

**EASTLEIGH BOROUGH
COUNCIL**

**Accessible Homes Strategy
2008-2011**

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Need for a Strategy

There are currently an estimated 10 million disabled people in Britain, of which 1.2 million are wheelchair users, 4.6 million are over state pension age and 700,000 are children. In Eastleigh, 16%¹ of all households contain people with limiting disabilities - 11% of whom are wheelchair users. This equates to around 2% of households in the Borough containing wheelchair users. 42% of households residing in social housing contain people with limiting disabilities, while some 18% of new tenancies each year within housing associations are held by households where at least one member has a disability and 3% contain wheelchair users.²

Research indicates that nationally there is a shortage of 300,000 fully wheelchair accessible properties to meet current and projected housing need³, while only 23% of all new Housing Corporation funded social housing in 2006-08 is being built to accessible Lifetime Homes standards; 9% being built to wheelchair accessible standards.

While everyone at some point will experience some form of limited mobility – perhaps through a sudden crisis such as an incapacitating accident, injury or illness besetting a household member - disabled people, and households containing a member with a long term disability, continue to face long term disadvantage in accessing suitable housing and are more likely to live in non-decent housing⁴.

We also face a significantly ageing population, with national and local projections showing that over the next 30 years the population aged 65 years and over will rise by 70 per cent and those aged 85 or over will increase by 149 per cent.

There is evidence that the current lack of development of suitable homes for older people is leading to their being unable to move. This in turn is leading to under-occupation of family homes; blocking up the supply chain; reducing flexibility and movement in the private and social housing sectors, and contributing to rising house prices⁵.

The percentage of households with long term limiting disabilities increases with the age of the household,⁶ as does the need for adaptations to their existing homes, while the capacity for adaptation of existing homes is limited or requires extensive and expensive works. The process of seeking and obtaining adaptations to enable them to remain in their home is lengthy with an average delay of 12 months; the quality of life of those affected can suffer during this time while health and social services can incur costs in the interim through hospitalisation, placement in extra care homes, or additional domiciliary care.

¹ Housing Needs Survey, 2002/2004

² Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan: Housing Corporation: Dec 2006.

³ Ackroyd, J (2003); Where do you think that you are going? John Grooms: London

⁴ Communities and Local Government, Disability Equality Scheme, Dec 2006

⁵ The future of the Code for Sustainable Homes; Making a rating mandatory; DCLG July 2007

⁶ Older Person's accommodation Strategy 2004-07, Eastleigh BC

The cost of minor works by landlords and Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funded adaptations to existing homes is also high and rising;

- The largest local housing association, Atlantic Housing, currently spends £122,000 p.a. on minor alterations for circa 300 tenants per year such as hand and grabs rails, over bath showers and lever taps
- DFG funding costs in excess of £430m per year nationally, and £0.5m in Eastleigh for circa 100 cases p.a. at an average of £5,000 per adaptation
- The Council's 2004 Housing Needs Survey identified a continuing increase in the need for adaptations, and
- The Council's private sector house condition survey in 2005 identified an estimated need for adaptations in 4,000 households across the Borough (10% of all stock) at a cost of £7.2m – an average of £1,800 per property.

Conversely, research suggests that the cost of building new homes to Lifetime Homes or Wheelchair Accessible design standards from the outset, which would ensure that all new homes are accessible for the disabled and flexible enough to meet the need of whatever comes along in life, equates to an average increase of only £550 per unit, and any additional costs compared to the overall benefits to the economy of doing this would be broadly in balance.⁷

There is therefore a social, demographic and economic need to ensure that all new and refurbished homes are more accessible, suitable and better able to adapt to the needs of their occupants at different stages of their life, alongside improving the scope of refurbishments to maximise accessibility when meeting decent homes standards.

Aims of the Strategy

The aims of the strategy are to:

- Highlight the current legislative and regulatory framework for accessible homes for the disabled
- Provide detail on the types of and benefits of accessible homes
- Examine the national, regional and local context and needs for accessible housing, and
- Seek to influence the Local Development Plan to ensure delivery of suitable accessible homes within the Borough.

The definition of disability for the purposes of this strategy is that used in the Disability Discrimination Act, which covers a wide range of disabilities from people with Alzheimer's and arthritis to those with learning disabilities, depression, diabetes, cancer etc. The definition is detailed at **Appendix 1**.

Relevance to other Council Strategies

The strategy has an impact upon and bears direct relevance to one of the Council's key corporate priorities – A Healthy Community, alongside detailed objectives contained within the:

- Housing Strategy: 2006-11
- Older Persons Accommodation Strategy 2004-07

⁷ The future of the Code for Sustainable Homes; Making a rating mandatory; DCLG July 2007

- Disability Strategy 2006
- Equality Strategy 2006
- Social Inclusion Strategy 2005-07

2. THE LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Disability Discrimination Act 1995 (DDA)

The Disability Discrimination Act (1995) was introduced in order to improve opportunities for disabled people. It set out to end discrimination against a person because they experience disability, and to ensure that organisations would make 'reasonable adjustments' to ensure that the person can access services.

