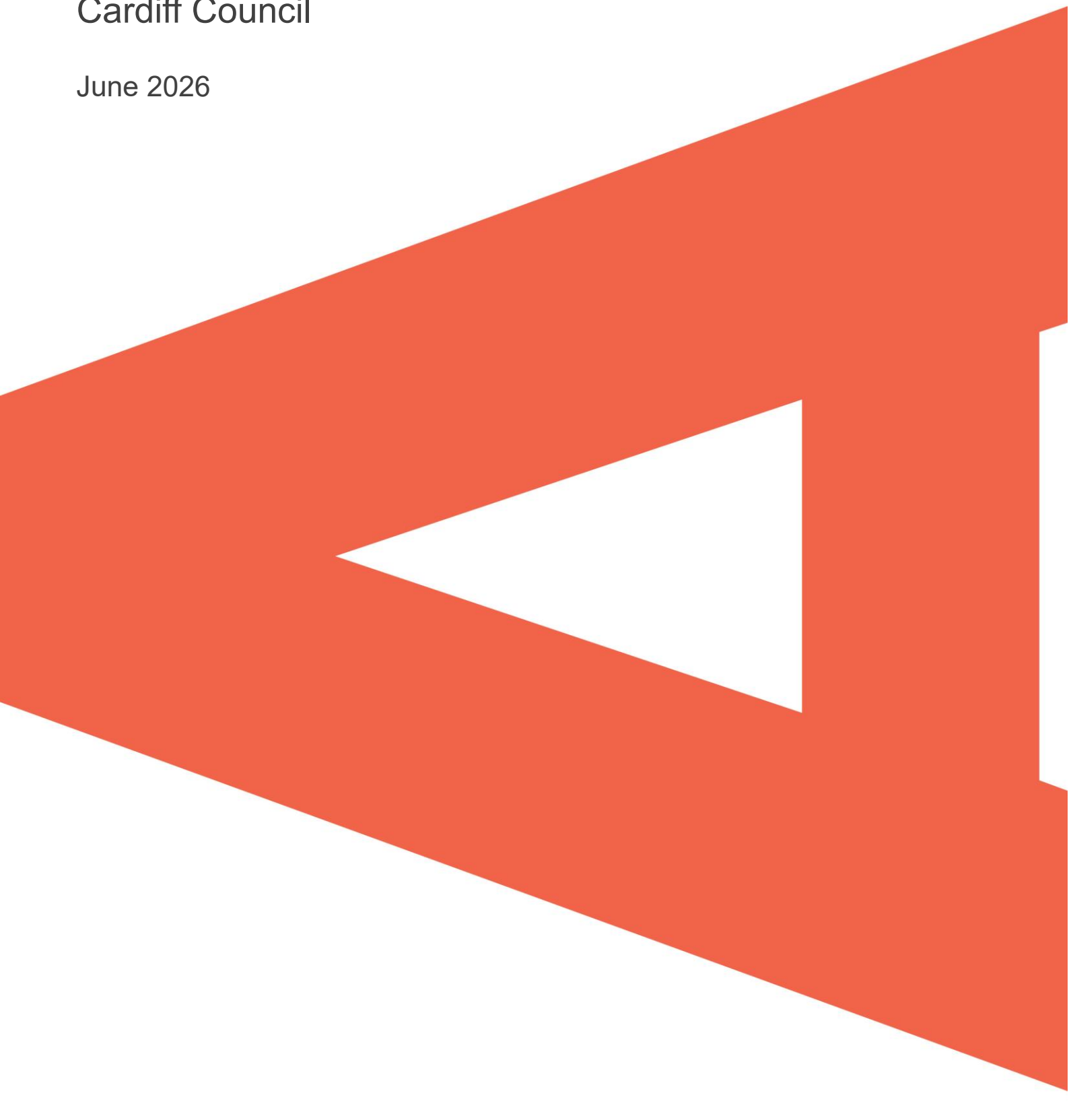


Housing Adaptations

Cardiff Council

June 2026



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Audit snapshot

What we looked at

- 1 We looked at how Cardiff Council (the Council) plans and delivers housing adaptations to help children, young people and adults stay in their homes.

Why this is important

- 2 Housing adaptations are changes to a home that make it easier for children, young people and adults to get around. They can help prevent falls or reduce or mitigate the need for formal care and unnecessary admissions to care settings. Examples of housing adaptations might include:
 - installing ramps or grab rails;
 - adding a stairlift or wheelchair lift;
 - fitting a level access shower or shower seat; and
 - widening doorways for wheelchair access.
- 3 The Council assesses people's needs to decide if they are eligible for support. If they are, the Council has a legal duty to provide services, such as housing adaptations or equipment, to help children, young people and adults stay at home.
- 4 Audit Wales previously reported on [Housing Adaptations](#) in 2018. We found an overly complicated system which reinforced, rather than addressed, inequality in provision of adaptations.

