

Angus Housing Adaptations Joint Working Policy

1. Introduction

The provision of an efficient adaptations service is crucial to meeting the housing needs of people with medical and support needs, helping people to live independently in their own home and supporting the provision of social care services. It reduces the risk of falls and other accidents as well as delays in discharging people from hospital or the need for long-term residential care. The provision of an effective and responsive adaptations service improves the quality of people's lives.

There is an intrinsic link between adaptations and housing. This means that close partnership working between Occupational Therapy Services, the Council's Housing Department, Building Standards, Housing Association's and Care and Repair is critical to ensuring that individual needs can be addressed.

This Policy sets out the approach to providing an adaptations service which promotes joint working between relevant services and minimises delays by ensuring staff have appropriate decision making authority. It is based on the principal of 'minimum intervention, maximum independence' which underpins every assessment. This means that adaptations, and in particular major adaptations, will only be provided when all other reasonable options have been ruled out. Physical adaptations can include the installation of ramps, level access showers or stair lifts.

The Policy recognises that in some cases it may not be practical or feasible to adapt a property and access to rehousing for households across all tenures is included within its scope. This is based on an understanding that the decision to move to a new home will often be a difficult one, with practical considerations as well as emotional and community ties. Joint working between partners will be particularly important to support clients who have to move, ensuring this can be considered from the earliest opportunity and increasing the likelihood a well planned and successful transition can be achieved.

This Policy is supported by a range of operational guidance and procedures for staff involved in the delivery of all aspects of the adaptations service.

2. Background

2.1. Integration of Health and Social Care

The way health and social care services are provided is changing. Since April 2016 Angus Council, NHS Tayside, the third and independent sectors have been working together in a new Angus Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP). The Angus HSCP has been established under the provisions of the Public Bodies (Joint Working) (Scotland) Act 2014. The [Angus HSCP Strategic Plan](#) sets out how partners will achieve the vision to 'to place individuals and communities at the centre of our service planning and delivery in order to deliver person-centred outcomes'.

Integration allows services to think innovatively about how a growing population of people in need can be supported differently and how we can respond to people's expressed wishes to remain at home for longer. The vision for health and social care in Angus is one which is shared not just within the integrated organisation but with a wider partnership that exists within our communities.

The Housing Contribution Statement (HCS) provides an overarching strategic statement of how the housing sector will support the work of the Integration Joint Board (IJB) to achieve the outcomes for health and social care. The HCS can be seen as the 'bridge' between the Local Housing Strategy (LHS) and the Strategic Plan and demonstrates how we will work together to support people to remain at home, prevent unnecessary admissions to hospital and ensure people who have to go to hospital are discharged in a timely manner with the right support in place.

Functions relating to equipment and adaptations are part of a range of local authority functions that are delegated to the Angus HSCP. This means that services related to equipment and adaptations, including the funding to support these, are now included within the new integration arrangements. In practice this has not meant an operational change to the delivery of adaptation services in Angus. However it was identified through the HCS, that there was a need to develop an approach to adaptations which takes cognisance of the principles of a tenure-neutral approach to adaptations. A Working Group was established to support the review of adaptations services across Angus.

2.2. Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations

In 2009 the Scottish Government published guidance on the [Provision of Equipment and Adaptations](#). The guidance encourages partnerships to:

- Place the user and carer at the centre of provision,
- Ensure a consistent approach to assessment, and provision of services, including equipment and adaptations, and
- Ensure accurate and accessible information on equipment and adaptations is available to all service users and their carers.

[Guidance on the Provision of Major Adaptations \(2011\)](#) was published to support local services to effectively develop, deliver, manage, and monitor the provision of major adaptations from the point of assessment through to provision, and the conclusion of the assessment process. It sits within the framework of the overarching National Guidance on the Provision of Equipment and Adaptations.

One of the defining principles within the Guidance is that the level of service received from assessment to provision should be equitable across private homeowners, council tenants, private landlord tenants and Housing Association tenants i.e. tenure neutral. It was recommended that consideration should be given to a strategic overview of Adaptation Services across tenure and agency.

The Angus Housing Adaptations Joint Working Policy has been developed to take the Guidance into account and has been reviewed against the Self-Evaluation Toolkit which forms part of the Good Practice Guidance on the Provision of Major Adaptations.

