

Housing adaptations

Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council

July 2026



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Audit snapshot

What we looked at

- 1 In 2010, Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council (the Council), like many other Welsh councils around that time, transferred its housing stock to housing associations for them to manage. This means the process of delivering a housing adaptation is different for people living in housing association properties compared to home-owners and people living in private rented homes.
- 2 We looked at how the Council provides housing adaptations for children, young people and adults living in their own homes and in private rented homes.

Why this is important

- 3 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.
- 4 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.

- 5 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

- 6 We found the Council has clear processes for assessing and providing housing adaptations. It uses detailed operational data to understand current and future demand for adult adaptations, but not for children and young people.
- 7 The Council is increasing its capital budget to meet demand, but it does not use data to assess whether it has enough capacity to deliver adaptations in a timely way.
- 8 The Council is changing how it assesses and delivers adaptations, but this has not yet improved performance. Although the Council regularly monitors and reports on housing adaptation performance, it does not know the impact of these adaptations or show whether they provide value for money.

What we recommend

- 9 We have made two recommendations to the Council to use data better and to understand the impact of providing housing adaptations.

Key facts and figures

Blaenau Gwent County Borough contains 30,587 households' dwellings (March 2023), with:

- 63% Owner Occupied:
- 24% registered Social Landlord (Housing Association):
- 14% Private Rented

The number of Disabled Facilities Grant referrals to Blaenau Gwent:

- 2022-23: 110
- 2023-24: 71
- 2024-25: 74
- 2025-26: 113

The number of Disabled Facilities Grant referrals for Children and Young People:

- 2022-23: 2
- 2023-24: 7
- 2024-25: 3
- 2025-26: 4

Number of completed Disabled Facilities Grants in Blaenau Gwent:

- 2022-23: 63
- 2023-24: 96
- 2024-25: 59
- 2025-26: 99

Number of people on the Disabled Facilities Grant waiting list in:

- March 2023: 47
- March 2024: 24
- March 2025: 29
- March 2026: 43

The average waiting time for a Disabled Facilities Grant (from Social Services receiving a referral to the approval date):

2022-23: 220 days

2023-24: 221 days

2024-25: 335 days

2025-26: 361 days

The average cost of delivering a Disabled Facilities Grant in Blaenau Gwent:

2022-23: £9,278

2023-24: £7,413

2024-25: £8,479

2025-26: £8,775

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

2022-23: £47,710

2023-24: £10,827

2024-25: £47,378

2025-26: No costs incurred as applications received towards the end of the year.

Our findings

Planning

The Council has a clear approach to housing adaptations

Housing Adaptations Approach

- 10 The Council assesses referrals, oversees delivery, and inspects all housing adaptations to home-owner and private landlord properties. For people living in housing association homes, the Council has a limited role. Council Occupational Therapists assess referrals for people living in housing association homes, but after this, the housing association is responsible for arranging and completing the adaptation. The Council does not monitor how quickly housing associations complete the work or if they inspect completed adaptations. As a result, it does not have a full picture of the timeliness and quality of adaptations across the borough.
- 11 For home-owners, landlords and their tenants, the Council has clear processes for assessing and delivering housing adaptations. The written procedures guide staff through the process and can help the Council provide a consistent service.
- 12 The Council explains its housing adaptation approach on its website. It sets out who can get an adaptation, what funding is available, and what happens at each stage. The website also includes the Private Sector Housing Policy, which describes the different options in more detail. The Council supports applicants through the housing adaptation process by offering help to complete the application form. Having clear, accessible information with support available helps applicants understand the process at every stage and helps them prepare for an adaptation to their home.

- 13 There is support available to help people who need adapted housing in the borough. The Council, in partnership with housing associations, manages the Blaenau Gwent Common Housing Register Allocation Policy. All partners work together to meet housing need including adapted housing. This policy makes sure allocating adapted homes are prioritised to people who need them most which supports people to remain in a home environment.

Understanding demand

- 14 The Council collects and analyses detailed operational data. It uses this data to support its understanding of service pressures, and current and future housing adaptations demand for adults.
- 15 However, the Council makes limited use of external data to predict future housing adaptation demand. The Council did consider external data to inform its Housing Strategy 2025–2030 and the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy but there is little evidence of its use to predict future demand for housing adaptations.
- 16 The Council also does not forecast housing adaptation demand for children and young people. Although demand is low, averaging four per year, the average cost of an adaptation for a child is significantly higher than adaptations for adults. Each adaptation for a child or young person can be costly, so not forecasting demand could leave the Council financially and operationally unprepared.