What we have found

- 5 Overall, we found a number of strengths in the Council's approach to providing housing adaptations to support people to remain at home. The Council:
- has an integrated and prevention-focused approach;
 - draws on data well to inform its approach;
 - completed a comprehensive review of its approach and has since taken action to improve the timeliness and efficiency of delivering adaptations;
 - understands its housing adaptation demand for adults;
 - is increasing its resources to assess and deliver housing adaptations;
 - regularly monitors and reports its housing adaptation activity and performance;
 - has clear corporate outcomes for housing adaptations; and
 - identifies opportunities for cost avoidance from providing housing adaptations to help demonstrate value for money.
- 6 In terms of areas for improvement, we found that:
- information on the Council website about housing adaptations is high-level with no clear step-by-step guide and information about timescales;
 - the Council completes a limited number of inspections on completed housing adaptations;
 - the Council does not forecast housing adaptation demand for children and young people; and
 - the Council does not understand if the desired outcomes of service users are being met from housing adaptations.

What we recommend

- 7 We have made four recommendations for the Council which focus on:
- capturing and recording service user outcomes;

- inspecting completed housing adaptations work;
- forecasting housing adaptation demand for children and young people;
and
- improving housing adaptations information on its website.

Key facts and figures

The number of total Disabled Facilities Grant referrals received by Cardiff Council:

2023-24: 1,280

2024-25: 1,102

2025-26: 1,156

The number of Children and Young People Disabled Facilities Grant referrals received by Cardiff Council:

2023-24: 25

2024-25: 35

2025-26: 38

The average cost of delivering a Disabled Facilities Grant in Cardiff:

2023-24: £7,808

2024-25: £7,180

2025-26: £6,838

The average cost of delivering a Disabled Facilities Grant for Children and Young People in Cardiff:

2023-24: £18,677.30

2024-25: £12,105.22

2025-26: £18,358.27

The Wales average for the rate of the population per 100,000 receiving long-term care accommodation is 554.6 people. The Council's rate is 338.6 people per 100,000.

Our findings

Planning

The Council has a clear, data-informed, integrated approach to support people to remain at home

Strategic importance

- 8 The Council can clearly show that providing housing adaptations supports its priorities. Housing adaptations is a key part of the Council's approach to prevention. They support delivery of the Council's well-being objective 'Cardiff a great place to grow older' and its 'Ageing Well Strategy 2022-27' with operational activity set out in the Directorate Delivery Plan. The Council clearly sets out the importance of providing housing adaptations.
- 9 Where a home cannot be adapted, the Council is building new, accessible homes for older people. The Council also has a team working in hospitals to support quicker hospital discharge. It has 'step-down' properties to temporarily accommodate people that are ready for discharge while waiting for the installation of adaptations. These actions help people remain in a home environment, and can delay, reduce or avoid the need for additional care services. It benefits residents and can reduce pressure on other public services. Over time, this approach can make better use of public resources and may lead to long-term cost savings.

Housing Adaptations approach

- 10 The Council has an Independent Living Service which brings different services together to assess people's needs, deliver adaptations and offer wider care support. This can help people get the right help earlier, preventing problems from getting worse.

- 11 The Council has a clear and comprehensive approach to assessing and delivering housing adaptations for adults, children, and young people. Operational procedures support daily service delivery. These procedures set out officers' responsibilities and timescales, helping to ensure a consistent service.
- 12 We found that the information about housing adaptations on the Council website could be better to help service users clearly understand the process. The website provides a high-level overview of the types of adaptations supported, funding, and eligibility. However, there is no clear step-by-step guide and information about timescales. The Private Sector Housing policy which includes different housing adaptation options, is not publicly available. Having clear information can help applicants understand the process at every stage and can better prepare them for an adaptation to their home.

Understanding demand

- 13 The Council uses a wide range of data to understand its current and future demand. It combines demographic data, operational activity data, well-being assessments, and national research to understand housing adaptation demand for adults. This allows the Council to forecast needs and prioritise preventative activity.
- 14 However, the Council does not forecast housing adaptation demand for children and young people. Providing adaptations for children and young people can support them and their families as they grow up. The average cost of an adaptation for a child is higher than an adaptation for adults. Predicting demand would help the Council plan how it uses its resources to meet this demand while supporting children and their families.

