

BRIDGEND COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL

REPORT TO EQUALITIES COMMITTEE

6th April 2009

REPORT OF THE CORPORATE DIRECTOR COMMUNITIES

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT AND THE BRIDGEND ACCESSIBLE HOMES PROJECT

1.0 Purpose of Report

- 1.1 The purpose of this Report is to present to Members information regarding Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and the Bridgend Accessible Homes Project, which aims to provide the best use of adapted housing stock and reduce the number of adaptations to non-adapted social rented properties.

2.0 Connection to Corporate Improvement Plan / Other Corporate Priorities

- 2.1 A decent home is one of the elements identified as a requirement that will equip citizens and families with the means to live life to the full as part of the Corporate Priority 'Opportunities for Our Disadvantaged Communities'.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 DFGs are the only mandatory grant within the Council's Private Sector Renewal Policy, all other housing grants being discretionary. DFGs are available to both owner-occupiers and tenants to provide facilities and adaptations to enable a disabled person to live as independently as possible.
- 3.2 Typically, schemes commissioned may include the provision of a stairlift or ramping to facilitate access in and around the home, specialist bathing facilities, etc, all dependent on assessed need. Some very complex schemes involve significant construction work in building extensions to existing homes. All grants are means tested (applicants income only) with the exception of works identified as being for children with disabilities.
- 3.3 Historically, a limit of £30,000 has been set on the value of mandatory DFGs, but recently this has been increased to £36,000. The overall annual housing capital budget covering this area is £3m. This has been reduced by £200k in recent years. In 2007/08 there was an overspend of approximately £300k, which was partially offset by a revenue contribution, which has resulted in an effective reduction in the budget available for 2008/09 to

around £2.8m. At its meeting on 18 February, Council approved a budget of £3.3m for mandatory DFG's for 2009/10, which addresses the overspend issue.

4.0 Current Situation / Proposal

- 4.1 There is growing pressure on local authorities to provide adaptations to assist people to remain living at home independently. This demand is growing as longevity increases and the number of children and young people requiring assistance grows.
- 4.2 Referrals to the Council's Occupational Therapists team have increased by over 20% per year over the past couple of years, which has resulted in significant increases in the number of recommendations for DFG works. The implementation of budgetary control measures and the continuing mismatch between available resources and the need for both mandatory and discretionary grants have impacted upon performance and waiting times.
- 4.3 The average number of calendar days to deliver a DFG during 2007/08 was 286 days, the second quickest performance in Wales, showing a significant improvement from 462 days during 2006/07. This was due to revised working arrangements, including the introduction of fast-tracking schemes for showers and stairlifts. However, at the end of Quarter 3 in the current year this average was increasing to 316 days. There are significant variations in the time taken to deliver individual DFGs within this average, but this increase is largely as a consequence of the budgetary control measures which have been introduced to reduce anticipated expenditure in 2008/9.
- 4.4 A key national social care policy aim is to keep older people in their own home to maintain independent living and the current position inevitably is resulting in vulnerable people having to wait longer for adaptations to their homes which will protect and improve their independence and quality of life. During this time there may be a need for increased care and support from other Council services such as home care. Risks of accidents and falls may also increase, with associated hospital admissions.
- 4.5 A Working Group has been established in response to the budgetary pressures and the affect upon applicants, to look at the entire DFG process, budgetary control measures and the impact upon applicants for all categories of grants. This will be the subject of a separate report to Cabinet later this year.
- 4.6 There is a disparity in adaptation services available to occupiers in different sectors of the housing market. Latest figures (2006/07) indicate that RSLs own 5% of the housing stock and in 2008/09 secured £9m while local

authorities who are responsible for the remaining 95% of the stock were nominally allocated £41.2m for DFGs and private sector renewal.

- 4.7 The Bridgend Accessible Homes project was recently established to provide a service that matches those people in need of social rented adapted housing to meet their physical needs. The aim is to reduce the need for adaptations in social rented properties, thus controlling the budgetary pressures from this type of applicant. The project is proving very successful, with **37** households, (66 people) having been relocated to suitably adapted properties, through the Disabled Housing Register during the period October 2007 to September 2008. A copy of the Year 1 Report is attached at Appendix 1.

5. Effect upon Policy Framework& Procedure Rules

- 5.1 There are no implications for the Policy Framework and Procedure Rules

6. Legal Implications

- 6.1 None

7. Financial Implications

- 7.1 None

8.0 Recommendation

It is recommended that Committee:

- 8.1 Note the actions and progress being made to deliver Disabled Facilities Grant, including that made through the Bridgend Accessible Homes Project.

