

TENANT SERVICES MANAGEMENT BOARD

1st JULY 2010

Somerset West Social Housing Partnership – Adaptation Agreement

INTRODUCTION

Since September 2009 a small group of social housing landlords have been meeting with representatives of Sedgemoor District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset District Council (the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership) and Somerset County Council to discuss possible improvements to the adaptations and housing options services for social housing residents in the 3 districts.

The attached draft agreement (with changes highlighted + some comments) aims to clarify responsibility for adaptations work through funding and practical support to get work completed. The partnership approach aims to improve the tenant experience of adaptations through reduced waiting times, clarifying who will do what and when etc. An action plan will be produced later to provide more of the detail to back up the agreement.

Stephen Boland, Housing Services Lead of Taunton Deane Borough Council, will provide the TSMB with a verbal update at its 1st July meeting on the development of the agreement to date.

Recommendation: Tenant Services Management Board Members to note the work being done so far and to offer their views and comments on the draft agreement

Somerset West Social Housing Partnership

Adaptation and Housing Options Agreement

1. The Partnership

Somerset West covers the Sedgemoor, Taunton Deane and West Somerset districts. The 3 local authorities have agreed a partnership approach to the management of their private sector housing responsibilities – the Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership (SWPSHP). Private sector housing responsibilities include adaptations for people with disabilities living in all tenures.

In autumn 2009 the SWPSH Partnership Manager invited social housing providers to work with the Partnership to develop a new joint approach to adaptations and housing options for residents in social housing. This new partnership is the Somerset West Social Housing Partnership.

2. Background

Home adaptations have been identified as a key policy area in the National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society. They are expected to be included in Local Area Agreements and Comprehensive Area Assessments.

The Tenant Services Authority (TSA) has produced six service standards to be introduced in April 2010 and is promoting a system of Local Service Standards to make sure that services delivered by social housing landlords meet the expectations of their residents.

There is a clear link to the Future Home Improvement Agency project.

The national systems for funding adaptations are complex and unclear. The adaptations process involves a number of agencies with different responsibilities and communication is often poor. Local authorities and social housing landlords have been encouraged to develop adaptation agreements by the Department for Communities and Local Government and the former Housing Corporation.

Residents needing adaptations are often faced with an unacceptable wait for work to be completed and are not always supported through the process.

Where adaptations are not the best solution residents may not receive the advice and support they need to explore alternative options.

3. Equality and diversity

[This agreement was developed with the help of residents and Compass Disability Services. A Disability Equality Impact Assessment has also been completed.](#)

4. Purpose of the agreement

The purpose of the agreement is to ensure that social housing residents are provided with a consistent, fair, timely, efficient and customer-focused adaptations service.

5. Partners to the agreement

The current partners are listed in schedule 1. Additional partners may join at any time by contacting the Lead Officer: *(does this need to be a partnership involving all parties or could separate agreements be signed with individual landlords as and when they have authority from their Boards to join in? It is possible that some landlords may take some time to get to the point of signing). I believe that because we will have an Action Plan in the appendices for closer working, RSL's will be happy to sign. The Action plan will be a way of recognising that we are not all at the same level or in some instances cannot be at the same level for financial or political reasons.*

Christian Trevelyan

Partnership Manager

Somerset West Private Sector Housing Partnership

Sedgemoor District Council

Bridgwater House

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6. Aims and principles

The partners agree to develop a service which:

- provides a strategic, efficient, effective, and integrated approach to adaptations
- is fair and equitable for residents
- is responsive, timely, flexible and respects the choices of residents
- achieves good quality outcomes and high levels of resident satisfaction
- is good value for money and makes optimal use of resources

The partners agree to support and promote:

- clear communication with individual residents
- positive joint working between partners

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7. Key points of agreement

A detailed schedule is included at schedule 2

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Schedule 1

Partners to the agreement

This Agreement is between:

Somerset West Private Sector Partnership (comprising Sedgemoor District Council, Taunton Deane Borough Council and West Somerset District Council)

