

**Report for:** Housing, Planning & Development Scrutiny Panel

**Title:** Housing Aids and Adaptations

**Report authorised by:** Jahedur Rahman, Director of Housing Services

**Lead Officer:** Christian Carlisle, Assistant Director for Asset Management  
Kim Christodoulou, Head of Integrated Care  
Alexandra Domingue, Commissioning Programme Manager

**Ward(s) affected:** All

**Report for Key/  
Non Key Decision:** For information.

## **1. Recommendations**

1.1. That the report be noted.

## **2. Describe the issue under consideration.**

2.1 This report sets out how the Occupational Therapy (OT) Aids and Adaptations service operates and interfaces with Housing. The report provides the Scrutiny Panel with an overview and service offer across Adults and Children's services, with a particular focus on Council housing stock, and the impact on Council tenants.

## **3. Background**

### Definitions

3.1 OT Adaptations are physical alterations or improvements carried out to a resident's home, that make it easier for them to continue leading an independent life. Residents are able to access an OT Aids and Adaptation following an assessment under the Care Act 2014 to determine the resident's eligibility for the intervention.

3.2 There are typically 3 different kinds of aids (equipment) or adaptations that the Occupational Therapy teams and Adaptations team provide.

3.3 Equipment might include a shower chair, a raised toilet seat or grab rails in the bath. Such equipment can be prescribed remotely or in person, and the way it is prescribed will vary depending on a number of factors, such as resident case history, presentation, and risk.

3.4 Adaptations are generally split into two categories, those being minor and major.

3.5 Minor adaptations generally cost at or under £1,000, with typical examples of a minor adaptation being:

- Level taps
- Stair rails
- Other galvanised rails, usually external
- Temporary ramps

- 3.6 If a minor adaptation is meeting an assessed, eligible need, is practical to undertake, and under the £1,000 minor adaptations threshold, it is free of charge to the tenant.
- 3.7 Major adaptations are typically works that are estimated to cost more than £1,000, with typical examples being:
- Over bath shower
  - Bathroom conversion to a wet room
  - Extension for a bedroom and/or bathroom
  - Major internal reorganisation of accommodation
  - Stair-lift
  - Vertical through floor lift
- 3.8 Occupational Therapists (OTs) are degree qualified and help people with disabilities or extra support needs to choose and use special equipment, such as wheelchairs and aids for mobility, eating, dressing or any other activity. They also help to adapt people's homes to accommodate their individual needs. They also supervise Occupational Therapy Assistants (OTA's), who support residents with treatment plans, and provide assistance and advice to residents with activities of daily living.
- 3.9 Adaptations for Council tenants are typically funded through Haringey's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) funding stream within the Council's General Fund.
- 3.10 The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), which forms part of the wider Better Care Fund grant (BCF), also provides funding for OT Adaptations. These grants are available to residents in both public and private housing, but Haringey predominantly provides adaptations to residents in Council properties through the HRA.
- 3.11 Housing services provide aids and adaptations for Council tenants through the Housing Investment Programme, ensuring that work to make homes 'decent' in line with regulatory requirements is aligned with the needs of residents.

### Legislation and Regulation

- 3.12 There is a variety of key legislation that the Council has a responsibility to enact, where these set some of the statutory requirements in the context of Aids and Adaptations. Some of these are:
- Human Rights Act 1998: Mandates all public bodies to respect and protect every individual's human rights, where Articles 3, 8 and 14 are especially relevant for Housing and Occupational Therapy.
  - Care Act 2014: Mandates local authorities to provide support for adults with care needs, and a duty of preventing people from coming into need or increasing need.
  - Equality Act 1010: Ensures non-discrimination and equal access to services.

- Mental Capacity Act 2005: Protects vulnerability people over the age of 16 around decision making, ensuring that every adult regardless of disability, is considered to have capacity unless assessment proves otherwise, and ensures that any decisions taken for someone who cannot make it themselves, is done in the person's best interests.
- Children and Families Act 2014: Provides for the welfare of children with disabilities.
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Governs Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)
- Building Regulations (Part M): Focuses on access and use of a building, ensuring it is adaptable, accessible, and suitable for individual with disabilities.

3.13 In addition to the overarching responsibilities for the Council as a whole, there are specific requirements in respect of registered social landlords. The Social Housing Regulation Act 2023 that was introduced allows the Regulator of Social Housing to take action against social landlords before people are at risk and holds landlords to account with regular inspections.

