

Homes in Sedgemoor



Scrutiny Bootcamp – review of Aids and adaptations Report July 2021





Background

Six Homes in Sedgemoor Customers met over four Zoom sessions to review the Aids and Adaptations Service. Customers were supported by Jane Eyles, Senior Tpas Associate who built training around scrutiny into the review, and by the Community Enabler, Sharon Collard.

Mo Burge Customer Services Advisor, Chris Wilmott, Head of Property and Suzie Abrahams, Occupational Therapist from SIP. Each gave separate presentations on the service and answered the panel's questions. Katy Barry, Surveyor also answered questions comprehensively in writing. The Panel designed a questionnaire which was telephoned through by Sharon Collard.

The Covid lockdown did restrict the review – it would have improved the review to be able to interview partners and customers face to face but the exercise has been very worthwhile.

The Scrutiny Panel would like to thank everybody for their involvement

Methodology

- The Scrutiny Review was carried out over three months through four separate Zoom workshops
- A desk top review was carried out of all relevant documents. These included:
 - The Aids and Adaptations policy dated 2016
 - A report of the dashboard showing performance against Key performance Indicators in this area
 - The Homes in Sedgemoor Website and customer Portal
 - Analysis of a resident's complaint around Housing Options and adaptations
 - The job description and a detailed supporting statement from the Occupational Therapist Team
 - Factsheets from the SIP service
- A questionnaire for those who had received the service – 5 responses



- Research of 12 Arm's Length Management Organisations and six housing associations and their approach to Aids and Adaptations including relationships with Adult Social Care and their publicity.
- Presentations from and interviews with Mo Burge, Customer Services Advisor, Chris Wilmott, Head of Property services, Suzie Abrahams, Occupational Therapist with SIP
- Written answers to questions from Katy Barry, HiS Surveyor
- The service was tested against themes which were:
 - How much do aids and adaptations work?
 - How much is the cost each year?
 - What is the quality of work like?
 - How long does it take (average)?
 - Is there a difference between supported/general needs?
 - What's the information like?
 - What impact did it have on lives?
 - How are customers involved in the service?
 - Was there anything to be learned from Good Practice elsewhere?



Summary of Findings

Customers were extremely positive about:

- The presentations from the staff
- Knowledge and experience of their part of the process by staff and partners
- The attitude by those involved around building customer relationships – it was clear to see that staff were aware that this is a complex area and different skills were employed to ensure customers got a good explanation and face to face discussion.
- Communication and relationship building between some of the key staff/organisations including a monthly meeting to trouble shoot problems
- Evidence of the huge impact that it had on customers' lives
- An Occupational Therapist that was dedicated solely to the Sedgemoor area which enabled a better service and improved communication
- Very efficient management of the minor adaptations

Not every organisation is perfect and customers found the following:

- It is an extremely complex process involving a variety of organisations, different service teams in each, a range of staff and very few understood the whole picture. This meant that no one person took responsibility and often found it hard to prioritise this area.
- There was almost no link between major and minor works – it was funded separately, administered by separate organisations with no link between the two. Staff who were involved in major works had no idea how the minor works were run and vice versa.
- The publicity around the service was very poor and there was nothing to guide customers as to what they could expect in a complex area that needed good quality information.
- It was evidenced that HiS were slightly inflexible about adapting general needs family housing. Fundamentally, the system demands a more personal needs centred approach which could be lost in this property centred approach.
- Communication between SIP and HiS could be improved
- Demand outstrips supply and the system is not meeting need

“I don't think there's a huge amount of publicity around the service if I'm honest – that's one area that could definitely be improved”



- The OT was not invited to allocations meetings about adapted homes
- The amount for minor works has not increased for many years and simple adaptations are no longer affordable and so get referred to SiP, and the more complex route, blocking the system
- There has been no resident involvement in this area until this review