Somerset County Council

Social housing providers

Home Improvement Agency (correct name to be inserted when Somerset-wide contract is completed)

Outline of individual agreement document signed by each RSL to include the amounts/work they are willing to fund – annual review + key contact details. It is possible that some landlords will feel unable to agree to funding at a higher level initially at least

Schedule 2

Adaptations		
Agreement category	Agreed approach	Expected outcomes
<p>Communication between partners</p>	<p><u>A contact questionnaire will be used to identify and record:</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>One person at strategic level responsible for overseeing the adaptations service for each partner organisation</u> • <u>A person/s at operational level as the principal contact for the service for each partner organisation</u> • Information including address, telephone number and e mail address for nominated person/s. • <u>The contact questionnaire will be reviewed regularly and at least annually,</u> • A clear adaptations process to be agreed identifying the key stages and who is responsible for each one • The involvement and role of any in-house or independent Handyperson/HIA service to be clarified • The role and involvement of any in-house or private OT service to be clarified • Local authority to notify landlords of DFG applications and stage reached (means test, approval etc) • Landlords to follow agreed expedited process for providing consent for adaptation • Each partner to be informed of the contractor 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved communication between partner agencies • Improved advice and information for partner agencies • Improved advice and information for residents • Clear procedures leading to improved understanding • No unnecessary delays in progressing DFG work

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<p>Communication with residents</p>	<p>selected to carry out adaptation work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The adaptations service will focus on the needs of individual residents. • All parties to publish information in Plain English online and in other forms on adaptations policy, entitlement, priorities, funding and process. Wherever possible this information will be standardised. • Assessment of need will include an opportunity for residents to discuss preferences and options, including moving rather than adaptation • All residents will be provided with a written document setting out the work to be done, how, by whom and when. • The document will also give the name and contact details of a key worker to provide information and deal with any difficulties. • Resident feedback on the quality and outcomes of the service will be obtained through a self administered satisfaction questionnaire 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Residents will be treated with respect • Adequate notice of appointments will be given • Appointments will be kept • Residents can find out what help is available • Residents understand the service • Improved advice and information for residents • Residents have choice in the type of service they receive • Residents know who to ask for help • Residents have the opportunity to influence the design and quality of the adaptations service
<p>Minor adaptations</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partner landlords will fund minor adaptations costing up to £1000/£3500 • Partner landlords will provide information on the budget available for minor adaptations each year • OT assessment will not be required for minor adaptations costing up to £1000, other than in exceptional circumstances • Partner landlords will arrange for minor adaptations work to be carried out by DLO, private contractors or HIA 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced waiting times for residents needing minor adaptations • Residents deal with fewer people • Landlords take responsibility for the quality of work in their properties • Landlords have control over the specification of key components • Reduced assessment workload

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Residents to be given the name and contact details of a key worker to provide information and deal with any difficulties. Variations and exceptions to be negotiated. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> for Occupational Therapists (OTs) Reduced administrative burden for local housing authority Reduced dependence on Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding No means testing of residents DFG funding focused on more complex and costly work Landlords with limited technical capacity/expertise can buy services from the HIA
<p>Major adaptations costing more than £1000/£3500</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> DFG procedure with targets for each step to be agreed, streamlining the process where possible OT assessment to be provided in all cases Partner landlords may take responsibility for selecting contractors within parameters agreed with the local housing authority Partner landlords will contribute funding on a 50:50 basis for all major works/40:60 basis for work costing between £1000 and £10,000 net of any means tested contribution <p><i>(How exactly might the cost sharing proposal work? LA commits a certain amount of the DFG budget to Landlords at start of year as a partnership fund? Retrospective funding quarterly/at year end – risky for landlord paying up front and for LA.)</i> <u>Housing Association provides funding per grant and this is identified in the Grant Approval. Their contribution</u></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Joint visits reduce disruption for residents Residents understand what is to be provided and how it will be used Reduced dependence on Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding DFG funding helps more people Reduced waiting times for residents needing major adaptations Landlord partners have a real stake in the adaptation of their stock

