Home Adaptations for Disabled People

Good Practice Case Study: Wigan
**Locality:** Wigan Borough  
**Type of authority:** Metropolitan Borough - Unitary Authority  
**Population:** 317,900  
**Description:** The Wigan Borough is located between Manchester and Liverpool. It is one of the ten boroughs in the Greater Manchester Combined Authority and, as such, it will become part of the first area in England with devolved health budgets from 2016. It covers a large geographical area of 77 square miles. The housing stock is varied with a large amount of older, terraced housing.  
**Health and Disability:** The Wigan Borough has an ageing population. By 2026, over 65s will make up 21.5% of the population and 2.7% will be over 85. Most over 65s have two or more health conditions, while those over 75 have three or more. Life expectancy is lower than the national average, with considerable variation across the Borough. People in the most deprived areas have shorter lives than those in the most affluent areas – the gap being 9.4 years for men and 8.5 for women.  
**Local policy:** Local health and social care plans have a strong emphasis on early intervention and prevention, and public health strategies aim to help people live and age well. Wigan Council is working closely with Wigan Borough CCG to transfer a significant amount of activity out of hospital settings and into primary care, the community and people’s homes.  

**Good practice illustrates:**  
- Lean, cost effective major adaptations service  
- Pilot of new non-means-tested grant for hospital discharge and people ‘at risk’ of hospital admission  
- Effective joint working with health and social care  
- Delivering aims of Better Care Fund and Care Act to reduce hospital admissions  
- Focus on prevention and wellbeing
Home adaptations service at a glance

The home adaptations service in the Wigan Borough is an in-house agency service based in the Private Sector Housing team, part of the Housing and Regeneration Division in the Places Directorate. The service delivers major adaptations in private sector homes using the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). They are piloting a new, non-means-tested, Home Adaptations Grant (HAG) in order to reduce unplanned hospital admissions.

The local authority home adaptations service employs a small team of 4.0 FTE staff. It consists of a manager and two principal EHOs who work part time on adaptations, two full time technical officers and a team clerk who also covers other roles in private sector housing. Primary Assessors and OTs are not based in the adaptations team, but in separate Early Intervention and Prevention locality teams.

Adaptations in the council housing stock are delivered by a separate adaptations team in the Wigan and Leigh Homes Arms Length Management Organisation. There is also a separate Care & Repair agency (which is part of Manchester Care & Repair) that provides minor adaptations, small repairs, warm homes and a handyperson service.

Budget and caseload

Disabled Facilities Grant
Funding for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) in 2015/16 is £1.73m. In the previous year, Wigan Council completed DFG work for 226 households.

New Home Adaptations Grant Pilot
From October 2014, £2m has been provided through joint funding from Wigan Council and Wigan Borough CCG to pilot a new, non-means-tested, Home Adaptations Grant. In the first nine months of operation, they completed 120 cases, there were 180 in progress and a further 51 enquiries – a total of 351 cases. Nearly all the original allocation of funding has now been committed. The project is being carefully evaluated to gauge its success in reducing hospital admissions and improving quality of life.
How we work

The adaptations service was re-engineered a few years ago and is now very quick and efficient. Most referrals come via the Social Services duty team who screen and pass adaptation cases to the Early Intervention and Prevention locality teams. Primary Assessors deal with the more straightforward work, such as showers, stairlifts and access ramps, while the more complex cases go to the OTs before being referred to the adaptations team.

Since the introduction of the Care Act, the Primary Assessors and Council OTs do holistic assessments that include looking at everything that is needed to keep people independent at home. They are also working much more closely with Health OTs. All the Primary Assessors and Health OTs in the community and hospital teams have been trained to assess for both the DFG and the new Home Adaptation Grant. Health OTs can refer direct to the adaptations team - cases do not have to go through the Council OTs - so duplication of assessment is avoided. So far, about 75% of DFG/HAG referrals are from Council OTs and 25% from Health OTs.
The DFG and the new Home Adaptation Grant (HAG)

1) Standard DFG cases are dealt with using the test of resources as usual.
2) HAG cases are referred to the adaptations team for a rapid, non-means-tested, HAG if they fit the following criteria:
   • allows a patient to be discharged from hospital;
   • reduces the risk of a repeat unplanned hospital admission;
   • reduces the risk of an unplanned hospital admission in the next 12 months.