Delivery

The Council proactively identifies how it can use its resources to deliver adaptations more quickly

Resources – Assessing housing adaptations

- 15 The Council is exploring ways to improve the timeliness of assessing referrals for housing adaptations. The Council is piloting training domiciliary carers as Trusted Assessors to prescribe equipment and minor adaptations.¹ If successful, this approach could reduce the workload on the service's occupational therapists and enable them to focus on the more complex referrals.

Resources – Delivering housing adaptations

- 16 The Council is proactive in showing how it is making the most of using its resources in delivering housing adaptations. It estimates that a single adaptation can avoid around £45,500 in care costs over three years based on providing two hours of daily care. The Council also reduces costs by reconditioning equipment through the Joint Equipment Store. Understanding and evidencing cost avoidance helps show how housing adaptations, aids and equipment can provide good value for money from the Council's preventative and early intervention activity.
- 17 The Council is increasing the number of contractors to deliver housing adaptations. The Council also has a separate framework with Care and Repair to deliver small-scale adaptations. Having enough contractors can reduce the time it takes to complete works making it more likely that service users are able to remain safely in their homes.

¹ A Trusted Assessor is someone acting on behalf of and with the permission of multiple organisations to carry out an assessment of health and/or social care needs in a variety of health or social care settings.

- 18 From 2026-27 onwards, the Council reduced its capital budget to deliver housing adaptations. This was after analysing demand data and changing work practices to reduce installation costs. This demonstrates how the Council is using data to manage its resources responsibly.

Reviewing

The Council proactively learns, monitors and reports performance, but does limited inspections to assess the quality of adaptations

Performance management

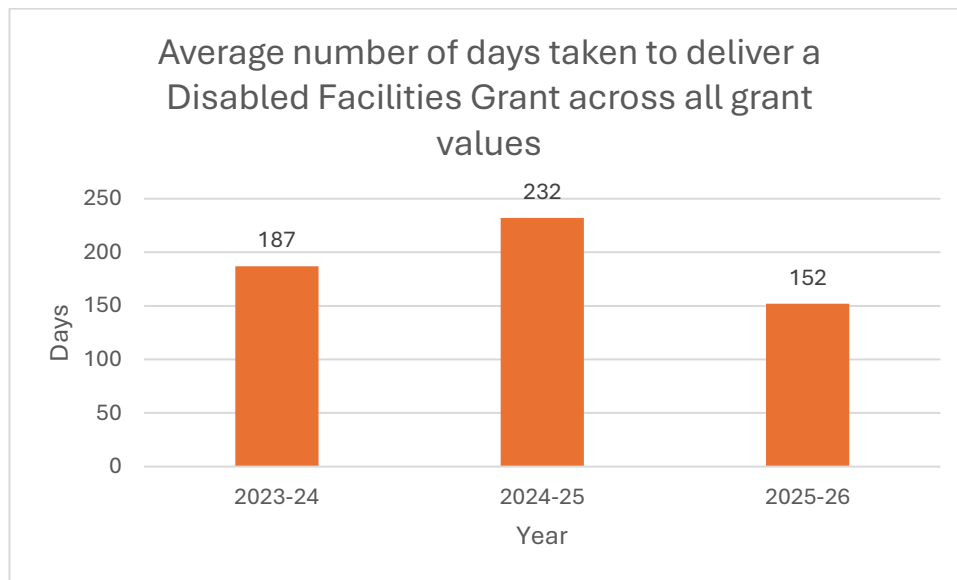
- 19 The Council has comprehensive performance information which it tracks at its monthly managers' meetings. Regular performance management enables the Council to identify emerging trends or issues in a timely way. It can allow the service to respond more quickly and strengthen decision-making.
- 20 Senior officers and members get regular updates on housing adaptations performance. The Council reports this in its mid-year and annual reviews. The Adults, Housing and Communities Scrutiny Committee also receive updates every six months through the Directorate Delivery Plan. In January 2026, this Committee had a briefing on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). These reports help the Council keep up to date with performance. It gives members the opportunity to challenge and scrutinise performance which supports understanding and decision-making.

Applying learning

- 21 The Council uses its data, service user and staff engagement to shape actions to improve its approach. In 2025, the Council completed a comprehensive 'As Is' review. This mapped the service user journey and analysed the time taken to complete each stage of an adaptation. The Council is now progressing its action plan to improve timeliness, citizen experience, reporting, and demand management.

- 22 As shown in Exhibit 1, the Council is seeing an improvement in the time it takes to deliver a DFG from 232 days in 2024-25 to 152 days in 2025-26.

