

Housing Adaptations

Bridgend County Borough Council

September 2026



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Audit snapshot

What we looked at

- 1 We looked at how Bridgend County Borough Council (the Council) plans and delivers housing adaptations to help children, young people and adults stay in their homes.
- 2 In 2002, the Council transferred its housing stock to a housing association. This means the process of delivering a housing adaptation is different for people living in housing association properties compared to homeowners and people living 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;
 - 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 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.
- 6 Audit Wales previously reported on housing adaptations across Wales in 2018. We found an overly complicated system which reinforced, rather than addressed, inequality in provision of adaptations.
- 7 In 2018, we reported on Service User perspective of disabled facilities grants (DFGs) at the Council. In this report we recommended the Council strengthen:
- strategic planning;
 - evaluation and learning;
 - information for service users;
 - contractor oversight and user protection;
 - overall governance and control.

What we have found

- 8 The Council's performance in delivering housing adaptations has been a concern for several years. We recognise that the Council has made changes to the service since our report in 2018 and that there has been regular reporting to Members. However, with the exception of slight improvement in two types of adaptations for 2025-26 performance is continuing to decline. Bridgend residents are now waiting over two years on average for an adaptation.

- 9 Despite recently increasing its capital budget, at the time of our fieldwork, the Council did not have a clear plan to address its performance. Weaknesses in strategic planning and resourcing, learning and evaluation, and lack of coordination between staff at the different stages of the process are impacting the effectiveness of the service. Based on the Council's track record in this area and progress to date in delivering housing adaptations, we do not have confidence in the Council's ability to quickly address this. Since our fieldwork, the Council is developing a plan to address our findings.
- 10 We have summarised the main strengths and areas for improvement below:

Strengths

- The Council has a single point of contact for applicants.
- The Council monitors performance for timeliness and overall cost.
- The Council has quality assurance and sign-off controls.
- The Council has improved its IT system.
- The Council has introduced a contractor framework.

Areas for improvement

- The Council's delivery time is worsening and is currently averaging over two years for an adaptation.
- The Council does not understand the medium to long-term demand for adaptations.
- The Council does not have up-to-date information online to help service users understand the process.
- The Council does not engage with regional groups to understand how issues compare and learn from their experiences.
- The Council has a limited understanding if it is delivering value for money.

What we recommend

11 We have made five recommendations to the Council about:

- conducting an end-to-end review of the service to understand and address the causes of delays;
- improving understanding of current and future demand for housing adaptations;
- developing a coordinated delivery plan;
- ensuring policies are up to date;
- engaging more systematically with regional groups and partners to compare performance and learn from good practice;
- evaluating value for money.

Key facts and figures

The average number of calendar days taken to deliver a Disabled Facilities Grant overall against the Council's target.

Year	Average	Target
2019-20	436	240
2020-21	553	240
2021-22	422	240
2022-23	434	240
2023-24	553	210
2024-25	799	542
2025-26	838	542

Total number of adaptations completed and certified.

2019-20 – 157
 2020-21 – 75
 2021-22 – 148
 2022-23 – 174
 2023-24 – 230
 2024-25 – 238
 2025-26 – 205

Total Council investment in housing adaptations between 2020-21 and 2025-26 – £13.5 million

Expenditure (DFG Capital, Housing Care Fund and ENABLE)

2023-24: £3.2 million
 2024-25: £2.7 million
 2025-26: £2.4 million

The percentage of people who feel they are able to live more independently as a result of receiving a DFG in their home.

2023-24: 98%

2024-25: 99%

Our findings

The Council recognises the importance of housing adaptations but lacks a clear view of future demand and a plan to improve service delivery

Understanding demand

- 12 The Council understands existing demand for housing adaptations through referrals and waiting lists. However, it has not undertaken analysis to understand future demand beyond a general recognition that the population is ageing. For example, the Council has not assessed the impact its new special school and nearby housing development will have on demand.
- 13 A clearer understanding of future demand is vital to help the Council plan how it will meet this demand, and the resources it needs to do so. As adaptations for children typically cost more than those for adults, breaking this demand down by adults and children would also help the Council strengthen its planning for the medium and long term.