All HAG cases are fast-tracked with no form filling or test of resources. The Primary Assessor or OT simply e-mails a referral form through to the adaptations team. The referral is passed to one of the partner contractors within a day. Once the sketch plan and quote for the work is received, the HAG is approved on the same day. The contract of work remains between the home owner and contractor.

The adaptation team aims to complete most common major adaptations within six weeks of referral. The type of work is very similar to that completed using the DFG, with the focus on providing showers, stairlifts and facilitating access to the home using modular ramps. The average cost is around £5,500.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>HAGs</th>
<th>Hospital discharge</th>
<th>Avoid repeat admission</th>
<th>Avoid future admission</th>
<th>Total cases</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Average cost</th>
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<tr>
<td>Completed</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>64</td>
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<td>In progress</td>
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<td>Enquiries</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>15</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>51</td>
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<td>5,512</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TOTAL</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>152</td>
<td>195</td>
<td>351</td>
<td>1,934,674</td>
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A business case for investment was presented to Wigan Council and Wigan Borough CCG Joint Commissioning Group to provide additional capital for DFGs from its “invest to save” fund in order to facilitate hospital discharge and reduce the number of unplanned hospital admissions from falls.

The Joint Commissioning Group awarded £2m for a pilot project, but required the adaptations process to be speeded-up and made available to all, regardless of financial circumstances, because patients awaiting discharge from hospital or having unplanned hospital admissions from falls were not solely from low income backgrounds.

Anees Mank, Service Manager - Housing Services at Wigan Council explained:

“Experience had shown that the lengthy DFG application form and complex test of resources built-in a significant delay that slowed down the adaptations process. In addition, very few DFG applicants who had a high means-tested contribution went ahead with a major adaptation by contributing towards the cost. The vast majority just made do with equipment or minor adaptations.

These two factors delayed the discharge of patients from hospital and increased the risk of people having unplanned hospital admissions from falls, which would result in expenditure to the NHS that often far exceeded the cost of the adaptations required. Therefore, it was decided to use the funding to establish what effect speeding-up the adaptations process and removing the test of resources would have on assisting hospital discharge and reducing unplanned hospital admissions from falls, and how much this would save the NHS. Those benefiting from an adaptation through this funding are being monitored in order to evaluate this.”
What we’ve achieved:

**Use of HAG Oct 2014-July 2015**

- 4 Hospital discharge
- 152 Avoid repeat admission
- 195 Avoid future admission

**Type of work using HAG**

- Completed
- In progress
- Enquiries

- Access
- Bathroom
- Bedroom
- Hoist
- Extension
- Shower
- Stairlift
- Stairlift
- Toilet
- Other
Other aspects of the service

Contractors

Wigan has one partner contractor for each of the main types of work including: ceiling track hoists, modular access ramps, modular bathrooms, showers, stairlifts, through floor lifts and wash dry toilets. They work to an agreed specification and schedule of rates, which makes it very quick for them to produce a sketch plan and provide a quote. Extensions go out to tender through private architects.

I would like to convey my gratitude and complete elation for the help your work team has been to me. Please relay my thanks to your team, in particular Connie, without whose help I would still be struggling around my house. The raising of my couch has helped me to be more comfortable and, more importantly, eased the pain when sitting or getting up.

Also, a massive thank you for the help with my personal hygiene by giving the go ahead for me to have a wet room installed. I can't thank you enough. I am so grateful. This e-mail doesn't do justice for the work your team has done. Thank you all. My life is more bearable because of you.

Kindest regards,
Kevin

Care & Repair Wigan Borough

There is an independent local charity and home improvement agency that carries out minor adaptations. Minor adaptations are seen as a key service to enable individuals to remain safe and independent in their own home for as long as possible. Since the introduction of the Care Act the Social Care Access Teams no longer screen out anyone who needs this type of help and, as a result, the number of cases referred to Care & Repair has increased by about 50% in the first three months of 2015/16.

Care & Repair aims to complete simple minor adaptations within three days and other adaptations costing up to £1,000 within three weeks. The service also provides advice and assistance, a handyperson service, repairs and improvements, safety and security measures and carries out energy efficiency work.