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25 February 2009

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APPENDIX 1



SOCIAL HOUSING MANAGEMENT GRANT PROGRAMME PROGRESS REPORT

Grant reference number: 2007/026

Organisation: Valleys to Coast

Project Title: Bridgend Accessible Homes

Reporting Period: Year 1

October 2007-September 2008

SECTION 3 – Managing the Project

1. How will you monitor the project and be able to demonstrate achievements?

- *The Steering Group will monitor the progress of the project against the targets and timetables set via regular meetings.*
- *Information will be provided by the Project Co-ordinator, to include feedback from social landlords, referral agencies and people who have applied for accommodation and/or adaptations.*

Progress

- The Steering Group has held regular meetings, in an accessible venue, to both support the Project Co-ordinator and to monitor the progress of the Project. Any identified potential barriers for people accessing the service, are discussed and solutions sought.
- The Project Co-ordinator has reported on a range of indicators and targets set by the Steering Group for the initial period of the Project. These have included the number of people referred to the project, the source of the referrals and the progress of the applicants through the process. This information is shown from Page 8.
- Information gathered by the Project from the social landlords, applicants and other relevant organisations has been provided regularly and has helped inform the Projects development to date. This has been particularly important to ensure that the Project is responsive to the needs of all partners.
- The Project has been proactive in forging links with relevant groups in the Bridgend county borough area and has established successful relationship with the Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People, (BCDP) and the Bridgend Community Occupational Therapy Team. This has resulted in the Chair of BCDP, (a tenant of one Partner RSL) joining the Steering Group in November 2007 and a Senior Occupational Therapist joining in April 2008.
- Visits have been made to relevant Social Services Teams to raise awareness of the Project and referral processes, including the First Contact Team, Adult Services and Disabled Children's Team.
- Bridgend Social Services now include a visit to BAH as part of the induction process for new staff.

2. Briefly explain how the project will be planned and managed:

The Steering Group, with the Project Co-ordinator, will develop the summary action plan into detailed work objectives on an annual basis. These will be reviewed quarterly and progress reported to the Steering Group quarterly.

Standards of service will be established and the Project Co-ordinator will establish an administrative system to enable reporting against those standards. The standards will be publicised to customers and stakeholders and provide a basis for their feedback.

Progress:

Following a recruitment process in the summer of 2007, the Project Co-ordinator, Janet Jordan started in October 2007, with the Administrative Assistant, Amanda Rogers starting in November 2007.

Subsequent to a period of induction, the initial focus was the development of appropriate procedures and related forms and other preparation ahead of an official launch of the Project in January 2008.

Visits were made by the Project Co-ordinator to similar projects in Cardiff, Rhondda Cynon Taff and Newport. The information shared, enabled the Project to benefit from the experiences of other areas.

The resulting documentation, which was approved by the Steering Group, includes the following:

- Bridgend Accessible Homes Procedures
- Applicant Referral Process
- Applicant Referral Form
- Property Referral Process
- Property Referral Form
- Disabled Housing Register Application Form
- Guidelines for Completing DHR Application Form
- FAQ's for Applicants
- Complaints Procedure Leaflet for Applicants
- Occupational Therapy Assessment Form

3. Please give a summary plan of action: Planned Achieved Ongoing Not applicable Not achieved

Planned actions, outputs and milestones	Quarter 1 Oct - Dec 2007	Quarter 2 Jan - March 2008	Quarter 3 April - June 2008	Quarter 4 July - Sept 2008
2007 - 2008				
Advertise and recruit to post	√ October 07			
Induction	√ October 07			
Establish work objectives	√ October 07			
Devise procedures and related forms for process of referral	November 07			
Establish necessary communication channels/protocols etc	November 07 & ongoing	√		
Develop links with appropriate inter-related organisations	ongoing	√		
Link in with partner organisations Housing Register re-registration exercises	Feb-March 08	√		
Trial of systems and procedures	December 07	√	√	
Devise promotional literature and marketing material, Including web presence.		January 08	√ May 08	
2008 - 2009				
Launch Project	January 08			
Promotion and Development of Service	ongoing	√	√	√
Annual Review and Evaluation Report		√		
Performance monitoring and evaluation	√	√	√	√
2009 – 10				
Review Project and future funding arrangements		√		
Annual Review and Evaluation Report		√		
Performance monitoring and evaluation	√	√	√	√

NB. Due to the unexpectedly high number of referrals to the project, the web presence has been deferred to May 2009.



