

Using Stock more Effectively – The Adapted Property Register & ‘Moving On’ Support Team

Introduction

Newham Home Improvement Agency (HIA) in partnership with Newham Housing Needs and Adult Social Care, aim to develop an accessible housing register which will enable them to make better matches between people and property. This will, for example, create opportunities for addressing overcrowding, prevent costly health and care problems, support choice for downsizing and deliver better outcomes for older and vulnerable people by helping them live independently.

This initiative will improve efficiency, in that, having dedicated Occupational Therapists and Support Caseworker will (1) reduce the cost of repeated, wasted and unsuitable adaptations and (2) the number of households living in unsuitable accommodation (including temporary accommodation).

Background and Context

Homelessness Prevention

Newham's Local Service Centres (LSCs) provide a single point of contact for local people threatened with homelessness. The LSCs are supported by a telephone advice line (linked directly to our Housing Options Centre) to enable advisers to provide in depth casework/interviews including housing options, liaising with private landlords, financial and benefits advice, access to employment (Council's Workplace service) and offer of family mediation and reconciliation

Proposed extension include (1) offer debt advice and (2) Specialist Advisers who will be located within LSCs

Newham's Bond Scheme facilitates increased access to the private sector. As a security deposit covering damage for landlords, the Bond provides them with an incentive to let their properties to households referred to them by us.

- **668** households have been prevented from becoming homeless through this route

Mediation

Newham's Homeless Visiting Team (HVT) provides mediation for households threatened with homelessness due to conflict and relationship breakdown. The aim is to help prevent homelessness by proactively targeting conflict resolution and reconciliation efforts at this client group.

- **242** family reconciliations have been achieved in the last 12 months
- **109** landlord and tenant reconciliations were achieved within the same period

‘Qualifying’ offers

A ‘Qualifying’ offer provides an alternative to long waits in temporary accommodation. Once the lease of a temporary accommodation property comes to an end, the existing tenant will be moved to an alternative temporary accommodation enabling hand back of property to the owner.

A ‘qualifying’ offer enables us to discharge the homeless application whilst encouraging households to bid for Council properties through the CBL route (priority and waiting times remain the same). In situations where the landlord is unable to renew the arrangements the tenant could still opt for another property in the locality as a qualified offer through the bond scheme.

- **108** homeless applicants have been moved from temporary to settled accommodation via the ‘qualifying offers’ route from year to date
- **47** households have been moved from temporary into settled accommodation through the same scheme

Reduce homelessness acceptances.

- In the last 12 months, our Prevention agenda has resulted in a record fall of homelessness acceptances to **409**, representing an 8% reduction on previous year’s figures

The Home Improvement Agency

Newham Home Improvement Agency is involved in the provision of all the adapted property for disabled people in all housing tenures in Newham. The service is delivered by a team of Surveyors, Housing Occupational Therapists and Caseworkers. It also includes a Handyvan Service. The service that they provide includes

- The grant delivery function for Disabled Facilities Grants in private sector housing and RSLs
- Adaptations for Newham Council tenants
- Working with adaptations for Newham Council tenants in Newham’s two PFIs
- An innovative fast track Adaptations Service as part of Newham Homes’ Decent Homes programme
- Casework support for grant applicants from the private sector and for vulnerable home owners living in non – decent housing

In 2008/9 the HIA carried out 392 adaptations in all tenures and were involved in a further 288 assessments for disabled people living in properties affected by the Modern Homes programme leading to the provision of a further 139 major adaptations.

Action Plan

Newham HIA will recruit a team consisting of an OT, a Surveyor, and a Move-On Caseworker to work closely with housing providers, including Newham Homes, RSLs and Lettings, and with Adult Social Care and Health in order to –

- 1. Identify adapted and adaptable void properties within Newham's stock and match them to disabled people in urgent need of housing or re-housing. Increase efficiencies and improve connections in the whole process of identification and allocation of adapted properties using stock more efficiently**
- 2. Set up a register of adapted and adaptable properties using the Mayor of London's Accessible Housing Definitions and make information available to disabled people in need of adaptations (whilst working within the framework of CBL). Develop means of recording and sharing information regarding properties and needs between OT services and all relevant housing agencies**
- 3. Provide fast track specific assistance to assess & match properties and potential tenants when vacancies occur. Provide fast track adaptations for emergency rehousing cases**
- 4. Build on the HIA's holistic approach and provide home-visiting casework advice and proactive support. Enabling moves to more suitable accommodation of all types**
- 5. Liaise early with RSLs and other builders of new housing to ensure that Lifetime Homes apply wherever possible. Roll out the programme to other housing tenures (private sector and RSLs)**