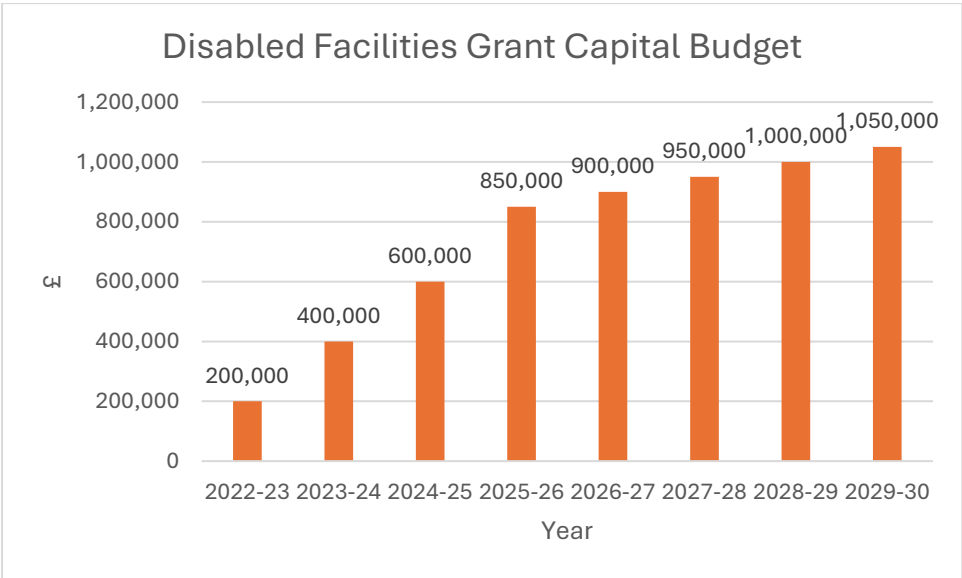
Delivery

The Council is changing its delivery approach and increasing its budget to meet service demand, but this has not yet led to improved performance

Resourcing

- 17
- In March 2022, the Council removed means testing for Disabled Facilities Grants. Despite predicting higher demand, the Council did not initially increase its capital budget. So as demand increased, a waiting list formed. The waiting list places extra pressure on the service to deliver timely adaptations.
- 18
- As shown in **Exhibit 1**, from 2023-24, a year after the decision to remove means testing, the Council responded by increasing its capital budget. It continues to do so year-on-year, demonstrating the Council’s continued commitment.

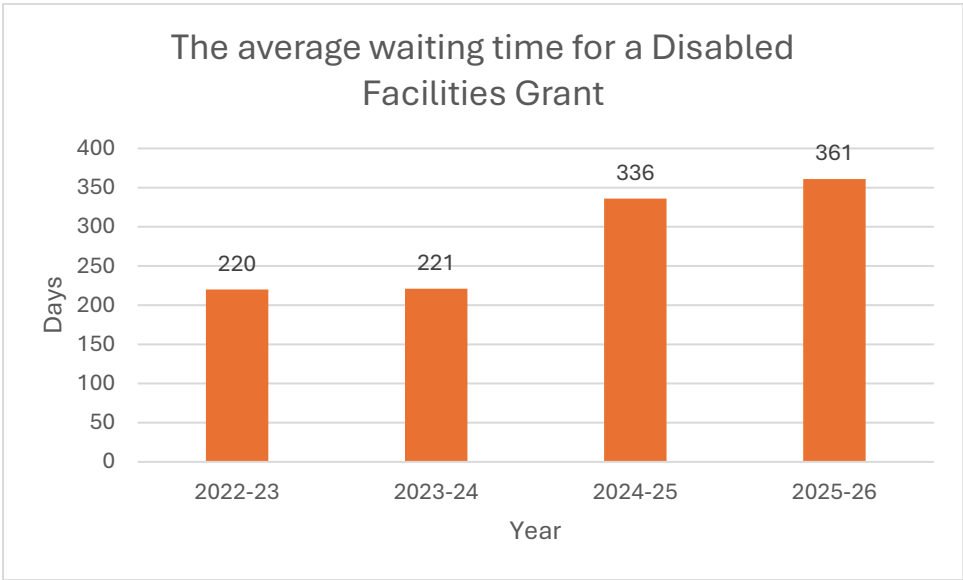
Exhibit 1: Disabled Facilities Grant Capital Budget



Source: Council data

19 However, despite the budget increase, the Council continues to manage the waiting list with waiting times getting longer as shown in **Exhibit 2**.