Progress Report – Year 1 October 2007 to September 2008

1. Project Launch

- 1.1 Bridgend Accessible Homes (the Project) was successfully launched on Monday 21st January at the Pyle Life Centre, Bridgend.
- 1.2 Jim McKirdle, Chair of the Bridgend Housing Partnership and Head of Housing at Bridgend County Borough Council, hosted the event and introduced:
 - Cheryl Green, Leader of Bridgend County Borough Council, who outlined why the Project had been established, including details of the independent study commissioned by the Council which concluded that 15.7% of all households in the county borough area included one or more members in an identified support needs group.
 - Simon Green, Chair of the Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People who delivered a powerful message on the importance of consultation with disabled tenants and spoke of his personal experiences as a wheelchair user.
- 1.3 The launch was very well attended by members of the public, some expressing a personal interest in being considered for housing through the Project. A wide range of organisations such as Age Concern, Shout, and Care & Repair were represented in addition to senior representatives from each of the Partners.

2. Project Promotion

All opportunities to promote the Project are taken and include:

- An article about the Project in The Gazette, Bridgend's local newspaper
- Publicity, promoting the official launch of Project
- A re-registration exercise undertaken by the Council on its Housing Register
- Never Too Old Day –Older People Strategy BCBC
- Valleys to Coast AGM
- Age Concern Day
- Partner Organisation newsletters
- Project information leaflets have been provided to relevant local statutory and voluntary agencies and community groups.

Visits and awareness raising talks to

- Bridgend Coalition of Disabled People
- Age Concern
- The Stroke Association
- SSD Teams
- RSL Team Meetings

3. Database

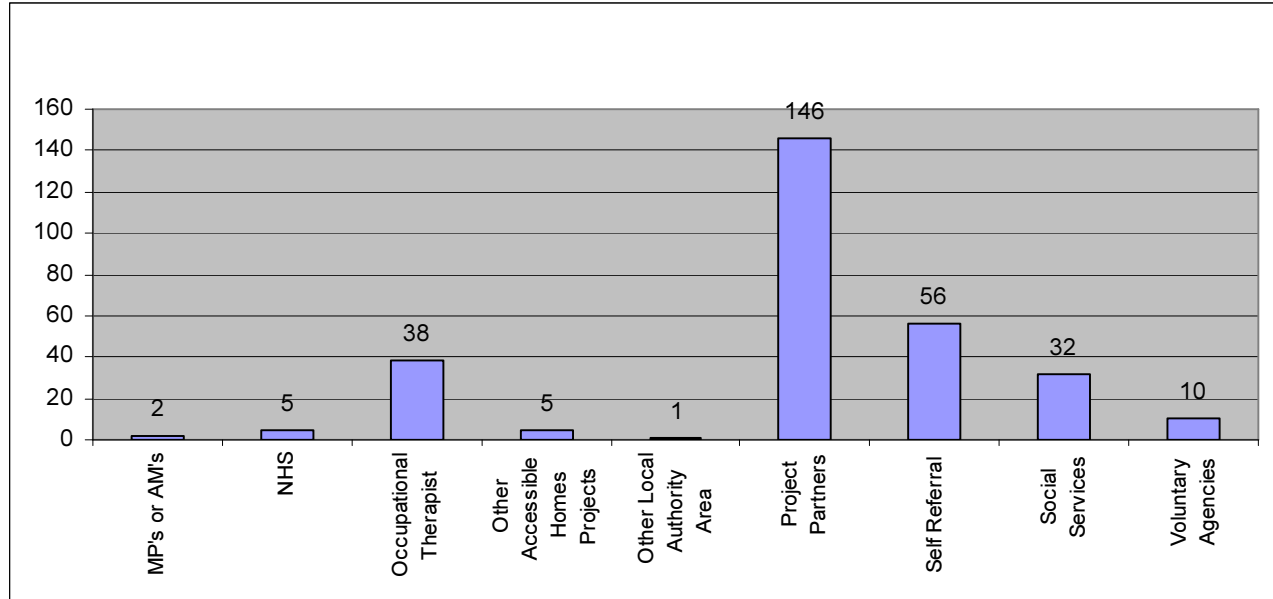
The Project has developed an access database for collating information on both properties and applicants, in order to match people to available adapted and accessible homes and provide monitoring information to the Project Steering Group. The information gathered was provided to the Steering Group monthly in the first 6 months and is now provided quarterly.

