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Warrington Housing Association Scrutiny Panel Service Review – Aids and Adaptations

Findings and recommendation report

Review Completion Timetable

Date of report WHASP sign off	Dec 2017
Date of report to SMT	Jan 2018
Date of return to WHASP	Feb 2018
Date of WHASP review of completion	

Warrington Housing Association Scrutiny Panel report on Aids and Adaptations

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Related documents:	WHA Disabled Adaptations Policy Disabled Adaptations Information Leaflet Disabled Adaptations Journey Plan Major Disabled Adaptations Journey Map Minor Disabled Adaptations Journey Map Disabled Adaptations Contact Information Disabled Adaptations Improvement Log

Introduction

Warrington Housing Association Scrutiny Panel (WHASP) has been developed with tenants and WHA staff, in response to the challenges of service and performance improvement, without regulatory compulsion or inspection.

WHASP, with the assistance of WHA's Community Development Officer, has identified a programme of scrutiny, with the Aids and Adaptations Review being the ninth in their programme. 9 members of WHASP have spent 115 hours carrying out this review.

By working together we are aiming to provide services which are fit for purpose, objective and customer focused. The Scrutiny Panel feel that their main aim is to give residents more choice and to provide the best possible, cost effective service.

Business Case

Over the last 12 months a team of WHA staff have been reviewing Disabled Aids and Adaptations creating Journey Maps and Action Plans to try and ensure all relevant staff have a clear understanding of the procedures to follow when carrying out a major or minor adaptation. Some changes have been made to improve the service for tenants and this review has been chosen so that the Scrutiny Panel can

check that tenants are satisfied with the practices and actions used by the Association when carrying out Aids and Adaptations. The review will look at the start of the process when they report the need for an adaptation or aid through to the implementation and installation and the tenant's experience of this journey.

The key questions that the panel chose in relation to this review were:

- Do the adaptations work for the person that they have been installed for?
- Is the tenant happy with the process used and would they recommend it to another tenant?
- Does the process used by WHA work for minor and major adaptations?
- Once an adaptation has been approved is the tenant given a time scale for completion? And is this time scale achieved on the jobs?
- Has the aid/adaptation made the tenant's life easier?
- Once the work is completed in a major adaptation does/who approved and signs off the work?
- If an adaptation is rejected, why is it rejected and what are the reasons given? And what alternatives given if possible?

The expected outcomes for this review are:

- To provide a good service to vulnerable tenants to ensure they can continue to live in their home whenever possible, allowing us to remain a major provider of housing and housing solutions in Warrington.
- A suitable aid or adaptation can assist to keep an older person in their property as long as possible and in a safe, secure and happy environment, ensuring a good quality of life through our housing and other services.
- Having an aid or adaptation done will allow tenants to stay in their homes and stay a part of the community that they may have lived in for a number of years. Giving tenants independence in their properties, allows communities to stay secure and sustainable.

Scope of the review – What we reviewed

The Scrutiny panel conducted this review by:

- Scrutinising the current WHA Disabled Adaptations Policy to ensure that the language and terminology used is understandable to tenants and that from this they understand the processes used.
- Reviewing the existing Disabled Adaptations Leaflet and Contact Information given to tenants when they enquire about an aid or adaptation, again to ensure that the information given is understandable and clear to tenants.
- Reviewing the different Journey Plans and Journey Maps for Major and Minor Adaptations to ensure that all stages and processes are relevant and as time effective for tenants as possible.
- Reviewing the Disabled Adaptations Log to ensure that recommendations and suggestions made as part of the internal review of DFGs are effective for tenants.
- Look at the number of aids and adaptations carried out over the last 6 – 12 months and the number of adaptations rejected along with the reasons given and if these are reasonable. Also if another suggestion is made to tenants from the Association if an adaptation is rejected.
- Consider how Aids and Adaptations are paid for as some are paid for through the Association and some are grant funded or part funded.
- Interview relevant staff members for WHA and WHiA that are involved with the Aids and Adaptations processes.
- Consider collated satisfaction surveys from tenants/clients that have had Aids and Adaptations completed over the last 12 months. Even though this data is anonymous it can still be used to gain an insight into customer satisfaction.
- Interview tenants and visit properties where Aids and Adaptations have been completed.

Value for Money

WHA has an annual budget allotted for Aids and Adaptations and currently minor adaptations can be approved up to £1000. The cost of a major adaptation is often split between WHA and Access to Social Care (WBC) as they provide the funding through disabled facilities grants.

However costs of major adaptations still have to be taken into consideration before they are approved by WHA.

If a major adaptation is to be carried out on a property the longevity of that adaptation has to also be considered. ie if the tenant will be remaining in the property for a number of years and another alternative cannot be provided than the adaptation will be completed as it should allow the tenant to remain independently and safely in their property.

However if the tenant is unlikely to stay in the property it may not be cost effective for a major adaptation to be completed, therefore alternatives options (sure as relocation to another property that may be more suitable) will be provided.

If a property is adapted and then the tenant leaves, WHA may need to reverse the adaptation so that the property can then be re let as a general needs home. This would be at great cost to WHA thus not providing value for money, hence other alternative options will always be explored.