2.3. Legislative Framework

In addition to specific guidance on the provision of adaptations, a legislative framework outlines the duties of local authorities in relation to assessing for and providing of adaptations. Legislation which has been taken into account when developing this Policy includes:

- Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Children (Scotland) Act 1995
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001,
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2006

2.4. Funding

The availability of funding to support the adaptations service is vital. While this Policy outlines the arrangements for a tenure neutral approach to the assessment and decision making approach to delivering adaptations it is recognised it operates within the context of differing funding arrangements. While the funding arrangements for adaptations are delegated to the IJB, individual services continue to oversee budget setting and monitoring. The funding arrangements are as follows:

- The private sector housing adaptations budget is funded through the Council's General Services Fund. The budget is set annually and monitored by the budget holder within Planning. The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 sets out the criteria against which the level of funding applicants are entitled to receive will be assessed.
- Adaptations in Council properties are funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This budget is set annually and monitored by the budget holder within Technical. HRA funding is ring-fenced for use only in Council homes.
- The Scottish Government provide Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) funding to carry out adaptations. This funding is allocated on an annual basis. In recent years the level of demand for services has exceeded the funding available impacting on the ability of RSLs to respond to assessed need.

In 2011 the Scottish Government established the Adapting for Change Working Group to examine the provision of adaptation services in Scotland. The group made a number of recommendations which Ministers agreed to take forward a five demonstration sites were established to pilot the recommendations. One of key issues emerging from the demonstration sites is the lack of a central of central funding pot. A report on the outcome of this work is expected later in 2017.

3. Approach to Housing and Adaptations

3.1. Principles and Outcomes

The Housing Adaptations Joint Working Policy seeks to achieve the following outcomes:

- Partners work together effectively to achieve shared outcomes for clients and minimise duplication or delay,
- Service users are given up to date and accurate information and are clear about what they can expect from us, and
- Decisions are taken in a timely manner, they put the needs of clients at the heart and the process is open and transparent.

The approach to delivering housing adaptations is based on the belief that joint working between services is critical to delivering a successful service. Working together increases efficiency and reduces duplication, ensures clients receive consistent and up to date advice and information and reduces the potential for delays within the system.

The Housing and Adaptations Joint Working Policy gives staff delegated authority to make decisions based on an agreed framework. By ensuring staff have appropriate decision making authority the length of time from assessment to service delivery will be reduced. Opportunities for fast tracking service users with recognised and agreed needs straight to service delivery will also be improved.

The approach is based on the principle of 'minimum intervention, maximum independence' which underpins every assessment. This means that adaptations, and in particular major adaptations, will

only be provided when all other reasonable options have been ruled out. This is fundamental to the continued delivery of a well functioning adaptations service and that public resources are used appropriately and directed to those most in need.

3.2. Role for Housing Options

A key element to the adaptation approval process is the importance of joint working between Occupational Therapy and Housing staff. This ensures that all options to meet the clients assessed needs are explored from the earliest opportunity, including the suitability of the property to meet the medium to long term needs and the opportunities for rehousing. By taking this approach the Council seeks to ensure that the decision making process is open, transparent and stands up to scrutiny. It also ensures the best use of public resources.

3.3. Assessment

Occupational Therapy staff will lead on the specialist assessment in all requests for adaptations to a client’s current home and applications to housing for adapted housing solutions.

Where the Occupational Therapy assessment demonstrates that the client’s accommodation cannot be adapted or requires numerous major or complex adaptations, they will liaise with Housing staff to explore the availability of suitable alternative housing options. Occupational Therapy and Housing staff will consider the assessed risk and desired outcomes and agree a joint recommendation to meet the client’s needs.

3.4. Adaptation Types and Approval Process

The Adaptation Approval Process ensures decision making reflects the level of complexity and financial resources required to meet the clients need. It is supported by a range of operational guidance and procedures which assist staff to manage the process. The Approval Process also sets out the requirements for joint decision making between services in order to support adaptation recommendations.

There are four Adaptation Types: minor; moderate; major and complex. The table below outlines the description of each Adaptation Type with practical examples and any criteria which must be met and the approval process.