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 <#>Different funding arrangements already in place may be maintained by mutual agreement ¶
 Partners to agree arrangements where a resident intends to use an Individual Budget (full/mixed funding)

	<u>forms part of any identified tenant contribution.</u>	
Contractors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The partners will consider 'kite marking' contractors who have proven expertise in carrying out adaptations work and working with disabled clients <u>Where a fixed price quote system is used for certain works partner landlords will be consulted</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved quality of workmanship Improved service for residents
Purchase & maintenance of equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The partners will work towards joint procurement of common items <u>and for lower costing schemes such as wet floor showers</u> Agreement will be reached on ownership, warranties and responsibility for maintenance post-warranty 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improved value for money, quality and lifetime cost of equipment Opportunity to share good practice in procurement
Removal, disposal and recycling of equipment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The partners will agree arrangements for making best use of equipment that is no longer needed or life expired e.g. use of a single recycling organisation for stairlifts 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Recycling keeps costs down Recycling may offer a rapid response to a short term need e.g. terminal illness
Monitoring of performance and record keeping	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The Partnership will meet <u>quarterly</u> to review performance. Performance of the Partnership will be measured on the SWPSHP approved system Covalent Once the Performance reports are agreed for each quarter, they will be published on the respective Council partners website Targets to be agreed for minor works and straightforward major works e.g. stairlifts, level access showers Landlords to record expenditure on adaptations and time taken to complete work they organise Landlords to ensure that adaptations of all types 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Reduced waiting time for residents Benchmarking information for the partnership Continuous service improvement Clear evidence of adaptations work and resident satisfaction is available for future inspections and management purposes

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	<p>are clearly recorded on their property database or other dedicated database</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Feedback from residents to be reviewed regularly by the partnership along with performance information for all partners • The partnership to consider other ways of gaining feedback from residents e.g. a Partnership Focus Group 	
Modernisation, cyclical & planned maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landlords to identify, protect or replace existing adaptations • Landlords to identify residents who may need adaptations and organise OT assessment where necessary • Adaptations to be provided where possible as part of the programme of works 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced disruption to residents and work programme • Future expenditure on one-off adaptations minimised • Demonstration of disability awareness
Sharing best practice & innovation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners will share information on best practice using case studies where possible • Partners may volunteer to pilot new approaches to adaptation • <u>Any proposed pilots to be shared with the partners to this agreement before being launched</u> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Benchmarking information for the partnership • Continuous service improvement
Training	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <u>The possibility of organising</u> Trusted Assessor training for landlord staff will be <u>considered by the partnership.</u> • Joint training may be organised from time to time to promote networking and discussion of common concerns/issues • Training may also be provided for resident groups/Partnership Focus Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved staff confidence in dealing with adaptations • Improved outcomes for residents • Reduced OT involvement in more routine cases
Review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Partnership will review the success of the 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The agreement will be relevant

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	agreement annually Intermediate reviews may be required e.g. if guidance is published by CLG, as a result of Audit Commission inspections	and up to date
Housing options		
Agreement category	Agreed approach	Expected outcomes
Knowledge and information	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All partners will cooperate in providing information on social housing and other options • The partnership will consider how best to help households needing re-housing in adapted or adaptable homes e.g. through CBL system, by proactive single advocate support • The partnership will consider adopting a categorisation system for all social housing e.g. non-adaptable, purpose designed/Lifetime Homes, adaptable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved guidance for residents • Reduced delay in re-housing
New build	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Partnership will provide information to local authority enablers on the need for purpose designed/adaptable homes for specific households 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improved options for residents • Reduced delay in re-housing
Re-letting adapted homes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Partners will develop a procedure for identifying adapted homes early in the letting cycle • Wherever possible adapted homes will be re-let to households needing the adaptation • Where extra adaptations are needed the partners will work together to expedite the work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduced void periods • Reduced delay in re-housing

[Glossary \(to be inserted before publication\)](#)