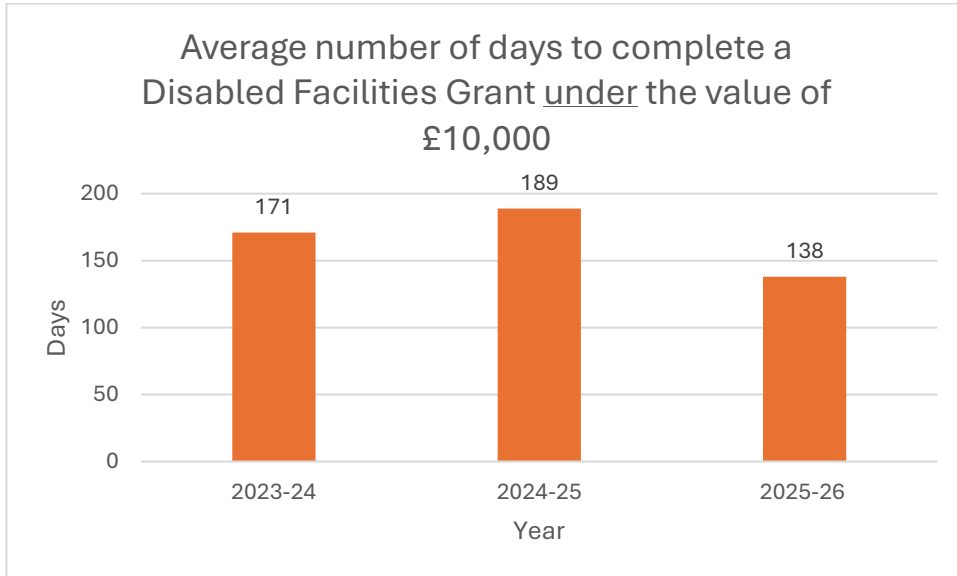
Exhibit 1: Average number of days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant across all grant values



Source: Council data

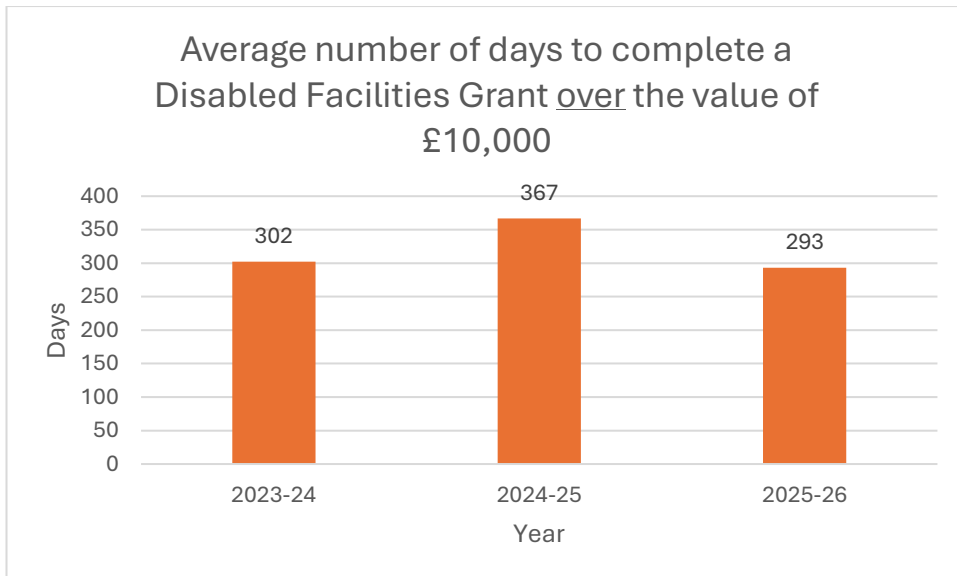
- 23 The Council has a target of 185 days to deliver a DFG. As shown in **Exhibit 1**, the Council achieved this in 2025-26. In future, the Council aims to reduce delivery time by increasing contractor capacity and by continuing to deliver its action plan. This shows the Council's ambition for continuous improvement.
- 24 The Council also collects performance data based on the cost or value of delivering DFGs. DFGs vary in cost depending on a person's need. Higher-value grants often take longer to deliver because they can involve major structural work. Higher-value grants are less common but can skew performance data. The Council also groups delivery of DFGs by value: under and over £10,000. This allows for a more accurate understanding of the Council's performance. As **Exhibits 2 and 3** show, the Council is improving the time it takes to deliver DFGs in both categories.