Strategic framework and delivery planning

- 14 The Council highlights the importance of housing adaptations in helping people to live independently in its key strategic documents, including its Corporate Plan. However, aspects of its policy framework are out of date. For instance, it has not updated its private sector housing renewal and disabled adaptations policy since 2018 and its standards for adaptations and assistance policy since 2010.

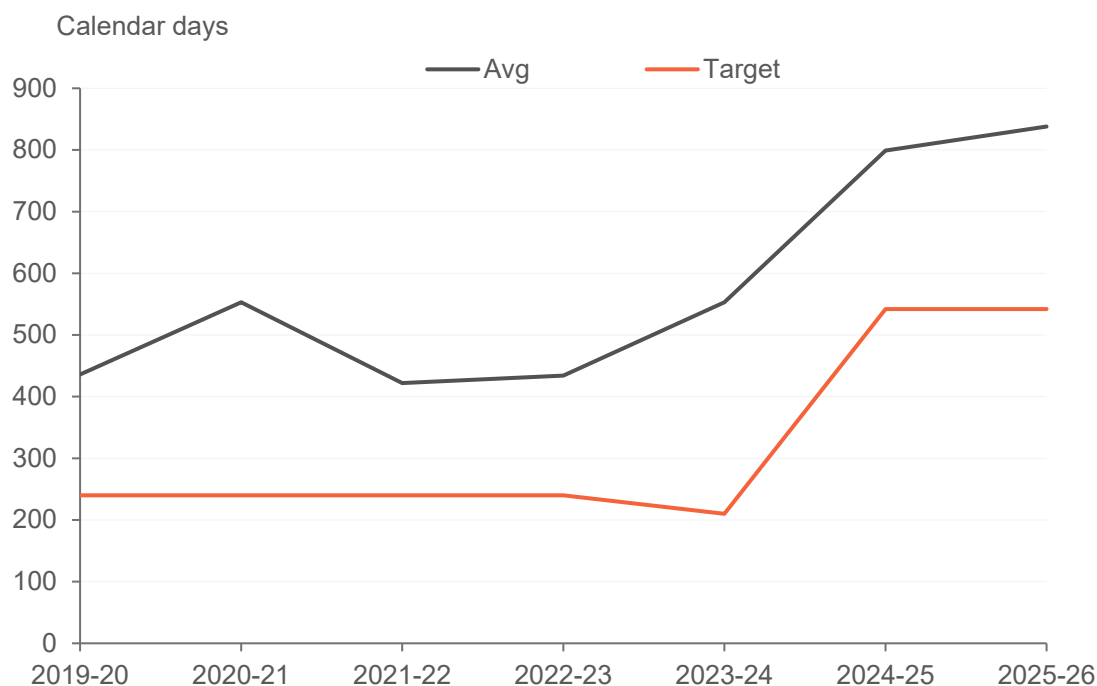
- 15 At the time of our fieldwork the Council did not have a clear delivery plan setting out how it will meet demand and improve timeliness. This is despite delivery times worsening overall, performance being below target and ongoing Member scrutiny and challenge. Taken together, these indicate that the Council does not have a clear and effective approach to planning and improving the service.

Despite changes intended to strengthen the service, delivery times are poor and worsening

Timeliness

- 16 Delivery times have been slow for several years and have declined significantly in the last two years. COVID-19 led to a backlog of applications and the Council provided figures that excluded those applications. But this data showed that performance continued to worsen overall during 2024-25 and 2025-26. Average wait times were longer than in the period before the COVID-19 pandemic. The Council is taking over two years on average to complete an adaptation. Its performance has been well below target for the last seven years (**Exhibit 1**). While more complex adaptations can affect this, delivery times for specific types of work have been lengthy. In 2025-26, it took more than three years on average to deliver a ramp or extension, and more than a year to deliver a stairlift.
- 17 These timescales raise significant concerns about the effectiveness of the service. Long waiting times can affect someone's health and independence and may increase the risks of falls, placing pressure on other public services.