3.14 The regulator's proactive role is supported by new consumer standards and an inspection regime, of which there are four key areas:

- Safety and Quality
- Tenancy
- Neighbourhood and Community
- Transparency, Influence and Accountability

3.15 Within these standards, there are more specific requirements, of which some relate to aids and adaptations. These are:

- Registered providers must assist tenants seeking housing adaptations to access appropriate services.
- Registered providers must use data from across their records on stock condition to inform their provision of good quality, well maintained and safe homes for tenants including allocating homes that are designed or adapted to meet specific needs appropriately.
- Registered providers must clearly communicate to tenants and relevant organisations as to how they will assist tenants seeking housing adaptations services.
- Registered providers must co-operate with tenants, appropriate local authority departments and other relevant organisations so that a housing adaptations service is available to tenants where appropriate.
- Registered providers must seek to allocate homes that are designated, designed, or adapted to meet specific needs in a way that is compatible with the purpose of the housing.

## Structure and Processes

3.16 The OT Aids and Adaptations Team in Adult Social Care (ASC) is responsible for overseeing the assessment and provision of aids and adaptations for the Council, which includes Council tenants. There are three teams:

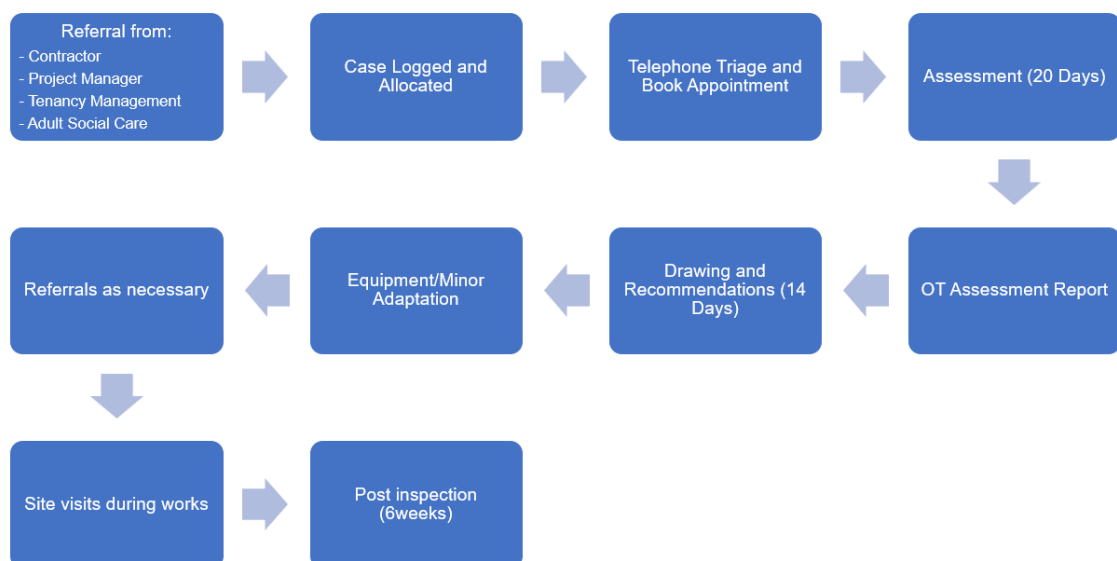
- OT Duty Team: Receive referrals and assess for short-term needs, before sending referrals for long-term needs to the OT and Sensory Team. They provide some equipment and OT support to residents with less complex needs.
- OT and Sensory Team: Assess residents for their long-term OT and sensory needs, including both Adults and Children. The Team provide equipment, minor and major adaptations, as well as manual handling and housing reports.
- Adaptations Team: They are responsible for surveying properties, providing drawings and schedule of works, procuring contractors to carry out works and managing the process through to completion of the adaptations.

3.17 Within Housing, there are three, reducing to two, Housing OTs within Asset Management, where clinical supervision is provided by Adult Social Care to ensure joined up working.