Objective 1 - Identify adapted and adaptable void properties within Newham's stock, and match them to disabled people in urgent need of housing or re-housing.
Increase efficiencies and improve connections in the whole process of identification and allocation of adapted properties. Use stock more efficiently

Lead Officer – Accessible Housing OT
 Supported by – HIA Surveyor, Housing OT team
 Working with – Housing Needs - Lettings team
 Managed by – Casework Support Manager, HIA Manager

	Actions	What we intend to do	Current Service	Milestones	Resources	Target / Outcome	Complete by	Risks (H/M/L)
1.	Set up a team to work with partners and Service Users to improve the use of stock that is adapted or adaptable	Recruit a specialist team, consisting of a housing OT, a Move on Caseworker and a Surveyor	In 2007/8, 323 out of 1049 total lettings were ground floor properties (flats, bungalows, houses and ground floor maisonettes), and of these, 40 were allocated to people with urgent medical needs (12%). The proposed schemes enable us to make better use of ground floor properties.	June 09 recruit OT & Surveyor July 09 recruit Caseworker Induction and training by Sept 09	Recruitment costs £4,500 £2000	A flexible team working with all the relevant sectors to achieve the objectives listed below	Sept 09	Failure to recruit M Delays waiting for CRB checks M

2	Set up regular liaison meetings with all stakeholders	Set up a Project Board including the HIA, Lettings, Voids, Adult Social Care and other interested parties to share knowledge and expertise across specialisms and to drive forward the Agenda	Until now these connections have been informal.	Existing pilot project board to be strengthened by July 09	Staff time	The pathway for a disabled will be clearer. All parties will be aware of the project and the benefits of early identification of potentially adapted or adaptable properties	Ongoing in the sense that there will always be a need for the board and a need to expand it	Lack of engagement by partners M
3	Utilise the strengths and expertise of the HIA Advisory Board	Consult with Advisory Board, which includes stakeholders, service users and partners to provide the wider vision necessary to carry the process forward	The Advisory Board is not yet involved	Advisory Board to be consulted in May 09	Staff time	Strategic links will be maintained with Health, Adult Social Care and the Voluntary Sector.	Ongoing	Lack of engagement by partners M

Objective 2 - Set up a register of adapted and adaptable properties using the Mayor of London's Accessible Housing Definitions and make information available to disabled people in need of adaptations (whilst working within the framework of CBL). Develop means of recording and sharing information regarding properties and needs between OT services and all relevant housing agencies

Lead Officer – Accessible Housing OT
Supported by – HIA Surveyor, Housing OT team

Working with – Housing Needs - Lettings team
 Managed by – Casework Support Manager, HIA Manager

	Actions	What we intend to do	Current Service	Milestones	Resources	Target / Outcome	Complete by	Risks (H/M/L)
1	Adapt the HIA database	Adapt the Foundations data base to record all relevant information and to provide reports on properties and people using the service. Every property seen by the HIA Occupational Therapy team to be identified in accordance with the Mayor of London's Accessible Housing categories	Details of adaptations are recorded at present but the database was not originally set up to record accessibility or the refinements of adaptations. Fortunately it is flexible enough to be adapted to meet our requirements	Database adapted May 09 Records uploaded Sept 09 Data input ongoing thereafter	£1000	Accessibility information on all current and recently adapted properties to be recorded	Sep 09 – ongoing task	Future planned redesign of national database may affect our adaptations to it L
2	Investigate ways of improving data sharing	Work with Newham IT team on sharing information with the Housing and Adult Social Care databases	At present we provide this information to Newham Homes in tabular form, and allow read only access to our system	Aim to have a plan of action by Nov 09 whilst continuing to share information with partners	TBA	Ideally an ability to share data electronically across databases. In the mean time to develop the HIA database and share outcome reports with all partners	May 10	It may not be possible to share information fully M
3	Use the Mayor of London's definitions to define every Newham Homes property seen by	Categorise and record every home according to the Mayor's definitions	Until recently this information was not kept in a formalised fashion. We have introduced a drop down menu that enables	Progress towards setting up a full adapted property register 30%	Staff time	Over the two years of the project identify all the adapted and adaptable properties in Newham's stock	July 10	May not manage to categorise all in time M

	HIA OTs. Advertise accessibility in the CBL Magazine		every OT assessment to include a categorisation					
3	Assess the level of disability of all applicants on the waiting list	Categorise their level of need according to Gold, Silver or Bronze, so that applicants needs can match available stock	At present we do not have categorisations of this sort	Contact all on the Housing Waiting list to fill in questionnaire regarding disability by end 2009 Make follow up OT visits to all wheelchair users by April 2010 Roll out programme to other disabled people on list by April 2011	Staff time Cost of questionnaire £1000	All those on the Housing waiting list to have either been assessed or have self assessed by April 2011(evidence will also be used from Now Medical)	Ongoing	Service Users exaggerate their needs in order to qualify for re housing M OT lacks capacity to assess all M