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



Source: Bridgend County Borough Council

Changes to strengthen delivery

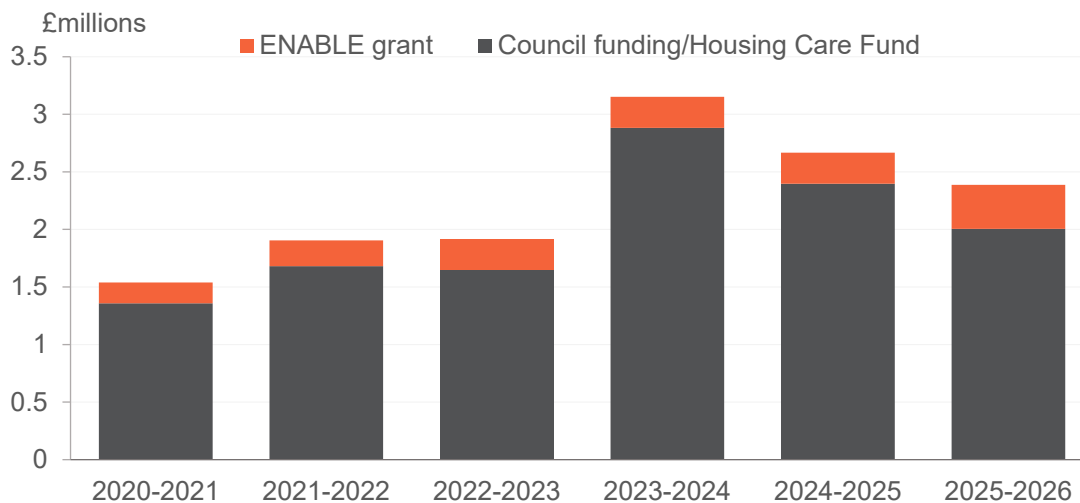
18 Over the last few years, the Council has introduced changes designed to improve the service:

- bringing the service back in-house after considering alternative arrangements;
- introducing a new IT system to improve data management and oversight;
- appointing a DFG caseworker to provide applicants with a single point of contact;
- introducing a contractor framework to speed up work, strengthen quality control and reduce costs;

- using discretionary funding to top up DFGs to help cover the costs of complex adaptations, particularly for children and young people.

- 19 However, as illustrated above, these have not helped improve delivery times.
- 20 **Exhibit 2** sets out the Council's capital expenditure on DFGs since 2020-21. We heard during fieldwork that, in some years, the Council did not spend its full DFG budget. This is despite ongoing demand and declining performance. This indicates the Council has not consistently been able to align available funding with delivery.
- 21 The Council has increased its capital budget for housing adaptations by £500,000 per year for the duration of its Medium Term Financial Plan (2026-27 to 2029-30). However, it is not clear how the Council derived this figure as it has not modelled demand to identify the actions it will take and resources needed to meet demand. Given the worsening performance, the Council would benefit from doing an end-to-end review of the service to understand why timescales are worsening and how it will address this and meet demand.

Exhibit 2: DFG Capital Expenditure Summary



Source: Bridgend County Borough Council

Notes:

¹ Between 2023-24 and 2025-26, around £0.2 million funding was allocated each year to Bridgend County Borough Council by the Welsh Government through its Housing Care Fund distributed through the Cwm Taf Morgannwg Regional Partnership. These allocations are included in the totals shown in **Exhibit 1**.

² Between 2020-21 and 2025-26, the Council also received ENABLE funding from the Welsh Government. Ranging from £0.18 million in 2020-21 to £0.38 million in 2025-26.

Service user information and engagement

- 22 The Council does not provide up-to-date information to help service users clearly understand the housing adaptations process. Its website sets out the options available and a brief overview of grants and provides email and telephone contact details. However, supporting documents, such as the Standard for Adaptations and Assistance, are out-of-date and do not reflect current Welsh Government guidance including details on discretionary grants and referrals for children.

- 23 The Council engages service users at key stages to understand their needs. This includes through occupational therapist assessments and the DFG caseworker who acts as the single point of contact. However, we heard during fieldwork that staff do not always manage handovers smoothly between stages, and differing professional views can contribute to delays and reduce the effectiveness of the service.