Adaptation Type	Description of Works	Approval Process
Minor Adaptation	Low value, minor changes or retrofitting that does not involve any structural changes to the property. An appropriate assessment is required in order to recommend a minor adaptation.	Occupational Therapist has delegated authority to recommend and approve minor adaptations which meet the criteria. If relevant, approval from the private sector landlord should be obtained.
Moderate Adaptation	Works that require permanent changes to a property but do not involve any structural changes.	If an Occupational Therapist assessment recommends a moderate adaptation which meets the criteria, the Housing or Care and Repair Occupational Therapist has delegated authority to approve the works. If relevant, approval from the private sector landlord should be obtained.

<p>Major Adaptation</p>	<p>structural works or other works that involve permanent changes to a property.</p>	<p>If an Occupational Therapist assessment recommends a major adaptation which meets the criteria, approval must be sought from the Housing or Care and Repair Occupational Therapist and relevant partners:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Private households – Building Standards and private landlord (if appropriate); • Council tenancy – Community Housing Team and Technical and; • Registered Social Landlord <p>If the criteria for a major adaptation is not i.e. the property does not meet the assessed medium to long term needs, the adaptation must be escalated to the complex adaptation process.</p> <p>In the event that approval from all partners cannot be agreed, the adaptation must be escalated to the complex adaptation process.</p>
<p>Complex Adaptation</p>	<p>Complex adaptations are described as structural work or work that involves other permanent changes to the house and either:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> i) Involves work to extend the footprint or convert garage/attic, or ii) Involves multiple adaptations, or iii) Involves work to a property which is not suitable for adaptation or will not meet long term needs, or iv) Involves complex social, personal or financial circumstances, or v) Joint recommendation not reached (major). 	<p>The Joint Housing and Adaptions Panel has delegated authority to take decisions in relation to complex cases.</p> <p>The Panel will review the joint assessment and recommendations and agree the most appropriate course of action taking into account the clients' needs, the financial implications and the likely impact.</p> <p>The Panel will consider cases regardless of tenure or if a housing application has been submitted.</p>

4. Joint Housing and Adaptations Panel

4.1. Purpose of the Panel

The Joint Housing and Adaptations Panel has been established to provide a decision making forum in relation to complex adaptation and rehousing decisions, as well as other adaptations where despite comprehensive joint working it has not been possible to come to an agreed recommendation. The Joint Housing and Adaptations Panel will review the following cases:

- Complex adaptations recommended following a joint assessment by the case Occupational Therapist and Housing Officer (Housing Options);
- Rehousing recommended following a joint assessment by the case Occupational Therapist and Housing Officer (Housing Options) where no suitable accommodation can be identified;
- No recommendation can be reached following a joint assessment by the case Occupational Therapist and Housing Officer (Housing Options) and;
- Client does not agree with the recommendation reached following a joint assessment by the case Occupational Therapist and Housing Officer (Housing Options).

4.2. Decision Making

The Panel will review the information provided in the Occupational Therapy assessment and Housing Options appraisal in order to reach a decision. The Panel will either decide on the most appropriate course of action to meet the medium to long term needs of the service user taking into account the information presented, or refer the case back to the case officer for further investigation.

The Panel will consider factors such as the identified needs and priority/ risk score awarded through the assessment process, the medium to long term needs of the individual, the impact on carers or other family members, the availability of alternative accommodation, the condition and suitability of the property and the cost benefit of any identified options.

It is recognised that the solution to meet an individual's assessed need may be complex and varied and therefore the options which the Panel may consider are not limited. The Panel may jointly decide on any reasonable course of action including but not inclusive of the following:

- Extending the footprint of a property
- Adapting a property which does not meet the medium to long terms needs of the individual
- Supporting the purchase of a property on the open market

5. Timescales

All Occupational Therapy referrals are screened and allocated a priority in relation to the person's need. The timescales are as follows:

Priority Banding:	Timescale:
Priority 1	Same day or within 24 hours
Priority 2	14 working days
Priority 3	28 working days

Where the Occupational Therapy assessment shows that the current accommodation cannot be adapted or requires numerous major adaptations or complex adaptations, the following timescales will apply:

Joint appointment to discuss housing options	14 working days (2 working days for delayed discharge)
Housing Options Appraisal completed and joint recommendation	14 working days following appointment (add an additional 40 working days for any feasibility studies requested)
Feasibility study	40 working days
Referral to Joint Housing and Adaptations Panel	2 working days
Considered at Joint Housing and Adaptations Panel	6 weeks

The Joint Housing and Adaptations Panel will monitor delivery timescales.