**Objective 3 - Provide fast track specific assistance to assess & match properties and potential tenants when vacancies occur.
Provide fast track adaptations for emergency rehousing cases**

Lead Officer – Accessible Housing OT
Supported by – HIA Surveyor, Lettings team
Working with – Adult Social Care
Managed by – Casework Support Manager, HIA Manager

	Actions	What we intend to do	Current Service	Milestones	Resources	Target / Outcome	Complete by	Risks (H/M/L)
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1	Visit all potentially accessible void properties	Assess them for adaptability, categorising them according to the Mayor of London's Accessibility definitions. Add the categories to the database	Currently the process is much slower and more liable to error. The HIA is not involved at the allocation period, and there is consequently a greater danger of disabled people being allocated properties that do not meet their needs or of properties that would have been suitable being overlooked	<p>Accessible homes OT and Surveyor to become involved in the process June 09</p> <p>Weekly updates on voids to commence June 09</p> <p>First quarterly project report Oct 09</p>	Staff time	<p>Increase in number of ground floor flats identified as being adapted or adaptable to be Wheelchair/mobility accessible over the life of the whole project</p> <p>Increase of people with medical needs taken off the emergency re-housing list</p>	July 10	Too great a demand on the OT M
2	Match properties to disabled applicants, initially from the emergency housing list	<p>Where appropriate, recommend, design, specify and carry out major and minor adaptations using the dedicated fast track surveyor</p> <p>Some adaptations will be able to wait until after the property has been allocated; others will be too disruptive</p>	Currently we do not have the resources to do this, as it would require total prioritisation from our over stretched Surveyor team. The dedicated Surveyor will endeavour to prevent lengthy voids whilst speeding through essential adaptations	<p>Surveyor in action from Aug 09</p> <p>First major adaptations complete end of 09 (because of through put time)</p>	Staff time	Number of properties specifically adapted for disabled people from the housing waiting list	April 2011	<p>Delays on planning for major adaptations (rare) M</p> <p>Too great a demand on the Surveyor L</p>

Objective 4 - Build on the HIA's holistic approach and provide home-visiting casework advice and proactive support. Enabling moves to more suitable accommodation of all types

Lead Officer –Move on Caseworker

Supported by – HIA team

Working with – Housing Needs, RSLs, Voluntary Sector

Managed by – Casework Support Manager

	Actions	What we intend to do	Current Service	Milestones	Resources	Target / Outcome	Complete by	Risks (H/M/L)
1	Assist disabled and elderly people to move to more suitable accommodation	Moving On Caseworker to assist in rehousing emergency cases Provide a practical support service to those who need to move. The service will include signposting, information gathering regarding housing options, Welfare Benefits advice and support, and, where necessary proactive assistance in arranging a move. Caseworkers giving support and networking with other agencies to make the move possible. Specific assistance in bidding on CBL	At present HIA Caseworkers do not provide a service to public sector tenants, so this will fill a gap in service	Caseworker in post by July 09 Training given in how to offer assistance in CBL etc by mid Aug 09	Staff time	Number of disabled people re-housed Savings in money spent on inappropriate adaptations Increase in available larger accommodation	April 2011	Lack of suitable accommodation M Too great a demand on Caseworker's services H
2	Assist disabled and elderly people to move from under occupied properties	Building on the work of the OT working with Decent Homes, the Caseworker will assist those people who would like to down size but are daunted by the task	As above	As above	As above	Number of under occupiers re-housed	April 2011	As above

Objective 5 - Liaise early with RSLs and other builders of new housing to ensure that Lifetime Homes apply wherever possible. Roll out the programme to other housing tenures (private sector and RSLs)

Lead Officer – Casework Support Manager
 Supported by – Accessible Homes OT
 Working with – Housing Needs, RSLs, IT Support
 Managed by – HIA Manager