4. Applicant Referrals

At 30th September 2008, (8 months after the launch of the Project), Referrals had continued to exceed expectations and 295 were received from a wide range of sources, which demonstrates a good awareness of the project in the community. These are illustrated in the graph below

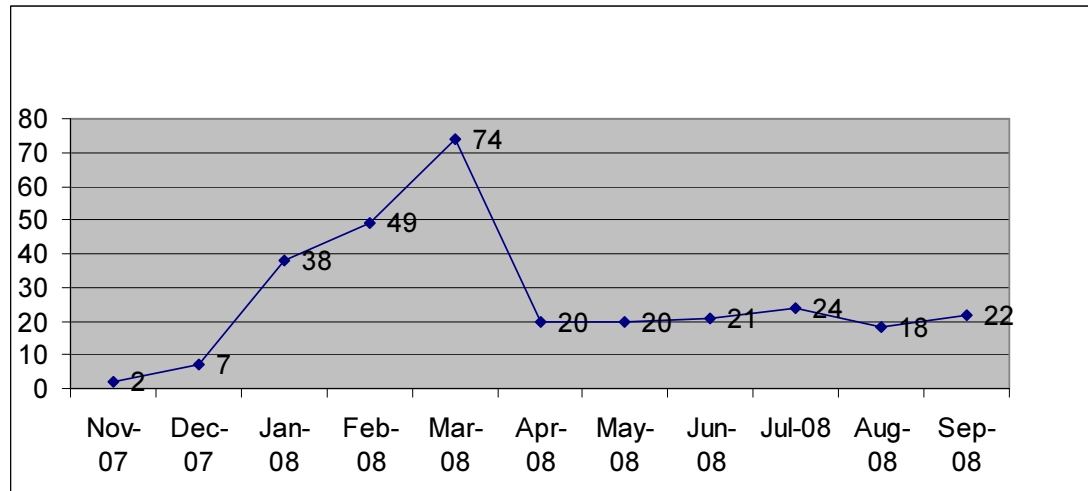
4.1

Applicant Referrals by Source to 30 Sept. 08



4.2

Applicant Referrals by Month to Sept. 08



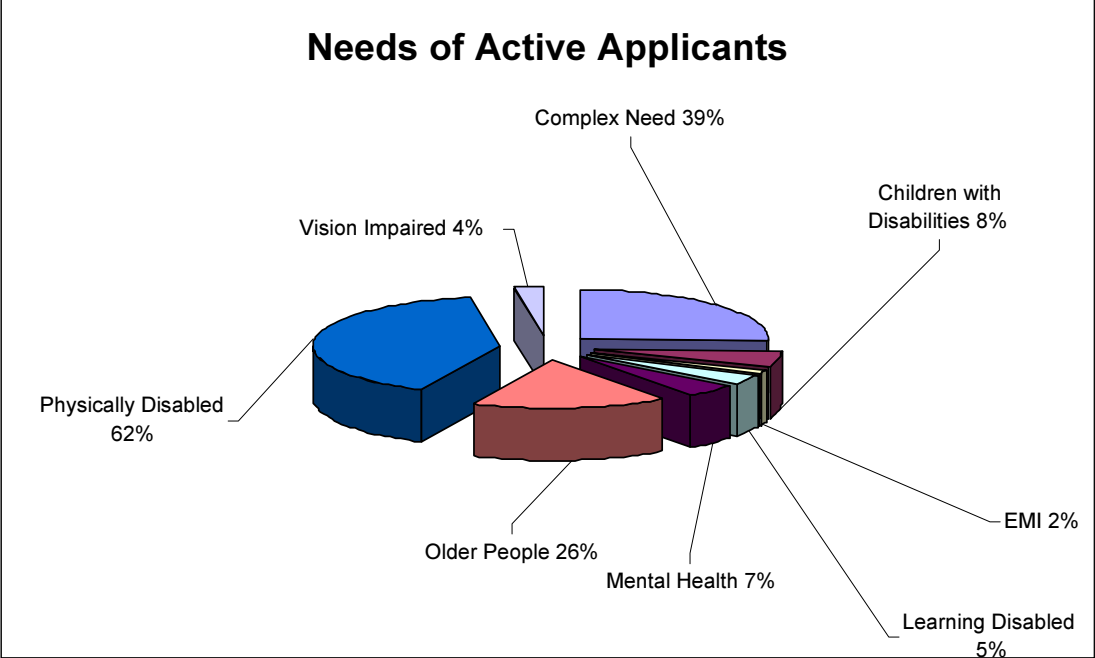
4.3 Of the 295 Referrals received to date

- **236** people have been accepted for the Disabled Housing Register
- **7** people have not been accepted for the Disabled Housing Register, i.e. do not need an adapted property.
- **3** people have passed away
- **1** person has been accommodated in Residential Care
- **3** people have not been accepted for the Disabled Housing Register, due to suitability of existing adapted housing, but have been accepted for future development of a Mutual Exchange Register when the Project is more established.