6. Realising Solutions

6.1. Scope of Work

The Specifications for Dwellings for Person with a Disability provides guidance on the scope of work which will be recommended in support of an adaptation. This guidance will be used to specify works across all tenures and covers external and internal works.

Where an adaptation is grant eligible under the Scheme of Assistance and the client wishes a specification of a different type or standard, the Council will only provide grant assistance up to the level required to meet the Specification for Dwellings for Person with a Disability. Any additional cost must be met by the individual.

6.2. Rehousing

Where the scope of work is not considered feasible or requires numerous major or complex adaptations, rehousing options will be explored. An options appraisal will be led by Housing and take into account the client's circumstances and needs. It will consider any suitable adapted or adaptable local authority stock; any suitable adapted or adaptable RSL stock; any suitable private rented properties and suitable home ownership options. Where rehousing is recommended by Occupational Therapy and Housing and due to the complex nature of the housing requirements and there are no solutions available in the current housing stock or private market, the case will be referred to the Joint Housing and Adaptations Panel.

Cases will continue to be actively managed by the Housing Officer (Housing Options) in conjunction with Occupational Therapy. The extent of active management involved will vary on a case by case basis however the case will be reviewed on a quarterly basis at a minimum. It is noted that the Council does not have a statutory duty to house people with a medical need for rehousing and while every endeavour will be made to find a satisfactory solution within a reasonable timescale each case will be different and timescales will vary.

There will be cases where a rehousing solution has been recommended but does not materialise. It will be for the Housing Officer (Housing Options), in conjunction with the OT to decide at what point the case needs to be reassessed or referred back to the Joint Housing and Adaptations Panel. This decision will be based on factors including the risk to the household of continuing to live in their current property, the availability of stock (including new build) to meet the households needs, the length of time since the original assessment and any changes in circumstances.

In the event that a household refuses two reasonable offers of housing they will remain on the housing list with a medical priority but their case will no longer be actively managed by the Housing Officer (Housing Options).

7. Open Market Acquisition

The Council currently operates an Open Market Acquisition Scheme, which enables properties to be purchased on the open market and brought into the Council's own stock. The Scheme has primarily been used to increase the Council's stock of high demand properties as well as bring mixed tenure blocks back into Council ownership. On a small number of occasions the Scheme has been successfully used to purchase a property to meet the needs of a household with complex needs, that would not otherwise be available within the Council's own stock.

Where a property is to be purchased on the open market for a household with particular needs this must be agreed as the most appropriate course of action by the Joint Housing and Adaptation Panel.

8. Funding and Resources

Following the integration of health and social care IJB has delegated authority for adaptation funding for private sector and Council housing. In 2016/17 capital budgets were set at c£0.45m for private sector adaptations and c£0.52m for Council tenants. Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) currently receive central funding towards adaptations directly from the Scottish Government, however the level of funding is not expected to meet 100% of the costs and RSLs have had difficulty in meeting the demand for adaptations in their stock.

The Joint Housing and Adaptation Panel will report to the Health and Social Care Partnership on adaptation funding six monthly in the first year and then annually thereafter.

9. Monitoring and Evaluation

The Joint Housing and Adaptations Panel will monitor the implementation of the Policy and the performance of services which support it. The Panel will receive Occupation Therapy client outcome monitoring, Scottish Social Housing Charter indicators and performance information. It is anticipated that the approach to performance monitoring will develop further as the Policy is imbedded into working practice.

The Policy will be reviewed after year one and every three years or earlier as appropriate.

10. Operational Guidance and Supporting Documentation

The following guidance and documentation supports the implementation of this Policy.

Assessment: EARN Matrix
 Housing Options and Assessment
 Housing Options Appraisal Template
 Housing Options Appraisal Guidance

Recommendation and Specification: Adaptation Approval Process
 Adaptation Types
 Specifications for Dwellings for Person with a Disability
 Adaptation Recommendation Letter

Joint Housing and Adaptations Panel: Terms of Reference
Referral Checklist