

Housing adaptations

Newport City Council

July 2026



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Audit snapshot

What we looked at

- 1 Around 15 years ago, Newport City Council (the Council), like many other Welsh councils, transferred its housing stock to Registered Social Landlords (RSL) for them to manage. This means the process of delivering an adaptation to a home is different for people living in housing association properties compared to homeowners 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. We reviewed the Council's approach, delivery and monitoring arrangements.

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 will usually carry out an assessment to understand care and support needs to help determine whether these meet the eligibility criteria for providing services. If they do, the Council has a legal duty under the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 to arrange or provide services to meet those needs. This might include arranging for housing adaptations or providing equipment to help children, young people and adults stay at home.

- 5 It is key that adaptations are delivered as quickly as possible to help people stay living at home safely and independently. Delays may mean people are unable to undertake daily tasks or at risk of falls and needing to access other public services.

What we have found

- 6 Overall, we found that the Council delivers a responsive housing adaptations service, with strong operational arrangements, clear public information and good partnership working between teams. However, whilst wait times have improved, they remain significant and the Council isn't using its housing adaptations data to inform resource planning and reporting focuses on outputs rather than impact and value for money.

What we recommend

- 7 We have made two recommendations to the Council. These focus on:
- Forecasting future demand to inform resource planning; and
 - Performance reporting to demonstrate the impact and value for money of housing adaptations.

Key facts and figures

The average number of days the Council took to complete a Disabled Facilities Grant is as follows:

- 2023-24 – 511 days
- 2024-25 – 342 days
- 2025-26 – 313 days

Applications approved fell from **125** in **2023-24** to **80** in **2024-25**, while the number of valid applications remained broadly stable, suggesting pressure in the approval stage or wider system capacity.

At the same time, completed Disabled Facilities Grants remained broadly stable (**124** in **2023-24** and **123** in **2024-25**), while the total value of completed grants increased from **£1.18 million** to **£1.32 million**. This reflects a higher average completed grant cost of **£10,737**, up from **£9,518** in the previous year.

The Handyperson service completed **1,095** jobs in **2024-25** and achieved an average delivery time of **14.8** days, against a target of **15** working days.

The percentage of satisfied applicants after an adaptation took place

- 2023-24 - 94%
- 2024-25 - 98%

Our findings

What is working well

The Council has a clear, well-developed approach to housing adaptations

Preventative approach

- 8 The Council clearly recognises the significance and preventative benefits of housing adaptations. This is demonstrated through its well-being objective, 'Quality Social Care and Community Services'. This objective includes a step to support people to maintain independence and access early intervention and preventative support. The Adaptations Team also sits within the Council's Prevention and Inclusion service. The service's plan 2025-26 highlights that housing adaptations can prevent hospital admissions and allow individuals to live more independently.
- 9 The Council has a good understanding of current demand for adaptations. It monitors the type of adaptation it delivers each year, with information dating back to 2015-16. This is broken down into small, medium and large adaptations and includes the number of cancellations due to means testing. However, the Council is not forecasting future demand to inform its planning. This is particularly important as the Council expects demand for adaptations to increase, including more complex cases.

Clear Guidance

- 10 The Council's approach to housing adaptations is set out in a range of operational and policy documents. These include an Adaptations Team Procedure and an Adaptations Policy which has been considered by the relevant scrutiny committee. Documented procedures guide staff through the process and can help the Council provide a consistent service.
- 11 The Council provides residents with clear, accessible information. This includes who is eligible, what grants are available and how to apply. An online guide explains each step of the process and what applicants can expect. The Adaptations Team is making access simpler by using more digital processes, but information is also available in paper form for those who need it. Having clear, accessible information helps applicants understand the process at every stage and helps them prepare for an adaptation to their home.

Working with others

- 12 The Council has an integrated approach to housing adaptations. The Adaptations Team works closely with Occupational Therapy to assess people's needs and choose the most appropriate adaptations. The Council also works with health partners to prioritise urgent assessments and complex cases such as palliative care. Occupational therapy teams are currently working with the Health Board to further develop assessments, showing a joint commitment to continuous improvement.
- 13 The Council has worked with Care and Repair for 25 years and since April 2022, they have worked together to deliver minor adaptations and a responsive handyperson service. Its aim is to help people leave hospital and prevent hospital admissions by providing a quick, sometimes same-day, response for small jobs such as fitting curtains, rails and lock boxes. The service has a clear referral process, service standards and performance targets. The average delivery time was 14.8 days against a 15-day target, at a cost of £99,703.