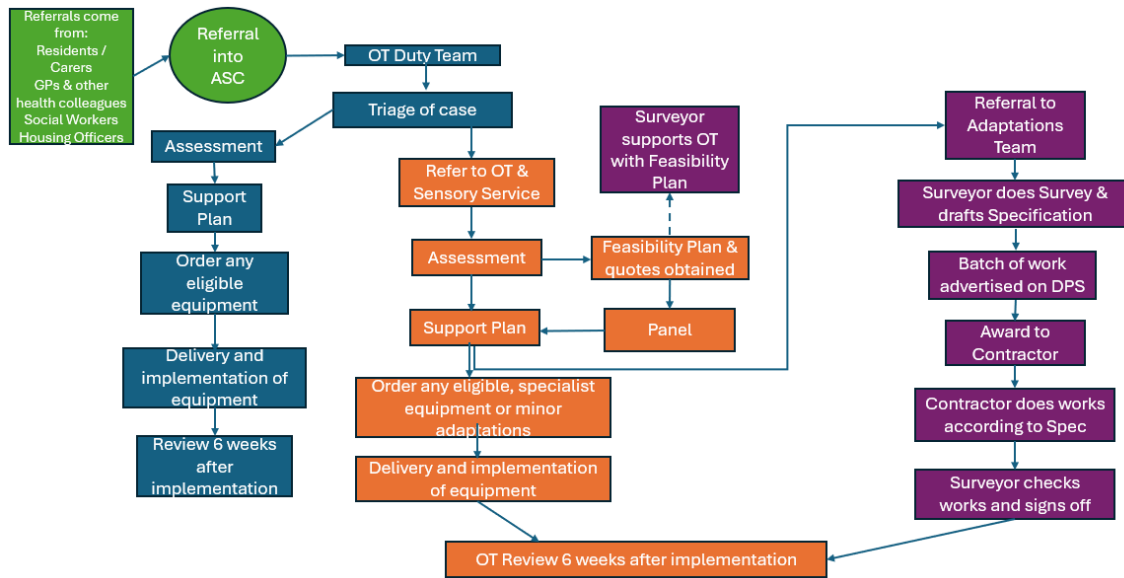
3.18 The Housing OTs services include:

- Individual resident assessments following referrals received by contractors as part of major works programmes.
- Specification of Adaptions such as bathroom and kitchen modifications, doors and windows, stair lifts and through floor lifts, ramps, and minor adaptations/equipment.
- Assisting with decanting residents due to the scope of works.
- Assessing void suitability checks for high profile cases.
- Staff and contractor training on the OT process.
- New build property design commentary.
- Referrals, maintaining a vulnerability tracker, and providing support to Adult Social Care.

3.19 The process map below indicates the overall process in Housing from referral to completion.



3.20 The current process within the Aids and Adaptations team itself from referrals to completion is outlined below. This process is the same for residents, regardless of type of housing (Council or private) the resident lives. This encourages equality of experience for residents.



#### 4. Performance and Challenges

##### Aids and Adaptations

4.1 Adaptations to Council properties account for approximately 50% of the OT Aids and Adaptations. The number of cases and cost for Major Adaptations over the last 5 years is outlined in the table below.

Major Adaptations		
Year	No. of Cases	Annual Cost
2020/21	139	£811,819
2021/22	160	£961,026
2022/23	173	£1,060,721
2023/24	114	£1,505,101
2024/25	127	£1,154,768

4.2 The various tasks carried out by the OT Aids and Adaptations Team in ASC, and the processes and indicative timescales for Council tenants is set out in the below table.

Task	Volume for 24/25	Target Timescale	% Completed within timescale
OT Assessment	OT Duty: 13	28 days	OT Duty: 100% (4.9 day average)
	OT & Sensory: 337		

			OT & Sensory: 79.2% (61.5 day average)
<b>Support Planning</b>	OT Duty: 4 OT & Sensory: 300	25-55 days	OT Duty: 100% (4.9 day average)  OT & Sensory: 92% (19.4 day average)
<b>Reviews</b>	OT Duty: 1 OT & Sensory: 252	6 weeks after implementation of recommendations	OT Duty: 100%  OT & Sensory: 75%
<b>Adaptations</b>	Referrals: 522	25-55 days for survey and specification	88%
	Work Ongoing: 349	5-20 days to agree HRA funding (panel)	86%
	Completed: 173	20-80 days from HRA funding to completion of works	78.7%

4.3 The work undertaken by the OT and Sensory Team and the Adaptations Team is more complex, which accounts for the differing percentages of tasks completed within the target timescale.

#### Asset Management

4.4 From a Housing perspective and the scope of works carried out, the below table indicates the type and number of adaptations completed.