However, over the course of the following decade, many indicators showed that ending discrimination hadn't yet happened, e.g;

- The Joseph Rowntree Foundation found that four out of 10 families with disabled children experienced homes which were cold, damp and / or in poor repair⁸
- The English House Condition Survey found that
 - 25 per cent of all households in non-Decent Homes included someone who is long term ill or disabled⁹, and
 - 1.5 million people were in need of accessible accommodation, with 329,000 living in completely unsuitable housing¹⁰.
- A survey of physically disabled people in England and Wales conducted by John Grooms in 2003 found that:
 - 20% had difficulty moving around their house or getting in and out of their front door
 - 24% felt that they were prisoners in their own home due to poor access and location
 - 40% felt that their housing situation made them unnecessarily dependent on other people.¹¹
- Between 1997 and 2004 in England the overall numbers of households accepted to be priority homeless (by local authorities) due to physical disabilities increased by 24 per cent, whereas those accepted as in priority need due to mental health problems rose by 65 per cent,¹² and
- A 2003 Joseph Rowntree Foundation study found that most young disabled people wanted to leave their parental home in their teens or twenties, and that the principal barrier they experienced was inadequate housing choices.¹³

As the Disability Rights Commission highlighted, "*Historically, the way in which houses have been built, and housing services have been run, has failed to address the needs of disabled people as part of the wider community. Because buildings and programmes have been designed in a way which excludes disabled people, they are*

⁸ York University, 2002, The housing needs of disabled children: The national evidence, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

⁹ Department for Communities and Local Government, 2002, English House Condition Survey

¹⁰ Office of the Deputy Prime Minister, 2003 / 2004, Survey of English Housing

¹¹ Ackroyd, J (2003) Where do you think that you are going? John Grooms: London

¹² Department for Communities and Local Government statistics for 2005

¹³ Dean, Jo, 2003, The housing aspirations of young disabled people in Scotland, Joseph Rowntree Foundation

instead often catered for by 'special' services. Too often this has resulted in disabled people finding themselves trapped in poor housing conditions, completely unsuitable to their needs"¹⁴.

Disability Equality Duty 2006 (DES)

The Disability Equality Duty was introduced as a result of perceived failures of the DDA. However, it is not about more individual rights; instead it is about improving public authorities' policies and services as a whole for all disabled people.

The general duty requires every public authority, when carrying out its functions, to have due regard to the need to:

- promote equality of opportunity between disabled and non-disabled people
- eliminate unlawful discrimination against disabled people
- eliminate harassment of disabled people that is related to their disabilities
- promote positive attitudes towards disabled people
- encourage participation by disabled people in public life
- take steps to take account of disabled peoples' disabilities, even where that involves treating them more favourably than others.

'Due regard' means that organisations should give due weight to the need to promote disability equality in proportion to its relevance.

In the context of Housing Strategies, expectations are that local Councils as part of their enabling role should set out a long term vision of housing for disabled people; a statement of housing-related targets and objectives; show how its proposals for the local area are consistent with the national, regional and sub-regional policies for disabled people, and how the wider priorities can be translated and implemented at the local level.¹⁵

Planning Policy

Planning Policy Statement 1 (PPS1) is the government's statement setting out the over-arching principles for sustainable development within which all planning authorities should be operating. The Government has detailed in Planning Policy Statement 1 their expectations that, 'Development Plans should promote development that creates socially inclusive communities... Plan policies should ...seek to reduce social inequalities and take into account the needs of all the community, including particular requirements relating to age, sex, ethnic background, religion, disability or income'.¹⁶ It is now a requirement for Design and Access Statements to be submitted for most planning applications to include access for disabled persons. The Council has a disabled access group that leads on these issues.

¹⁴ A guide to the Disability Equality Duty and Disability Discrimination Act 2005 for the social housing sector; DRC,; 2006

¹⁵ A guide to the Disability Equality Duty and Disability Discrimination Act 2005 for the social housing sector; DRC; 2006

¹⁶ DCLG (2005) Planning Policy Statement 1- Paragraph 16 "Delivering Sustainable Development"

The Code for Sustainable Homes

The Code for Sustainable Homes was introduced in England in April 2007 following extensive consultation with environmental groups and the home building and wider construction industries, and is currently a voluntary code for all except publicly funded housing (which must achieve three star ratings) but with plans to make it mandatory for all on a phased basis between 2008 and 2016.

The Code measures the sustainability of a new home against categories of sustainable design, rating the 'whole home' as a complete package out of a possible 104 'credits'. There is currently no requirement to adopt the Lifetime Homes standards (which form part of the health and well-being category and account for 4 credits out of the 104) in the Code – it is entirely up to the developer to decide where to focus their effort in acquiring points.