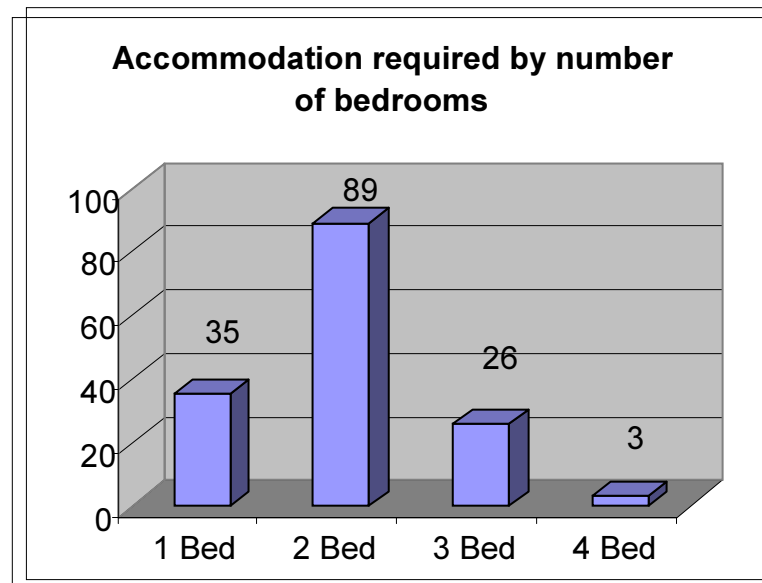
All Applicants not accepted for the DHR are signposted to the most appropriate agency for their needs or Partner RSL for a General Housing application.

- **45** people referred have not responded to requests for further information, telephone and/or written communication from the Project.
- **17** applicants referred have secured suitable alternative accommodation via the Partner Organisations General Needs Housing/Transfer Lists.
- **4** applicants have found suitable accommodation in Privately Rented housing.
- **4** applicants have found suitable accommodation in other Local Authority areas
- **18** people have cancelled their applications
 - 13 decided to remain in their own homes
 - 1 chose to have adaptations to current home
 - 1 moved back to parental home for support
- **153** Applicants are currently active, at variable stages of the application process, on the Disabled Housing Register.

4.4



4.5

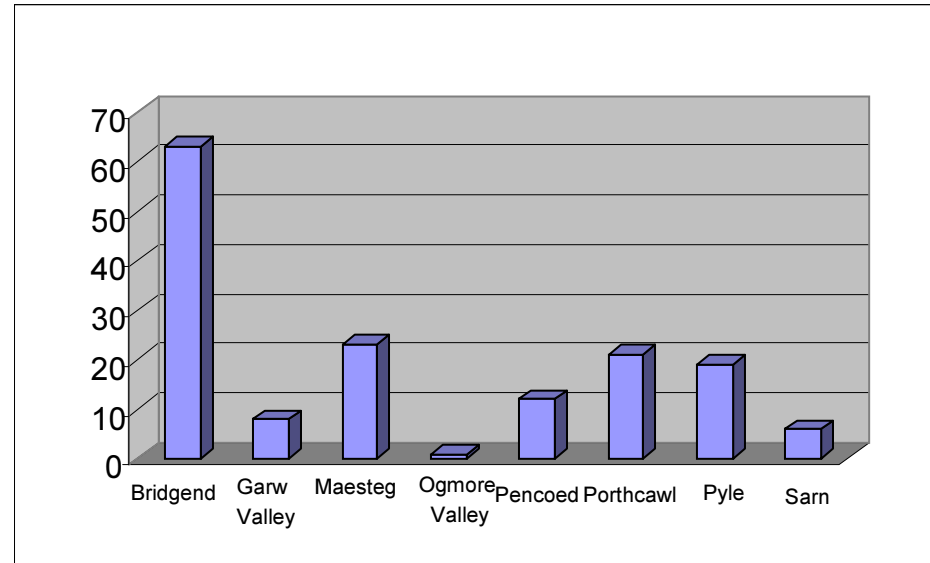


4.6 There continues to be a very high demand for one level accommodation both by choice of the applicant and need as identified and recommended by an Occupational Therapist (OT).

93% of active applicants have indicated a bungalow is their preferred option to meet their mobility needs when completing the Disabled Housing Register (DHR) application.