Exhibit 2: The average waiting time for a Disabled Facilities Grant

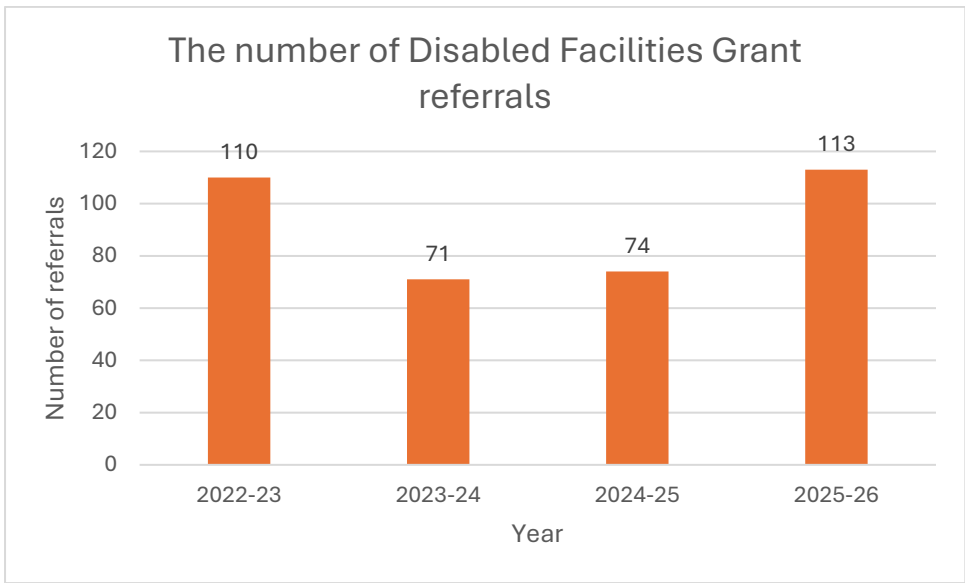


Source: Council data

20 The Council uses both Occupational Therapists and Trusted Assessors to assess referrals.¹ The use of Trusted Assessors helps provide additional resources. There are two housing surveyors, down from four eleven years ago when demand for housing adaptation was lower. However, there was a sharp increase in referrals in 2025-26, as shown in **Exhibit 3**. While the Council is increasing the capital budget to meet service pressures, it has not assessed service capacity to help inform resourcing decisions.

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.

