

REPORT TO: **Housing Committee 17 September, 2001 and
Social Work Committee 17 September, 2001**

REPORT ON: **Best Value Review of Housing and Related Services
for People with Physical Disabilities:
Continuous Improvement Proposals**

REPORT BY: **Director of Housing and Director of Social Work**

REPORT NO.: **210-2001**

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1. To report on proposals to amend existing policies regarding the Provision of Housing and Related Services to People with Physical Disabilities and to obtain Committee approval for same.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 2.1. It is recommended that the Committee agree to the recommendations contained in Appendix 1 at 2.5., 3.1., 4.3., 4.4., 4.5., 4.6, 5.5 and 6.4.

3. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1. Any financial implications resulting from this report will be contained within existing departmental budgets.
- 3.2. Implementation of the proposals may even lead to minor savings, which can be reallocated to enhance service provision.

4. LOCAL AGENDA 21 IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1. The policy and procedural changes identified in this report added to the service improvements from the original Best Value Review will allow for a more efficient use of resources and will assist the client group to benefit from modern, high quality facilities.

5. EQUAL OPPORTUNITY IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1. The proposals identified will help the clients to live a full life within the community and to make full use of facilities and services provided.

6. BACKGROUND

- 6.1. The Best Value Sub-Committee, at its meeting of September 1999, approved a report on the Best Value Review of Provision of Housing and Related Services for People with Physical Disabilities.

- 6.2. At the same time, the Sub-Committee agreed to further meetings of the Review Group aimed at addressing anomalies and policy deficits within the existing service delivery.
- 6.3. The attached paper (Appendix 1) reports on the outcome of these further meetings.

7. **CONSULTATION**

The Chief Executive, Director of Support Services, Director of Finance and Chief Corporate Planning Officer have been consulted in the preparation of this response.

8. **BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Best Value Sub-Committee September 1999.

“Best Value Review of Housing and Related Services for People with Physical Disabilities”.

ELAINE ZWIRLEIN
DIRECTOR OF HOUSING

Signed: _____

Date: _____

ALAN BAIRD
ACTING DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK

Signed: _____

Date: _____

APPENDIX 1

Best Value Review of Housing for People with Physical Disabilities: Proposed Changes to Policies, Procedures and Criteria.

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. In response to Item 3.4. (Policy Issues) of the original Best Value Report, Officers of the Housing and Social Work Departments had further meetings to address the discrepancies in policy and priorities between the departments.
- 1.2. They also considered existing criteria for the provision of equipment and adaptations and developed draft criteria for future provision.
- 1.3. Their deliberations were further informed by the outcome of a meeting, chaired by the then Social Work Convener, Councillor Helen Wright, and involving elected members and Officers from both departments.
- 1.4. This small group of Officers identified three main areas where current policy, practice and eligibility criteria diverged. These involved the provision of:
 - level access and overbath shower.
 - ramping to the entrances to dwellings and closes.
 - ramping and storage for privately funded wheelchairs.

In addition, during compilation of this report an issue arose which identified the need to consider the provision of stair lifts.

- 1.5. Several options were identified in each category, and those are detailed below for members' consideration, alongside Officers recommendations.

2. LEVEL ACCESS SHOWER

- 2.1. Current practice is for level access showers to be refused if all facilities are not on the ground floor. However, occasional exceptions have been made for upper floor flats where the tenant can access the dwelling without having to negotiate either steps or stairs (generally where lifts are available in a flatted building).
- 2.2. This position has been adopted to address concerns over potential damage due to water penetration. This damage is potentially far greater above ground floor level and, in the past, has resulted in expensive repairs being required.
- 2.3. Structural issues associated with installation are also more complex and costly above ground level. Indeed, in some flatted buildings the built form will prevent the installation of showers of any type.
- 2.4. From a functional perspective the provision of a level access shower is indicated where the user has extremely limited mobility. If the individual can manage steps to their property then it is likely that they can manage using alternative bathing equipment as well.

2.5. Recommendations

- 2.5.1. *Level access showers will be considered at ground floor level where an assessment of the client's physical requirements identifies this as the most appropriate option.*

2.5.2. *Level access showers above ground floor level will be considered only where access is available, ie., flats with lifts, or properties on two levels already provided with stair lifts.*

2.5.3. *These are higher qualifying criteria than the existing, but are designed to reflect the additional expense associated with this option.*

2.6. **Costs**

The cost of level access shower installation depends on individual location, however, the higher specification above ground level will typically generate a cost of between £2,500 - £4,000 per shower.

3. **OVERBATH SHOWERS**

3.1. **Recommendations**

The Housing Department will consider each case on its merits based on technical considerations associated with water penetration. This is a policy which applies to all tenants who are required to obtain Area Housing Office permission prior to installation and will be held responsible, at tenancy handover, for the costs of reinstatement if the standard is unacceptable where such permission was not sought.

3.2. **Costs**

Implementation of this recommendation would be cost neutral.

4. **RAMPING**

4.1. **Background**

4.1.1. Provision of ramping historically has been very complicated. Decisions have been governed by different policies in Housing and Social Work Departments, which pre. date local Government Reorganisation. These in turn were based on the COSLA 40/85 document which gave guidance to Local Authorities on the provision of equipment and adaptations.

4.1.2. Further problems are created when taking into account the ownership of properties, issues of common entry, topography of the site and the provision of related facilities where this is also necessary. It is important when considering this issue, therefore, to differentiate between both house type and tenure.