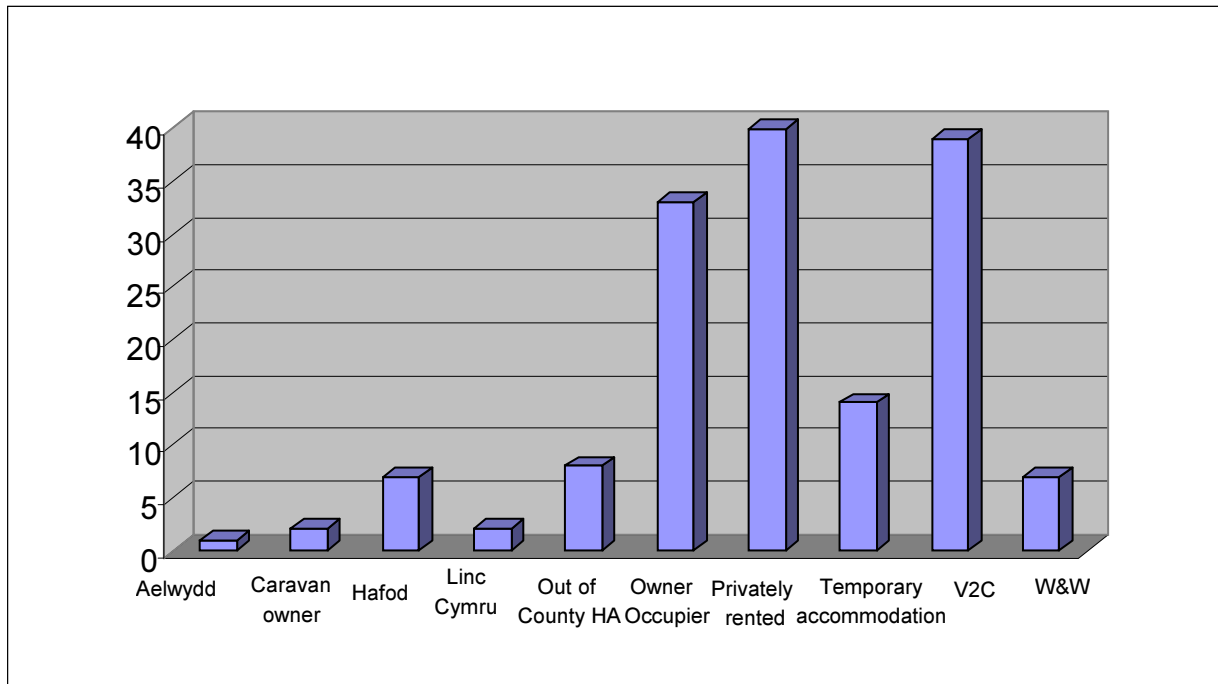
4.7

Areas most requested at 30 Sept. 08



4.8

Current Tenure of Active Applicants at 30 Sept. 08



5. Adapted Property information

- 5.1 At 30th September 2008 the Project had basic information on 361 tenanted Properties, which are believed to be adapted.
(309 from V2C; 49 from W&W; 3 from Hafod).
- 5.2 Of these, 45 properties have become vacant and referred to the Project for assessment, by the following Partners
- 3 Hafod
 - 0 Linc-Cymru
 - 26 Valleys to Coast
 - 10 Wales & West
 - 6 Hafodcare new build development

Of the 45 vacant properties referred by the Partners, the Project assessed them as:

Category	Applicant Description	Property Description
A <u>2</u>	Wheelchair user - people with a severe disability who are unable to stand or walk unaided, and use a wheelchair all of the time for all activities and need facilities on ground floor level.	Bungalow or G F Flat fully adapted to Wheelchair Housing standards. Accommodation on one level.
B <u>2</u>	Wheelchair user - people with a severe disability who use a wheelchair all of the time and are able to use a through floor lift.	House fully adapted to Wheelchair Housing standards. With provision of through-floor lift to access other floor levels.
C 1 <u>14</u>	Semi-ambulant people and occasional wheelchair users – people who use a wheelchair occasionally and/or are semi ambulant, and are able to walk to a limited extent but cannot climb steps or stairs	Bungalow, House or Flat part adapted. Level or ramped access for wheelchair users. House or flat, will include a stair or

C 2 <u>7</u>	Semi-ambulant people who are able to walk to a limited extent but cannot climb steps or stairs.	through floor lift fitted to access other floor levels. Level or ramped access but not suitable for wheelchair access. House or flat, will include a stair or through floor lift fitted to access other floor levels.
D <u>7</u>	Ambulant - people who do not use wheelchairs and require a powered lift to access other floor levels. Can manage a few steps and stairs.	Any property part adapted. Limited stepped access Has a stair or through-floor lift been fitted to access other floors?
E <u>7</u>	Ambulant- people who do not use wheelchairs and require adaptations other than a stairlift. Can manage steps and stairs.	Any property part adapted. Limited stepped access. Without a powered lift.
F	Blind or visually impaired- people who do not need mobility adaptations but need visual aids/equipment around the home.	Accommodation preferably with ramped or level access. Property specifically adapted to RNIB Housing Sight specifications.
Brocastle - 6	Non adapted – Adaptations agreed where necessary for vulnerable people	

**6. Service Delivery Progress and Development
Putting the Policies and Procedures into Practice**

- 6.1 Working to the Social Model of Disability, the aim of the Project is to maximise the independence of disabled and elderly people who live in their own home in the Community of Bridgend.

