

R1 The Council should ensure it evaluates the impact and value for money of housing adaptations (paragraphs 26 and 27).

R2 The Council should develop a workforce plan for the housing adaptations pathway to ensure timely delivery of adaptations. The plan should: (paragraphs 28 and 29)

1.1 analyse current and future demand and capacity, including for children and young people; and

1.2 identify the workforce and resource requirements needed to meet forecast demand in the medium-long-term.

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.

This 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 also assessed the Council's progress in addressing the recommendations set out in the Audit Wales report on Housing adaptations in 2018.

We undertook the fieldwork for this audit in March 2026.

Questions

We drew on the previous Housing Adaptations report to determine the audit criteria.

The current 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 previous audit which helped to develop the audit criteria, and we also had discussions with councils to understand Housing Adaptations further.

Methods

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

2 Key terms in this report

<u>Term</u>	<u>Description</u>
Value for Money	Value for money is about whether money is being used to deliver intended outcomes at the best price. This is also sometimes referred to as 'cost effectiveness'. Value for money is commonly associated with the 'three E's' of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. We have summarised these as: • Economy – Getting the right deal – securing the necessary inputs, to help achieve intended outcomes, at the lowest possible cost. • Efficiency – Doing things right – making the most of the inputs to generate outputs designed to achieve intended outcomes. • Effectiveness – Getting the right results – achieving the intended outcomes for the short and longer term. Councils have legal duties relating to value for money. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty on councils to review the extent to which they are using resources economically, efficiently and effectively.
Adaptations	Adaptations are categorised into Minor Aids such as grab rails and lever taps, Medium Adaptations such as level access showers, stairlifts, ramps, door widening, or Major adaptations like building extensions. Specialised services like Care and Repair Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly provide a rapid response for smaller works.

Needs assessment	The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 dictates that anyone who may need care or support has a right to a needs assessment. This process is designed to identify what matters to you and what help you might need to maintain your independence and well-being
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are administered by the housing department of your local council. They are means-tested for large adaptations unless you are applying on behalf of a child under 18 The Grant can provide up to £36,000 of funding.
ENABLE	Small adaptations that cost less than £1,000 are usually provided free of charge and without means testing to older people or those who need to make changes to their home because of a disability. Welsh Government provides ENABLE grant funding to local authorities as a flexible resource which can be used to pay for small and medium adaptations.
HCF	The Housing Care Fund is a Welsh Government capital funding stream used by councils to develop housing that supports care needs. It is intended to reduce reliance on reactive adaptations like DFGs.

3 About us

The Auditor General for Wales is independent of the Welsh Government and the Senedd. The Auditor General's role is to examine and report on the accounts of the Welsh Government, the NHS in Wales and other related public bodies, together with those of councils and other local government bodies. The Auditor General also reports on these organisations' use of resources and suggests ways they can improve.

The Auditor General carries out their work with the help of staff and other resources from the Wales Audit Office, which is a body set up to support, advise and monitor the Auditor General's work.

Audit Wales is the umbrella term used for both the Auditor General for Wales and the Wales Audit Office. These are separate legal entities with the distinct roles outlined above. Audit Wales itself is not a legal entity.



Audit Wales

Tel: 029 2032 0500

Fax: 029 2032 0600

Textphone: 029 2032 0660

E-mail: info@audit.wales

Website: www.audit.wales

We welcome correspondence and
telephone calls in Welsh and English.

Rydym yn croesawu gohebiaeth a
galwadau ffôn yn Gymraeg a Saesneg.