The panel also found that three versions of a very similar leaflet are printed; one is a more detailed disabled adaptations leaflet; two are separate information sheets. This cannot be providing value for money and the panel would like to see just one information leaflet produced and one information sheet.

Brief overview of findings – What is working well?

The panel found that normally everything is working well from the initial request made by tenants through to the completion of the aid or adaptation.

The tenants interviewed during the review were very happy with the communication from WHA and WHiA throughout the aids and adaptations process. They felt that they understood each step taken and were fully informed at the different stages, and the panel felt this was very important.

The tenants expressed that the adaptations they have had done have completely transformed their lives giving them a better quality of life, allowing them to have more independence and feel safer in their own home. As one tenant interviewed commented, 'it's like winning the lottery'.

The panel also found that the staff are very competent and have strong knowledge in their specific fields, which allowed them to gain a very clear understanding of the processes followed throughout an aid or adaptation.

When an adaptation is rejected a thorough investigation is carried out by WHA and the outside agencies (Access to Social Care) as to why an adaptation cannot be completed and alternative options are given to the tenant, such as relocation into another property. Tenant adaptations are not rejected easily and tenants are always given detailed reasons for the rejection, whether this be from the perspective of WHA, Access to Social Care or both.

There is a strong working relationship between WHA and WHiA meaning that the tenant is dealt with efficiently and effectively during the process. Tenants can speak

to WHA and/or WHiA staff within the same phone call and both organisations have a good understanding of tenant's requirements.

Improvements and Recommendations

These are the detailed findings and recommendations made by the Scrutiny Panel as a result of the information given and research carried out during the review of Aids and Adaptations.

1. When the Disabled Adaptations Policy and leaflet are read abbreviations are used frequently without consideration to those reading it.

This is evidenced in both documents using abbreviations such as 'OT' (Occupational Therapist). The impact of this is that a lack of knowledge of the abbreviations could lead to confusion and misunderstanding when the documents are being read. The recommendation is that a simple Jargon Busters should be added to all policies and leaflets for any abbreviated or complex terminology. Throughout the Disabled Adaptations policy abbreviations are used for OT (Occupational Therapist), PSD (Property Services Director), PSDO (Property Services Development Officer), HSD (Housing Services Director), WBC (Warrington Borough Council), WHA (Warrington Housing Association) and SMT (Senior Management Team). A jargon buster on the first page of the policy would mean that the reader can quickly look at the first page to see what the abbreviated term means, rather than looking through the full document to find it in its full form. This should make it quicker and simpler for the resident to read.

2. Does the word 'disabled' have to be used within the documents, as this could be seen as discriminatory?

The term is used many times throughout the policy and information leaflet however some tenants who request an aid or adaptation may not deem themselves as disabled but just need some extra support to maintain their safety and independence in their property. The recommendation is that the word 'disabled' be removed or exchanged for more modern terminology. For example the policy be called 'The Aids and Adaptations Policy' rather than the 'Disabled Adaptations Policy'.

3. Communication between tenants and some contractors was poor.

A number of tenants interviewed were very happy with the communication from WHA and WHiA however they had issues with the contractors as they were not clear in regards to their attendance and time factors to complete the job. Despite the tenant being happy with the adaptation this did impact on her overall experience of having the work done. The recommendation is that if contractors repeatedly cause issues for tenants in regards to poor communication and/or poor workmanship these contractors should not be given further jobs, particularly adaptations. Throughout the adaptation

process when work is being completed the WHiA technical officer visits the client every other day giving support if needed. The technical officer will sign off on any job and this will not be done if they are not satisfied. If clients are not happy with work being done by the contractor they must contact WHiA who will deal with the issues.

4. There was poor communication between contractors working on the same adaptation.

One tenant interviewed commented that two separate contractors (a painter and an electrician) were arguing over the time scales of the job, as one could not complete their part of the work until the other had finished. This argument took place in the tenant's kitchen which was very unprofessional and could cause trauma to the tenant. If more than one contractor is being used as part of an adaptation, clearer communication needs to be guaranteed to ensure the contractors have a clear understanding of when their aspect of the job is to be started and finished.

Conclusion

The Scrutiny panel have been very happy with the outcomes from the Aids and Adaptations review as they do fulfil the expected outcomes proposed during the initial scoping stages. The review has proved that:

- WHA provides a good service to vulnerable tenants to ensure they can continue to live in their home whenever possible.
- A suitable aid or adaptation can assist to keep an older person in their property as long as possible and in a safe, secure and happy environment, ensuring a good quality of life through our housing and other services.
- Having an aid or adaptation done has allowed tenants to stay in their homes and stay a part of the community that they may have lived in for a number of years. Therefore giving tenants independence in their properties, allows communities to stay secure and sustainable.

All these outcomes were evidenced from the tenants properties visited as both believed they had a much better quality of life since the adaptation had been completed.

Due to the very positive results from this review the recommendations made by the panel are small 'tweaks' to the existing Aids and Adaptations policies and procedures which the panel hope will be fulfilled.

The Scrutiny panel would like this report to be submitted to Senior Management Team for approval and an action plan to be created from the recommendations given. The report will be submitted to SMT by January 11th 2018 and then after approval it will be sent to the next Audit and Risk committee.