<b>Asset Management Housing Occupational Therapist Adaptation by Scope</b>				
<b>Scope of works</b>	<b>2024/25</b>	<b>2023/24</b>	<b>2022/23</b>	<b>2015/16</b>
Disabled height toilet	21	69	1	No Records
Bathroom	13	30	0	0
Bathroom/WC	3	4	0	0
Bathroom and Kitchen	21	22	0	0
Kitchen modifications	3	5	10	5
Window openers	1	3	1	2
Front door modifications	2	2	5	9
Pods to bathroom/kitchens	0	0	61	0
Over bath showers	0	0	3	10

Level access shower	1	2	95	65
Clos-o-mat toilets	0	0	2	0
Ad-Hoc	13	9	16	0
Decant visits	0	0	7	N/A
Void	1	1	N/A	N/A
Social Services	4	23	N/A	N/A
New Build	7	10	N/A	N/A
Equipment	14	41	24	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>104</b>	<b>221</b>	<b>225</b>	<b>118</b>

- 4.5 When undertaking aids and adaptations as part of the Housing Investment Programme, these are generally related to Decent Homes works. The works do not require access to the aids and adaptations budget, the costs are included in the capital investment budget, enabling the budget to be maximised; the aids and adaptations can be carried out as part of the investment programme preventing works being delayed and the resident being disadvantaged; and avoids abortive works where aids and adaptations are installed retrospectively after the investment works have been completed.
- 4.6 There is also minimal cost variation for adaptation when the bathroom or kitchen is being replaced as part of the Decent Homes, meaning it is a case of what adaptations are needed rather than funding available.
- 4.7 Equipment costs remain with the Adult Social Care Aids and Adaptations budget.
- 4.8 With regards to the specification of new builds around adaptations and future proofing, the Council meets the requirements for GLA wheelchair accessible best practice guidance, Building Regulations Part M, Habinteg Wheelchair Housing Design Guide and Housing our Housing Population: Panel for Innovation standards.

This includes:

- Future hoist provision: Ceiling structure in the bedrooms should be strong enough to allow for the fitting of a ceiling track hoist capable of carrying a load of 200kg.
  - Flooring is designed as per the building regulation M4(3) guidance and ensures level access showers, usually in the form of a wet room.
  - Surfaces which do not impede wheelchair access.
- 4.9 During the development process, the Contractor works with the Council's Occupational Therapist to address any specific requirements for individual needs who have been assigned to the properties. The adapted properties within schemes can be adapted as required by a resident's needs.

4.10 Feedback from residents has been reinstated by the Adaptations Team. Of the 21 collected surveys thus far, there is a high degree of satisfaction, where there is a 90% satisfaction rate for how residents feel overall about the service provided.

	Very Dissatisfied	Not Satisfied	Quite Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Not Answered	No Opinion
How do you feel about the contractor timescales for the works?	2	3	6	10	0	0
How do you feel about your ability to communicate effectively with the workmen in your home?	1	4	8	7	1	0
How do you feel about the Contractor's efforts to minimise disruption and leave your home clean and tidy at the end of every day?	0	2	5	14	0	0
If you raised any concerns regarding the works, were they resolved to your satisfaction?	1	2	3	13	0	2
Overall how do you feel about the professionalism of the Contractor?	1	0	5	14	1	0
How do you feel about the quality of the adaptation?	1	0	3	17	0	0
How do you feel about the length of time it took for your adaptation to be completed?	2	5	7	7	0	0
Overall how do you feel about the service provided by the Adaptation Department?	1	1	9	10	0	0
<b>TOTALS</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>46</b>	<b>92</b>	<b>2</b>	<b>2</b>

4.11 Whilst there are still challenges that remain in providing an aids and adaptations service for residents, progress has been made to reduce waiting lists and waiting times. Implementation of the OT Duty Team in July 2024, and use of an external OT Assessment Service since October 2024 have helped the Team manage increasing demand for services owing to a growing and ageing population and coupled with a national shortage of OTs.

4.12 The variety of complex cases require expertise, and wider support or resourcing, such as working within the Mental Capacity Act where residents need to be able to give permission to access their property to do the works and we need to have lawful permission when a person lacks mental capacity to make this decision.

4.13 There are also timescale issues in completing works and delays to works. A purchasing solution for Specialist Equipment and Adaptation provision is being procured via the Dynamic Purchasing System (DPS) in the coming months, which will provide a choice of supplier for residents via the OT and Adaptations Services. We remain engaged in discussions with our NRS Consortium (equipment supplier) colleagues for the purchase of mainstream equipment. Our contract monitoring information and qualitative information suggests that the supplier's performance is improving.

4.14 OT and Housing colleagues recognise that sourcing alternative accommodation instead of adapting a property is another option to fully support the resident's needs, however it can take a long time to source a suitable alternative Council accommodation to meet a person's needs. Sometimes this means an adaptation needs to be undertaken in the absence of a suitable Council property. Moving residents to facilitate their adaptation taking place (referred to often as "decanting") can also contribute to delays, but Housing and OT colleagues are engaged in discussions to improve in this area.