- 14 The Council chairs the regional South Wales Renewal and Adaptations Group. This group helps housing adaptations teams from across the region to share practice and discuss common issues. It is also helping to deliver practical benefits. For example, discussions at a recent meeting led to the Council joining a procurement exercise that will expand the range of options available for extensions.

Monitoring operational data and quality

- 15 The Council has robust arrangements to check the quality and timeliness of each adaptation. This includes:
- setting clear instructions and standards for contractors, which officers monitor through on-site checks;
 - carrying out site inspections and health and safety checks on all adaptations; and
 - building control sign-off where needed.
- 16 The Council gathers data on its housing adaptations activity. This includes numbers of referrals, timescales, and costs. The adaptations team uses this data to monitor operational activity and performance. For example, officers track planned and actual costs for each adaptation to help understand budget variances. They also monitor progress against internal measures and report performance to Welsh Government.
- 17 The Council also collects data to help it understand if it is meeting the desired outcomes of individual service users. At the start of the process, the occupational therapy assessment captures the needs and desired outcomes of applicants. At the end, the Council gathers service-user feedback on both outcomes and experience. This includes the impact of adaptations on service users' sense of independence. However, the Council does not follow up after service users have had more time to use the adaptation. A staged follow-up will help it to understand if adaptations continue to deliver their intended outcomes over the medium to long term.

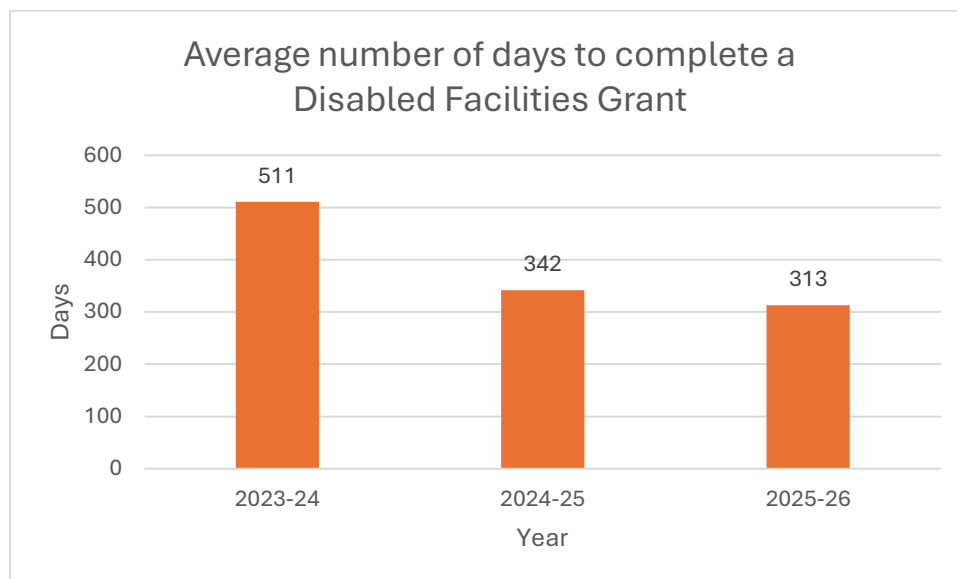
What needs to improve

The Council has significant wait times to complete DFGs and does not use its housing adaptations data to inform resource planning and reporting

Waiting times

- 18 Some applicants have to wait a significant amount of time for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). The Council developed a backlog of cases after Covid-19. Though waits remain high, performance to complete a DFG is improving, as **Exhibit 1** shows.

Exhibit 1: Average number of days to complete a Disabled Facilities Grant



- 19 The Council analyses and understands the reason for the long wait times but service plans do not include actions to address them.

- 20 The Council is one of only two councils in Wales that still apply a means test for DFG applicants aged over 19. Over the last three years, 29% of applications have required a means test. However, delays in obtaining the financial information and documents from vulnerable applicants to satisfy the testing requirements is slowing applications and increasing waiting times.
- 21 Limited Occupational Therapy capacity delays timely assessments at the start of the adaptations process. Occupational therapists sit within Social Services, while the Adaptations Team sits within Prevention and Inclusion. The Council has no occupational therapists dedicated to housing adaptations – therapists work across Social Services and assess adaptations in private and RSL homes. As the housing adaptations pathway spans different teams, there is currently no clear ownership of these capacity constraints.
- 22 Delays may mean people are unable to undertake daily tasks or are at risk of falls and needing to access other public services.