Overall performance is declining despite ongoing monitoring and scrutiny, and the Council has a limited understanding of value for money

Performance management

- 24 The Council has provided regular reports about housing adaptations to Governance and Audit Committee, Corporate Oversight Scrutiny Committee, and Cabinet over the last five years. These cover current demand, costs and timeliness.
- 25 However, timeliness of delivery has continued to decline overall. This indicates that while members have scrutinised and challenged performance, this is not yet translating into sustained improvements in performance.
- 26 The Council monitors timescales for completing housing adaptations on average overall as well as for small, medium and large adaptations. However, it has not assessed where the issues are in the process to identify how it can address these.

Understanding partner performance

- 27 The Council has limited involvement in providing housing adaptations for tenants living in housing association properties. The Council does not monitor how quickly housing associations complete the work or if they inspect completed adaptations. It therefore does not have a full picture of performance to help evaluate if it is meeting its aim of supporting vulnerable residents, whatever their housing situation.

Learning and evaluating impact

- 28 The Council engaged with other councils to learn from their experience when it developed its contractor framework. However, it does not engage routinely with health and housing partners about housing adaptations. It also does not engage in the regional Housing Adaptations network group. Therefore, the Council is not making the most of these channels to discuss common issues and identify ways to improve.
- 29 Before paying the contractor, the Council checks that the quality of the adaptation meets agreed standards. It also collects feedback from service users as soon as the work is completed and satisfaction levels are consistently high.
- 30 The Council has reviewed its contractor costs as part of its contractor framework, but it is not actively assessing whether its housing adaptations service is delivering value for money. For example, whilst it asks some outcome-based questions when works are completed, it does not routinely follow this up once individuals have had a chance to properly use the adaptations to check that the adaptations are meeting the intended outcomes set out in the original care plan. It has also not assessed whether adaptations are reducing reliance on other services, such as helping to avoid hospital admissions.

Recommendations

R1 The Council should conduct a thorough end-to-end review of the service to understand the causes of delays and take targeted action to improve delivery and the effectiveness of the service (**paragraph 21**).

R2 The Council should improve its understanding of current and future demand for housing adaptations, including the likely impact of demographic change and demand from children and young people, so that it can plan its resources more effectively (**paragraph 12**).

R3 The Council should develop a coordinated and up-to-date strategic framework for housing adaptations. This should include updating key policies and having a clear delivery plan that sets out priorities, actions and intended outcomes (**paragraph 15**).

R4 The Council should engage more systematically with regional groups and relevant partners to understand and compare issues and learn from the experiences of others (**paragraph 28**).

- R5** The Council should evaluate whether its housing adaptations arrangements are delivering value for money, including by linking the full cost of support, timeliness and outcomes (**paragraph 30**).

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 March 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 the housing adaptations process. We interviewed key officers and elected members involved in the housing adaptations process.

The audit did not include interviews with other stakeholders who are involved in the delivery of housing adaptations, such as local health boards, contractors, Extra Care, and housing associations. 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 (VFM)	Value for money is about whether money is being used to deliver intended outcomes at the best price. It is commonly associated with the ‘three Es’ – economy, efficiency and effectiveness. We have summarised these as: • Economy – Getting the right deal by securing the necessary inputs, to help achieve intended outcomes, at the lowest possible cost. • Efficiency – Doing things right by making the most of the inputs to generate outputs designed to achieve intended outcomes. • Effectiveness – Getting the right results by achieving the intended outcomes for the short and longer term. Value for Money is therefore not just about costs, but about the quality and effectiveness of the delivered outcomes for the money spent. 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.

Term	Description
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 the person and what help they might need to maintain their independence and well-being.
Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) help pay for changes to a home so residents can live there more safely. 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.
ENABLE	Small adaptations that cost less than £1,000 are usually provided free of charge and without means testing to older people or those who need to make changes to their home because of a disability. The Welsh Government provides ENABLE grant funding to local authorities as a flexible resource which can be used to pay for small and medium adaptations.
Housing Care Fund (HCF)	The Housing Care Fund is a Welsh Government capital funding stream used by councils to develop housing that supports care needs. It is intended to reduce reliance on reactive adaptations like DFGs.

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