Exhibit 3: The number of Disabled Facilities Grant referrals

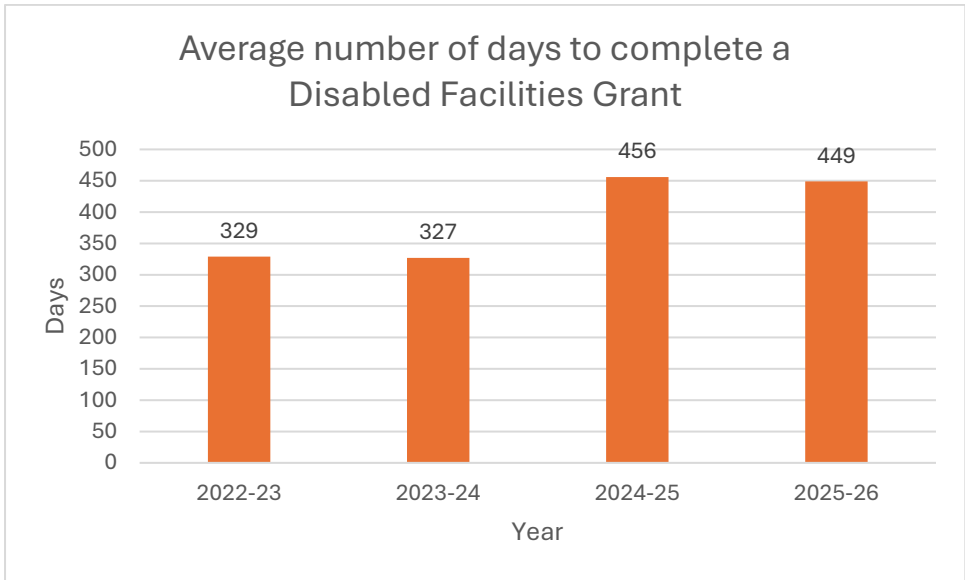


Source: Council data

Applying Learning

21 The Council uses its performance data and feedback from staff and service users to change the way it assesses and delivers housing adaptations. For example, Occupational Therapists and Housing Surveyors now visit homes together to speed up assessments. In 2025, the Council also changed its procurement arrangements so that contractors can carry out multiple jobs together, rather than one job at a time. This shows a commitment to learn and provide a more efficient service. But these are recent changes and, as **Exhibit 4** shows, the Council cannot yet evidence they are improving performance.

Exhibit 4: Average number of days to complete a Disabled Facilities Grant



Source: Council data

Monitoring

The Council regularly monitors and reports housing adaptation performance

Performance Management

- 22 The Council collects, analyses and monitors a range of service user information. But there is no single IT system that tracks a person’s journey through the process. Instead, officers record operational data in different IT systems and on detailed spreadsheets to manage and monitor the service. As a result, Council processes are not as efficient as they could be, and there is a risk of staff duplicating effort.

- 23 Senior officers and members receive updates on housing adaptations performance. The Joint Executive Team receives its corporate performance dashboard every 12 weeks with the latest performance. Members also get updates through the Council's annual self-assessment and other progress and policy reports. Recent examples include performance information in the latest Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy, which went to members in November 2025 and January 2026. These reports give senior officers and members the opportunity to challenge and scrutinise performance.

Impact

The Council does not evaluate the impact or value for money of providing housing adaptations

- 24 The Council does not define the outcomes it expects from housing adaptations. Although the Corporate Plan 2022–27 includes a priority focused on independence, safety and resilience, it does not highlight the contribution of housing adaptations. Similarly, while the Housing Strategy 2025–2030 includes a target to increase Disabled Facilities Grant completions by 30%, it does not link this to wider outcomes such as wellbeing, independence, or prevention. Without a clear understanding of what it wants to achieve, the Council cannot assess the impact of providing housing adaptations.
- 25 The Council also does not track outcomes for individual service users. At the start of the process, it records practical needs but not desired outcomes. At the end, it gathers feedback on the impact of a housing adaptation, but the Council does not analyse or report this information. As a result, the overall impact of housing adaptations is not known.
- 26 The Council has not set out how it will evaluate value for money in delivering housing adaptations. Officers and members are clear that housing adaptations have the potential to mitigate or reduce the need for people needing additional care support and can alleviate pressures on other public services. But the Council does not have an approach that supports officers to analyse and evidence value for money.

Recommendations

R1 Use of data

The Council needs to strengthen its use of:

- 1.1** external data to help forecast future housing adaptation demand (**paragraph 15**);
- 1.2** data to forecast housing adaptations demand for children and young people to improve resource planning (**paragraph 16**); and
- 1.3** data to understand its service capacity to help inform resourcing decisions (**paragraph 20**).

R2 Understanding Impact

- 2.1** The Council needs to set outcomes for housing adaptations to help it demonstrate the impact of delivering them (**paragraph 24**);
- 2.2** The Council needs to strengthen its arrangements to understand if service user outcomes are being achieved. This can help the Council demonstrate the impact of delivering housing adaptations for service users (**paragraph 25**); and
- 2.3** The Council should develop arrangements to assess the value for money of delivering housing adaptations. This would also help the Council understand and demonstrate the preventative impact of the service (**paragraph 26**).

Appendices

1 About our work

Scope of the audit

The 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.

The 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 completed the fieldwork for this audit in March and April 2026.

Questions

The 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 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 and interviewed key officers and elected members.

2 Key terms in this report

What we mean by Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

1. A Disabled Facilities Grant can help disabled residents make essential changes to their homes so they can live safely.
2. The grant covers necessary, substantial structural changes or equipment to improve access into and around the home.
3. 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

4. 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.
- 5 Councils have a legal duty to check whether they are using money and resources economically, efficiently, and effectively.
- 6 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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