4.2. **Current Position**

4.2.1. The current positions of Housing and Social Work in relation to house types and tenures are indicated below:

House Type	Social Work	Housing
House all on one level.	Supply, fit and finance (if ramping possible).	May be part of grant if internal works are grant funded. (If ramping possible and property is internally suitable).
4-in-block ground floor.	As above.	As above.
Property on 2 floors.	Supply and fit ramp, stairlift and shower as appropriate. Grants may be available.	Problems of fire hazard where all rooms not suitable/accessible. No policy decision, but some have been decided as one off basis. Rehousing has been offered as alternative.
Closes.	Supply and fit ramp following permission from all other occupants.	Problems of keeping stepped access for other occupants on Health & Safety grounds. Permission of all tenants/owners required.

4.2.2. Concrete ramps do not represent good value for money. They are expensive to install and difficult and expensive to remove. Typically, a fibreglass ramp can be installed for £1,500 while a concrete one would cost £6,000.

4.2.3. Expenditure is rising year on year on ramping. Last year over £20,000 was spent by Housing and Social Work on ramping. It is anticipated that there will be increased provision of wheelchairs by the Health Services. Optimum use of resources, therefore, is imperative.

4.3. Recommendations

4.3.1. *It is recommended that Housing and Social Work adhere to the following joint criteria for people who have been provided with a standard electric or self propelling wheelchair from the NHS.*

4.3.2. House all on one level with suitable circulation space.

- i. *A fibreglass ramp will be provided.*
- ii. *In Council property Housing and Social Work will share the costs.*
- iii. *In private property Social Work will fund unless additional internal works are recommended when the ramp may be covered by grant.*
- iv. *If circulation space is adequate, but modifications are required, these will be undertaken.*
- v. *If circulation space is not adequate then rehousing will be offered.*

4.3.3. 4-in-a-block ground floor.

Occupants of these dwellings requiring ramping will be treated as above.

4.3.4. Property on two floors with adequate circulation space where a ramp, stairlift and shower are required.

- i. *In Council property Housing and Social Work will share the costs of ramping and retain existing responsibilities for showers and stairlifts respectively.*
- ii. *In private property grant applications will be accepted where appropriate.*

4.3.5. **Closes with adequate circulation space.**

- i. *In Council property costs will be shared between Housing and Social Work.*
- ii. *In private property Social Work will fund or grant applications will be accepted.*
- iii. *The position of the ramp will be at right angle to close entrance with extended platform and steps for other users. Work will only proceed with the permission of all occupants.*

4.4. *All ramps to be supplied will be constructed of fibreglass, except in the cases of new build or major adaptation. This will give considerable cost savings.*

4.5. *The ramp contractor will be responsible for meeting the requirements of Building Regulations and ensuring that all permissions are obtained. This will obviate the need to use the Architects Department giving an additional marginal saving.*

4.6. *Ramps will not be provided where the estimated costs exceed £3000.*

4.7. All of these recommendations together will achieve greater consistency and more flexibility in the provision of ramps.

4.8. **Costs**

Implementation of these recommendations in full will produce a total projected saving based on previous years, of £1,500 on each glass fibre reinforced ramp.

5. **RAMPS AND STORAGE FOR PRIVATELY PURCHASED WHEELCHAIRS**

5.1. Currently there is no Council policy regarding provision in this matter, although a small number of people have been given assistance on a case by case basis.

5.2. A consistent position is required. Given the rapid increase in the number of requests being received and the fact that more and more people are exercising choice to buy scooters or wheelchairs for themselves.

5.3. A number of requests have already been made to the Social Work Department and it is reasonable to expect that this will grow rapidly if a service is made available.

5.4. **Options**

5.4.1. A number of options have been identified by Officers on whether to provide a service at all and if so at what level. Those are listed below:

- i. Provide no service.
- ii. Provide advice only on possibilities and considerations associated with private provision.
- iii. Provide fixed amount of contribution towards costs – costs £10,000 - £20,000 (based on 50-100 cases).
- iv. Provide same service as for those who qualify for NHS wheelchairs – cost £100,000-£200,000 (based on 50-100 cases).

5.5. Recommendations

In addition to cost implications, consideration must be given to maintenance issues and to the danger of creating a two tier service. Nevertheless, some assistance should be offered. It is recommended, therefore, that advice only is provided.

5.6. Costs

Implementation of this recommendation would be cost neutral.

6. STAIR LIFTS

6.1 Ultimately, it is a matter of professional judgement whether or not to recommend the provision of a stair lift.

6.2 Internal Stair Lifts.

6.2.1 Currently, the provision of internal stair lifts will be considered where individuals have a substantial disability and: -

- i. They are unable to negotiate stairs without unreasonable risk to their health and physical well being.
- ii. They require to access facilities on both levels of their accommodation.

6.3 External Stair Lifts.

6.3.1 The existing position is that no external stair lifts are provided.

6.4 Recommendations.

6.4.1 *It is recommended that in reaching a decision on the provision of an internal or an external stair lift the following common criteria will be considered: -*

- i. Whether wheelchair adapted or single level accommodation is a more suitable option.*
- ii. The impact of the provision on other members of the household.*
- iii. The availability of other strategies.*
- iv. Whether this is a viable or the preferred option in cases of terminal illness.*

6.4.2 *The provision of internal stair lifts will be considered on the basis of the existing policy, identified in 6.2.1.*

6.4.3 *The provision of external stair lifts will be considered where individuals have a substantial disability and: -*

- i. They are unable to negotiate stairs without unreasonable risk to their health and physical well being.*
- ii. They and their household have exclusive use of the stair on which the stair lift is to be installed.*
- iii. One stair only will require to be provided with a stair lift and no other alterations or adaptations are required to ensure access.*

- iv. *The provision of this stair lift will result in access to all of the necessary facilities on the floor to which the stair lift provides access.*

7 Costs

The recommendations on internal stair lifts will be cost neutral. New external stair lifts can be purchased typically for £3500. Additional costs of insurance, maintenance and servicing may require consideration.