	Actions	What we intend to do	Current Service	Milestones	Resources	Target / Outcome	Complete by	Risks (H/M/L)
1	Meet with Major RSLs	Involve larger RSLs. Carry out voids inspections in RSL properties. Add details of accessibility to continually growing register of adapted properties Encourage the recycling of adaptations (rather than current tendencies to remove level access showers and stairlifts)	Majority of adaptations in RSLs are paid for with DFGs	2 major RSLs approached by Sept 09 Continue to approach 2 per quarter	Staff time	Savings in adaptations budget Decrease in expensive and inappropriate adaptations as joint working arrangements yield results in terms of rehousing and recycling outcomes	Ongoing	Refusal to co operate by some RSLs
2	Roll out programme to smaller RSLs	Add details of accessibility to continually growing register of adapted properties. Agree protocols on smaller adaptations	Majority of adaptations in RSLs are paid for with DFGs – smaller RSLs often have no	Write to all small RSLs explaining project and inviting participation Meet with RSLs on an ad hoc basis as issues arise (because of the large	Staff time	As above	Ongoing	As above

				number of small RSLs we do not have the resources to approach them all individually)				
3	Set up the Virtual Estate Agent for private sector owner occupiers or private landlord and tenants wishing to sell or buy or rent adapted properties	Recruit volunteers to set up a Virtual Estate Agency giving details of private sector housing that has been adapted. Adapted properties to advertised with the Silver Wheelchair logo Link with local bodies such as Age Concern and local Disability networks as well as national bodies such the Elderly Accommodation Counsel and Counsel and Care	Currently, when private sector houses are sold, the adaptations are almost always removed. There is little opportunity for disabled people to advertise their adapted homes to one another	Work with Newham Volunteer projects to recruit disabled people to run the Virtual Estate Agent Liaise with the Disability Partnership Board and recruit committed people to support the project If possible seek long term funding for the project	Training volunteers, CRB checks etc Setting up the website costs	A successful website that links with similar or compatible schemes in other parts of the country. A service run by disabled people for disabled people	Jan 2011	Difficulty attracting & retaining volunteers with the necessary skills M Meeting industry standards and confidentiality criteria M Sustaining the project M

Budgets

Expenditure

Year 1		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total for year
	Recruitment costs	£4,500				
	Salary, Senior OT		£11,519	£11,519	£11,519	
	Salary, Surveyors	£7,000	£21,250	£21,250	£21,250	
	Salary, Move On Caseworker		£8,875	£8,875	£8,875	
	Printing costs		£1,000	£1,000		
	Total yearly cost	£11,500	£42,644	£42,644	£41,644	£139,432
	CLG contribution to costs	75,000				
	Newham's contribution to costs	64,432				

Year 2		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total for year
	Volunteer recruitment, support & training costs	£2,000	£1,000	£500	£500	
	Salary, Senior OT	£11,750	£11,750	£11,750	£11,750	
	Salary, Surveyors	£21,675	£21,675	£21,675	£21,675	
	Salary, Move On Caseworker	£9,050	£9,050	£9,050	£9,050	
	Total yearly cost	£44,475	£43,475	£41,975	£41,975	£171,900
	CLG contribution to costs	75,000				
	Newham's contribution to costs	96,900				

Targets/PIs

Outputs Year 1		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total for year	Baseline figure (yearly)
	Targets						
01	Number of ground floor flats identified and adapted to be mobility/wheelchair accessible	1	1	1	2	5	1
02	Number of people with medical needs taken off the emergency re-housing list	4	5	5	6	20	12
03	Number of disabled/elderly people re-housed who are currently under-occupying family accommodation	1	2	2	2	7	7
04	Number of homeless disabled people in temporary accommodation rehoused	0	1	1	2	4	0
05	Number of OT assessments carried out in Social Housing as part of the Decent Homes programme	50	50	50	50	200	
06	Number of vulnerable people in all types of social housing assisted to move (other than those listed in the above categories)	0	1	3	4	10	3
07	Number of RSL properties utilised as part of the scheme	0	0	3	5	8	
Outcomes Year 2		Q1	Q2	Q3	Q4	Total for year	

	Targets						
01	Number of ground floor flats identified and adapted to be mobility/wheelchair accessible	3	4	5	6	18	1
02	Number of people with medical needs taken off the emergency re-housing list	6	6	6	6	24	12
03	Number of disabled/elderly people re-housed who are currently under-occupying family accommodation	2	2	2	2	8	7
04	Number of OT assessments carried out in Social Housing as part of the Decent Homes programme	50	50	50	50	200	
05	Number of vulnerable people in all social housing assisted to move (other than those listed in the above categories)	2	2	2	2	8	3
06	Number of RSLs participating in scheme	4	8	10	12	34	
07	Number of RSL properties utilised as part of the scheme	5	5	5	5	20	

Note re baseline figures. These figures are based upon a 5 month pilot that was carried out with very limited resources and are therefore not entirely indicative.

Monitoring and Evaluation

All interventions will be recorded on the database and regular quarterly reports will be produced.

In 2010 a final report will be produced, although the intention is that the project will be ongoing.