BAH is committed to providing a person centred, responsive matching service that considers the holistic needs of the applicant. By not adhering to the property categories too rigidly and proactively recognising the potential of properties suitable for further adaptation the Project aims to achieve both the most effective use of the Partners existing adapted housing stock and reduce the applications for costly adaptations to non-adapted properties.

The Project works very closely with colleagues in Social Services in order to achieve this aim and people are now offered the option of applying to the Disabled Housing Register when a relevant Social Services/OT Assessment is completed, as shown by the 70 referrals received to date directly from Care Managers and OT's. To date there have been 15 applicants with significant need for advocacy and joint working with Health & Social Care professionals and benefits agencies.

- 6.2 Traditionally, Partner RSL Housing Registers have focussed on the Medical Model of Disability to determine housing need/priority on their registers.

In order to promote a better understanding of the Social Model of Disability and the ethos of the Project, we have arranged Disability Equality Training for November 2008, facilitated by an experienced Disabled Trainer and the Project Steering Group Tenant and Disabled Person representative.

Operational colleagues from the Partner organisations, including Customer Service Advisers, Housing Officers and Surveyors and Maintenance staff have been invited and approx. 50 people are expected to attend over the 4 half-day sessions.

- 6.3 All Occupational Therapists who complete an assessment for applicants to the Disabled Housing Register are offered the opportunity to view potential properties before nomination if required for their client's needs, working in Partnership to ensure the long-term needs of the disabled tenant and reduce the need for further adaptation in future, particularly for people with progressive and degenerative conditions.

- 6.4 The Project has excellent links with the Council's Community Occupational Therapy (COT) Team, which continues to be a vital part of the process for matching applicants to adapted properties. To 30 September 2008, 200 OT assessments have been requested by the Project, including 16 for applicants from outside the County, of which 136 have been completed and returned.
- 6.5 Where an applicant is not currently in receipt of support, or known by, social services, the Project staff will refer them for an OT assessment by completing the Unified Assessment, Initial Contact Form. This resulted from meetings with the First Contact Team and feedback received has confirmed this system is working effectively.
- 6.6 Bridgend Accessible Homes has evolved as a Disabled Persons Housing Service rather than a Disabled Housing Register, which is evidenced by the increasing number of enquiries from relevant Health & Social Care Practitioners, the voluntary sector, political representatives and individual disabled people as the first point of contact for housing need for disabled people and people with support needs.

Signposting people in need of housing to other relevant organisations is an inherent part of service delivery and can add many practical and financial benefits for applicants.

For example, one homeless applicant had severe need following a number of strokes and had no Social Services involvement. Through sign posting and advocacy via BAH, social care and health links were made and an OT assessment was fast tracked due to the severity of need, providing much needed care and aids. By working in Partnership, the applicant was successfully accommodated and received a substantial increase in benefits, all resulting in a dramatic improvement in his physical and emotional well-being.

Another example is an elderly couple whose income has increased dramatically following a referral from BAH to Bridgend Age Concern for a Benefits Health Check, affecting all aspects of their daily living.

- 6.7 The project was invited to attend the Launch of The National Forum for Specialist Discharge Liaison Practitioners in Wales in May 2008 and after speaking about the role of Disabled Housing Registers, following the successful nomination of one applicant from the local hospital, BAH has been invited to attend the meetings, currently quarterly, regularly.
- 6.8 Excellent links have been forged with similar Project Coordinators in other areas, i.e. RCT, Cardiff, Swansea, Newport and Neath Port Talbot. Three meetings have taken place to date, to share information and experiences and there are plans to formalise the meeting group in the near future.

A joint visit with Pathways, (RCT), and ADAPT, (Swansea) was made to the well established Bradford Disabled Persons Housing Service. A presentation by Bradford Housing members demonstrated the CBL and integrated IT system which feeds into the project.

This was an informative visit, which confirmed many similarities between the projects. In Bradford the DPHS has an adaptation budget which enables fast track adaptations in cases of severe need, e.g. for Hospital Discharges, and adaptable properties, up to a limited cost.

7. Outcomes

It is worth noting that in practice, although the information collated and prioritised on the Disabled Housing Register is (applicant) needs based, the matching and nomination process is driven by the accessibility of the vacant property, rather than the applicant with the highest priority. This is mainly due to the general lack of fully wheel chair accessible properties, most often required by the highest priority need applicants.

Following a request for information from one Partner, Hafod Housing Association, BAH met with a representative from Hafodcare regarding possible properties for rent at a new development for over 55's in Bridgend, originally built for purchase. This liaison has been ongoing to date and 10 properties have been made available for rent via the Project.