4.15 While many other factors can complicate the process, such as the resident may not wish to move, the resident may request variations to the OT specification, contractors



may not follow fully the OT specifications, or residents and their families may not want their home adapted, the OT and Housing teams continue to work with residents and suppliers to ensure that Care Act eligible needs are met as quickly as possible.

## **5. Improvements**

- 5.1. To address some of the challenges the Aids and Adaptations Team have across the Council, including Housing, a Programme Board has been initiated, and this is to monitor the following areas:
  - 5.1.1. An OT dashboard has been developed and is being refined to help teams improve against KPIs for timeliness and customer satisfaction
  - 5.1.2. The OT Duty function is being embedded, to take pressure off the long-term OT and Sensory Team, allowing them to work on more complex cases.
  - 5.1.3. We continue to improve coordination between departments, which will include embedding regular meetings between the Housing, OT and Sensory Team, and Adaptations Team, and having a contact person in each service to assist in resolving queries.
  - 5.1.4. Determining what future resources are needed to ensure a continued drop in waiting times for residents in both the OT Sensory Team and Adaptations teams.
  - 5.1.5. Procurement via mini competition to change how we use the DPS, developing a list of suppliers who provide specialist equipment and/or major adaptations, and engage contractors who are able to work well with vulnerable residents. This will ensure we are better able to quality assure and contract manage our suppliers of adaptations, with a limited number of suppliers who have had to undergo a rigorous competitive process.
  - 5.1.6. Development of accessible information for residents about their eligibility for Aids and Adaptations, and information about the process itself and options within it. This information will be provided in a number of formats to improve accessibility.
- 5.2. The training and development of OTs is also being increased, where there is a need for OTs with particular specialisms, e.g. children, learning disabilities etc.
- 5.3. In addition to ensuring accessible information of eligibility criteria, we will be creating awareness programs for tenants, by creating guides for adaptations to inform tenants and also ensuring these are available in other languages, particularly in the most spoken languages in the borough.
- 5.4. We continue to work on embedding the voice of the resident through a co-produced approach within our services. This includes ensuring we evidence the resident's voice throughout their journey with OT Aids and Adaptations and continuing to seek views, input and engagement with development of the service.
- 5.5. A new Council Housing Aids and Adaptations Policy is being developed jointly between the Aids and Adaptations service and Housing services, to ensure that our approach is aligned, meets statutory and legislative obligations, and reflects that the principles for agreeing an adaptation for a Council tenant are the same as those set out in the guidance for DFG, leading to a consistent approach across all tenures.

- 5.6. Work is also underway to ensure that Housing have the data from Aids and Adaptations of their Council tenants and their respective homes and what adaptations have been completed on the Housing Management system. This will enable services to be tailored where required, such as helping indicate that a resident may be vulnerable and may require additional or tailored support in accessing housing services, or that when a property is void where possible adaptations are preserved in the interest of moving a resident that needs the adaptations into a more suitable home and saving money on adapting another property.
- 5.7. In light of the CQC inspection in February 2025, a review of the OT Aids and Adaptations teams will be undertaken to ensure that we continue to develop and deliver assessed, eligible adaptations to Haringey residents that are high quality and delivered in a timely manner.
- 5.8. Services are improving how they work together to ensure an equitable experience for all residents in Haringey who need an adaptation. Our continued commitment to resourcing the teams, streamlining interventions and working across social care and housing resources, will continue to improve delivery of Housing Adaptations to residents.

**6. Statutory Officers comments (Director of Finance (procurement), Head of Legal and Governance, Equalities)**

Not required.

**7. Procurement**

Not required.

**8. Head of Legal & Governance**

Not required.

**9. Equality**

The Council has a Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act (2010) to have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment and victimisation and any other conduct prohibited under the Act.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share those protected characteristics and people who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share those characteristics and people who do not.

The three parts of the duty apply to the following protected characteristics: age, disability, gender reassignment, pregnancy/maternity, race, religion/faith, sex and sexual orientation. Marriage and civil partnership status applies to the first part of the duty.

Although it is not enforced in legislation as a protected characteristic, Haringey Council treats socioeconomic status as a local protected characteristic.

The aids and adaptations service has a positive impact on equality, where residents with an aids or adaptations need can access support to enable them to continue leading an independent life, therefore removing some barriers that those with age or disability related protected characteristics may face in the absence of such a service.

**8. Use of Appendices - none**

**9. Background papers - none**