Recommendations

	Recommendation Comments	HiS Response
1. Improve organisation of the service:		
a.	Consider a one stop service within HiS. Appoint one person to lead on aids and adaptations who processes minor adaptations and liaises and gives permission for major works. This person could lead on training, liaison with SiP, Housing Options, the District, publicity etc.	<p>Whilst minor adaptations were very efficiently run, the Panel was concerned that it was a one person show that operated without much knowledge from the rest of the organisation.</p> <p>The Panel felt that so many players from the organisation meant that there was a lack of a strategic approach.</p> <p>Poole HP have a dedicated co-ordinator</p>
b.	Consider delivering the major works as well – appointing contractors, liaising with OT who would need to be SiP based	<p>This is complex and depends on funding from the district council and future arrangements for a unitary authority which was beyond the scope of this review. However, this would be a desired outcome.</p> <p>The Panel rejected the idea of HiS direct employment of the OT because we felt that they would need bespoke peer management and support</p>
c.	Reconsider blanket ban on adaptations such as wet rooms in 3 bed family properties. More flexibility may be cheaper in the long run.	<p>Given the shortage of suitable homes, it may be cost effective to install a wet room and then take it out again in the future. The Panel felt there could be more flexibility</p>



	Recommendation Comments		HiS Response
		in installing additional wet rooms/facilities.	
d.	Take a more strategic approach to disability housing in the district. Compile a register of all accessible homes to enable “matching” to be improved. Improve flexibility on “matching”. It may be cheaper to increase void periods to achieve a match rather than waste adaptation	It felt that the service was very reactive and not prioritised by any one staff team. There is clearly a role for the OT in this too in compiling a district wide register.	
e.	We were able to evidence some homes that were let and the adaptations ripped out. Can HiS be more proactive in matching suitable customers to adapted properties matching process. Could customers/applicants be called and properties discussed and viewed.	When a home is modified and not re let for adaptation purposes what are costs comparisons leaving a property empty for a period against removing adaptations?	
a.	Tweak communication – ensure OT gives a HiS fuller picture about household members and needs.		
b.	Involve the OT in more strategic mapping and planning of accessible homes including attending allocation meetings of accessible homes		
2. Improve information (and to customers)			
c.	Once a way forward is agreed, put comprehensive information on the website with good links to partner organisations such as ASC/SIP, the Council. There should be pages for minor and major	Your Housing have an excellent Guide and website Aids and adaptations (yourhousinggroup.co.uk) Berneslai also have a good website Equipment and	



	Recommendation Comments		HiS Response
	works, an application form, how Disabled facilities grants work. Include stories/case studies on the impact on customers' lives	adaptations - Berneslai Homes Solihull CH has a self-referral form on the website EMH Homes puts its annual spend on its website too	
d.	Produce a guide for customers that incorporates SiP's factsheets	https://www.yourhousinggroup.co.uk/media/1675/aids-and-adaptions-guide.pdf Shropshire Towns has a good guide/policy	
e.	Include after care and responsibility for future maintenance in the publicity	The Panel were able to evidence	
f.	Include a contact number and email for adaptations in line with most ALMOs researched (Solihull, Blackpool, Berneslei)		
g.	Improve profiling data on customers and households	This would overcome the lack of knowledge on applications for major adaptations from household members	
h.	Renew policy with residents	The current policy contains complex terms around budgets and does not include housing options/development	
i.	Align KPI/feedback mechanisms and publicise		
Funding/Budget			
j.	Increase minor adaptations to £2000. The Panel were able to find examples of this elsewhere in	Whilst the Panel acknowledged the budget constraints in this recommendation, if the major adaptations funding was	



	Recommendation Comments	HiS Response
	Norwich Council (£5K) and Your Housing (£2K)	allocated to HiS, this would save a lot of blockage.



Appendix A

1. How does the whole adaptation process work at Homes in Sedgemoor?
2. What is your role in this everybody else's role?
3. What is the total budget for minor works A&A?
4. How many do you do in a year?
5. What happens if you go over budget?
6. Is £1000 per adaptations enough?
7. How does it interlink with the Council doing the major works?
8. Could you do the major works and would you want to? Why not?
9. How are people assessed for minor works?
10. How do you ensure aids and adaptations are recorded well – who logs it (some of us have inaccuracies on their personal accounts!!)
11. What has been the effect on the service of Covid?
12. How do you collect feedback – is it a good method?
13. Tell us how it all works with a disabled person needing a home – what happens with voids?
14. What have you learned from the complaint?
15. What works well in the whole service?
16. How would you improve aids and adaptations? Why is feedback 100%?





Appendix B – Interview Questions to OT

1. Tell us about how it all works
2. What is your role – with major/minor works?
3. Are you dedicated to HiS?
4. How do residents know what to expect from the service?
5. How is feedback collected?
6. What are the good things about the way it works?
7. What would you improve things?
8. What do you like about your job?