Resource planning

- 23 The Council does not routinely use its housing adaptations data to support workforce planning. As a result, the Council lacks a clear workforce plan which reflects actual and forecast demand for housing adaptations and addresses current bottlenecks in the adaptations pathway. Currently, neither the Social Services Service Plans nor the Prevention and Inclusion Service Plan 2025-26 reflect the occupational therapy capacity needed to deliver housing adaptations across the Council and the RSLs. As a result, the housing adaptations pathway is not sufficiently resourced.
- 24 The Council does not routinely use its housing adaptations data to support budget planning. For example, core budget allocations for housing adaptations are not based on demand data. This limits the service's ability to match resources to need. In 2024-25, the Adaptations Team exhausted its core delivery budget by December 2024 and had to bring forward funding from the following year to complete adaptations. This is not a sustainable approach.

Performance reporting, impact and value for money

- 25 Performance reports focus on short-term outputs rather than outcomes. Current reports show the number of Disabled Facility Grants completed and the percentage of satisfied customers. As noted above, the Council collects data to understand the impact housing adaptations have on service users, but this information is not routinely brought together to demonstrate impact. The Council could do more to show the difference housing adaptations make to people's lives and the extent to which they support the Council's wider preventative goals, particularly as prevention is a key theme in the Council's Corporate Plan 2022-27.
- 26 The Council has not set out how it will assess value for money in delivering housing adaptations. Officers and members understand that adaptations help people live safely at home, reduce the need for care support and ease pressure on other public services. Between 2021 and 2025, occupational therapy carried out some useful cost avoidance work. This estimated cost savings on residential and domiciliary care packages as a result of equipment or technology being provided to service users. However, the Council has not expanded this approach further. As a result, it cannot yet show the value for money of housing adaptations.

Understanding partner performance

- 27 The Council is not responsible for delivering housing adaptations for people living in housing association homes – this is the role of RSLs. The Council recognises differences between its approach and that of local RSLs, including that RSL tenants are not means tested. Although it knows RSL tenants face waiting times for DFGs, the Council does not monitor how quickly RSLs complete adaptations. As a result, it does not have a full picture of the timeliness of adaptations across the county.

Recommendations

28 The recommendations below aim to strengthen corporate oversight and workforce capacity to improve the sustainability and timeliness of the housing adaptations service.

R1 The Council should develop a clear understanding and analysis of future demand and service capacity over the medium to long term. This should inform:

1.1 a workforce plan for the housing adaptations pathway which uses data to identify the workforce needed – including Occupational Therapy – to meet current and future demand; (**paragraphs 21 and 23**).

1.2 its resource requirements needed to meet future demand over the medium to long term (**paragraph 24**)

R2 The Council should ensure its reporting demonstrates the impact and value for money of housing adaptations, including the service's contribution to preventative objectives (**paragraphs 25 and 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.

We completed the fieldwork for this audit in 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 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 housing adaptations process. We interviewed key officers and elected members. We did not interview 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.

2 Key terms in this report

Term	Description
Vale for Money	Value for money is about whether money is being used to deliver intended outcomes at the best price. This is also sometimes referred to as 'cost effectiveness'. Value for money is commonly associated with the 'three E's' of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. We have summarised these as: • Economy – Getting the right deal – securing the necessary inputs, to help achieve intended outcomes, at the lowest possible cost. • Efficiency – Doing things right – making the most of the inputs to generate outputs designed to achieve intended outcomes. • Effectiveness – Getting the right results – achieving the intended outcomes for the short and longer term. Councils have legal duties relating to value for money. The Local Government and Elections (Wales) Act 2021 places a duty on councils to review the extent to which they are using resources economically, efficiently and effectively.
Adaptations	Adaptations are categorised into Minor Aids such as grab rails and lever taps, Medium Adaptations such as level access showers, stairlifts, ramps, door widening, or Major adaptations like building extensions. Specialised services like Care and Repair Cwm Taf provide a rapid response for smaller works.

Needs assessment

The Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 dictates that anyone who may need care or support has a right to a needs assessment. This process is designed to identify what matters to you and what help you might need to maintain your independence and well-being

DFG

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are administered by the housing department of your local council. They are means-tested for large adaptations unless you are applying on behalf of a child under 18. The Grant can provide up to £36,000 of funding.

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