- **37** households, (66 people) have been relocated to suitably adapted properties, through the Disabled Housing Register.
- **6** of these properties were referred by Hafodcare for the new build development for Older People.
- The outcome of an additional two nominations are not known at 30.09.08
- One property is awaiting nomination due to improvement works taking place
- 5 properties were not allocated to BAH Applicants for the following reasons:
 - ❖ 3 were studio sheltered units with inadequate space for people with mobility issues, two of which were located on the first floor level with no provision of a powered lift for access.
 - ❖ 1 house was returned to the Partner RSL for general needs due to inappropriate adaptation and lack of accessibility.
 - ❖ 1 Sheltered studio unit was withdrawn by the Partner RSL

8. Feedback from Applicants

Feedback forms are sent to all applicants successfully re-housed through the Project/Disabled Housing Register following a settling in period. To date 37 Feedback Questionnaires have been sent and 18 completed forms have been returned.

Of the 49% returned, the responses have been as illustrated on the form below:

Quality Review

Please help us to develop and improve Bridgend Accessible Homes by answering the questions below.

1. Please tell us how you would rate the following aspects of the Service (please tick as appropriate)

	Poor 1	Unsatisfactory 2	Adequate 3	Good 4	Excellent 5
1.1 Service delivery					
Accessibility				5	13
Communication			1	3	14
Responsiveness			1	3	14
1.2 Provision of Information					
Relevance			1	8	9
Suitable format			1	8	9
Explained			1	7	10
Easy to understand				7	11
1.3 Staff					

Politeness				1	17
Contactable					18
Responsive				1	17

2. Outcomes (Please circle as appropriate)

2.1 Were your expectations of the project met?

No	Partly	Mostly	Yes	Exceeded
		1	7	10

2.2 Has your new home met your needs for adapted housing?

No	Partly	Mostly	Yes	Exceeded
		3	12	3

2.3 Are you more independent in your new home than you were in your previous home?

No	A little	Yes	A lot
		6	12

Below is a sample of the additional comments received from people re-housed through the Project

3. Is there anything we could have done differently to improve your experience of Bridgend Accessible Homes?

- *No - Apart from an outing on a bus for all the people to take them places.
JH May 08*
- *No - Spot on.
DL May 08*
- *I am very happy with what I have received and helpfulness from everyone concerned and the residents are very kind and friendly also the warden.*

JS March 08

4. Please add any further comments you would like to make about your experience of Bridgend Accessible Homes

- *Fantastic!*
KB Feb. 08
- *Everything went well and I don't think there is anything you could have done better. I'm very, very happy in my new home!*
JH May 08
- *The staff were very helpful and understanding always in contact. Also the work they have done to help me has made my life very happy.*
JC April 08
- *BAH were very helpful and caring of my needs and made me feel really at ease and helped me quickly.*
MH June 08
- *Very pleased my husband can go out in his wheelchair as couldn't when at our home. Accessible homes were very good to find our flat. It's the best thing we have done with your good help for my husband and myself his wife I have settled in very good we would never look back at living in our old home.*
DL May 08
- *Well run, helpful staff, quick response for home*
TR Sept. 08
- *It is a wonderful place to be for us elderly people we don't get lonely there is plenty going on.*
JS March 08

- *I find my home very comfortable and feel at ease. Very happy!*

JW July 08

- *I was found a home quickly with no fuss and was very pleased with the service I received.*

JC Feb. 08

In addition, the project has received many positive comments from colleagues in Partner and voluntary organisations, including the two examples below:-

..... I wanted to thank you for your prompt response to my referrals I have been very impressed with your subsequent success in re-housing these people.

X is delighted with her bungalow and we are moving her in on Thursday.

This move can only serve to improve her quality of life. Without your support I do not think we could have achieved this in such a short space of time. I am sure you will be receiving more referrals from our team as there are many of our service users in inappropriate housing. Keep up the good work!

Community Care Worker, Bridgend Social Services, March 2008, following a successful nomination for a disabled lady with complex and progressive needs.

..... You did a wonderful job in finding Y the accommodation. I had for years been trying to encourage Y to consider a ground floor flat but she refused. When you introduced her to the property she instantly wanted to move there. She has gone from strength to strength, she feels safe enough to go outside, to open windows and even walk to the café. She now has started writing poetry and helping others with their difficulties with the computer. She has a new lease of life. A big thank you.

Social Worker, Bridgend Social Services, Nov 08, following a successful nomination for a disabled lady with complex physical and sensory need.

Bridgend Accessible Homes would like to thank all Partners and Colleagues for their support and contributions to the Project's development and a special thank you to Simon Green, whose time and insight has been invaluable.

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