Exhibit 2: Average number of days to complete a Disabled Facilities Grant under the value of £10,000



Source: Council data

Exhibit 3: Average number of days to complete a Disabled Facilities Grant over the value of £10,000



Source: Council data

Monitoring quality of housing adaptations

- 25 The Council inspects a limited number of completed adaptations. It inspects around 10% of completed works. This low percentage can limit the Council's assurance that adaptations are to the quality expected.

Impact

The Council has clear corporate outcomes for housing adaptations but is not assessing if adaptations meet service users' intended outcomes

- 26 The Council is clear on the outcomes it wants to achieve from housing adaptations. It wants to:
- promote independence;
 - allow people to live safely in their own homes by negating the need for residential and domiciliary care; and
 - give people more control over their own lives.
- 27 The outcomes align with the Council's preventative activity, and the Council can show impact. For example, it currently has the lowest rate in Wales for the number of people per 100,000 population in long-term care home accommodation. The Council's delivery of housing adaptations along with the work of other services within the Independent Living Service may be reasons for this low level of need for residential care accommodation.
- 28 However, the Council does not know if it is meeting the desired outcomes of its individual service users. At the start, it collects information on a service users' desired outcomes. But the Council has only recently restarted collecting feedback from service users following completion of an adaptation. Response rates have been low.

- 29 Understanding if housing adaptations are meeting service user desired outcomes is also hampered by a lack of interface between the IT systems used. The Council does not track a person's journey through the process or contact with the wider Independent Living Service. The Council is exploring how it can align its different IT systems to:
- track service user outcomes: and
 - monitor its repeat service user needs.
- 30 If the Council is able to align its IT systems while also improving its feedback collection rate, the Council would be better placed to assess whether adaptations are meeting individuals' desired outcomes.

Recommendations

R1 Publicly available information

There is high level information on housing adaptations on the Council website but it does not contain sufficient information to prepare service users for an adaptation to their home.

- 1.1** The Council should improve publicly available housing adaptations information to better inform and prepare service users (**paragraph 12**).

R2 Predicting Demand for Children and Young People

While the Council uses a wide range of data to understand its current and future housing adaptations demand for adults, it does not forecast demand for housing adaptations for Children and Young People.

- 2.1** The Council should use data to predict housing adaptations demand for children and young people to strengthen service planning and financial planning (**paragraph 14**).

R3 Housing Adaptations Inspections

The Council inspects 10% of completed housing adaptations work.

- 3.1** The Council should strengthen its arrangements to inspect completed housing adaptations to check that they are to the expected quality (**paragraph 25**).

R4 Service user outcomes

The Council gathers service users' desired outcomes at the start of a housing adaptation process but cannot demonstrate if it achieves these outcomes at the end.

- 4.1** The Council needs to strengthen its arrangements to capture and record whether service user outcomes are being achieved. This can help the Council demonstrate the preventative impact of delivering housing adaptations for service users (**paragraph 28**).

Appendices

1 About our work

Scope of the audit

This audit considered whether the Council's arrangements for housing adaptations support service users to remain at home. This included reviewing the Council's approach, delivery, and monitoring arrangements.

This audit did not include interviews with other stakeholders who are involved in the delivery of housing adaptations. Neither did we contact service users to obtain their feedback on the service they received.

We undertook the fieldwork for this audit in March 2026.

Questions

This audit used the following high-level questions:

- Does the Council have an informed and clear approach to housing adaptations which supports people to remain at home?
- Is the Council delivering its approach to housing adaptations to support people to remain at home?
- Does the Council have arrangements to monitor the progress and impact of housing adaptations to support people to remain at home?

Criteria

We considered the Audit Wales's 2018 report on Housing Adaptations to develop the audit criteria. We also had discussions with councils to understand Housing Adaptations further.

Methods

We reviewed documents relating to the housing adaptations process. We interviewed key officers and elected members.

2 Key terms in this report

What we mean by Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

A Disabled Facilities Grant supports disabled children, young people and adults have essential changes to their homes so they can live safely.

The grant covers necessary changes or equipment to improve access into and around the home.

Councils in Wales are legally obliged to provide this grant and it applies to homeowners, tenants, and landlords.

What we mean by value for money

Value for money means spending money in a way that gets the best possible results for the cost. Value for money is commonly associated with the ‘three E’s’ of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. We have summarised these as:

- Economy: buying what is needed at the lowest sensible cost to help achieve intended outcomes.
- Efficiency: using resources well to help achieve intended outcomes.
- Effectiveness: achieving the intended outcomes for the short and longer term.

Councils have a legal duty to check whether they are using money and resources economically, efficiently, and effectively.

Councils must also think about both short-term and long-term needs when making decisions. Sometimes the best value for money is not the cheapest immediate option, but the one that prevents bigger problems and costs later.

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