However, Ministers said in the Government response to Kate Barker's report on Housing Supply that they considered Lifetime Homes standards important, would monitor take-up, and did not rule out regulation if it proved necessary. They have now indicated their intention to make Lifetime Homes a mandatory element of the code. The basis for this being that;

- Consultations with disabled people in formulating the Department for Communities and Local Government's (DCLG) Disability Equality Scheme identified improving housing opportunities as a key priority outcome
- The home building market is not reacting as quickly as necessary to meet dramatic demographic changes highlighted in the introduction to this strategy, and
- Including Lifetime Homes standards as an essential element in the Code for Sustainable Homes will achieve their aim of delivering sustainable communities and form an important element of their forthcoming Strategy for Housing for an Ageing Population.

3. LIFETIME HOMES

What are Lifetime Homes

Lifetime Homes standards were developed in the 1990s as a set of sixteen criteria which together make a dwelling easier to use and adapt as a family's needs change over time, and are suitable for older people and for the vast majority of disabled people, as well as the non-disabled person. Lifetime Homes are built with accessibility and adaptability incorporated at the design stage, with inbuilt flexibility to ensure that should the occupant's needs change, the homes are cheaper to adapt and there is minimal disruption to the occupant.

The full criteria and a comparison with Part M of the Building Regulations alongside Housing Corporation Scheme Development Standards are detailed at **Appendix 2**.

Some, such as a requirement for a level threshold and provision of a downstairs WC are already incorporated in the Building Regulations.

The Benefits of Lifetime Homes

The benefits of Lifetime Homes have been evaluated over the past decade and are summarised below, in that they can result in;

- A reduced need to move into residential care
- Savings in home/domiciliary care costs; as Lifetime Homes may reduce the need for some of this home care
- Savings in Supporting People costs
- Savings in health care costs: Where people cannot be discharged because of difficulty of securing places in residential or nursing homes, or they cannot return home the health service bears additional costs
- Reduced costs of rehousing disabled people
- Savings in the costs of minor adaptations: Minor adaptations are generally those costing less than £500, in the main currently paid for by social landlords
- Reduced costs of removing adaptations: When a home switches from use by a disabled person to an able bodied person adaptations may have to be removed
- Real quality of life benefits for disabled people and carers
- Long-term community benefits: the fact that older and disabled people may not have to move unless they choose to, adds to the social cohesion of a community

The table below details the anticipated savings of adopting Lifetime homes across the country as a mandatory element of all new build homes.

Table 1: Summary of benefits and costs of Lifetime Homes

Benefits	Costs
Reduced cost of adaptations to dwellings for disabled people (£49.6m per year)	Increased costs of building all homes to Lifetime Homes Standards (£92.9m per year)
Reduced need to move into residential care (£5.6m per year)	Effect on value of properties
Savings in home care costs (£21.5m per year)	
Savings in health care costs	
Reduced costs of rehousing disabled people (£2.5m per year)	
Savings in the costs of minor adaptations (£10.6m per year)	
Savings in administrative costs (£2.7m per year)	
Reduced costs of removing adaptations	
TOTAL: £92.5m	TOTAL: £92.9m

Source: The future of the Code for Sustainable Homes; Making a rating mandatory; DCLG July 2007

It is recognised that there is still debate around the true cost of lifetime homes provision as this could vary depending on site constraints, design and the impact of the required standard.

4. WHEELCHAIR ACCESSIBLE HOMES

What are Wheelchair Accessible Homes?

Wheelchair accessible homes, built to the standards detailed in The Wheelchair Housing Design Guide, 2nd edition, 2006¹⁷ are different to Lifetime Homes. Wheelchair accessible homes allow either immediate occupation by a wheelchair user or easy adaptation when the need arises.

Whilst Lifetime Homes and wheelchair accessible housing have some features in common, there are important differences that will almost certainly make the footprint of a unit designed to be wheelchair accessible different to other residential units, included in which is the need for a covered carport to facilitate access to a vehicle.

The full criteria are detailed at **Appendix 3**.

5. THE NATIONAL & REGIONAL CONTEXT

New Homes

Requirements for Lifetime and Wheelchair Accessible Homes standards are key emerging features in the national policy context for development and funding of new homes.

Building for Life

Building for Life is a joint initiative between CABE, the Civic Trust and the House Builders Federation to promote design excellence and celebrate best practice within the house building industry. The Building for Life standard is the national benchmark for well-designed housing and neighbourhoods in England. It is awarded to new housing projects that demonstrate a commitment to high design standards and good place making.

Accessibility is included in 20 key criteria which new housing projects are measured against. Criteria 15 of the building for life standard is whether internal spaces and layout allow for adaptation, conversion or extension.

CABE also believe that as a minimum, an adequate supply of new housing should be designed to “Lifetime Homes” standards¹⁸ and that everyone should have the opportunity of living in a decent well designed home which is capable of meeting their needs throughout their lives.¹⁹

¹⁷ ‘Wheelchair Housing Design Guide’ by Stephen Thorpe, 2006 edition, available from www.brepress.com

¹⁸ Planning Policy Statement 3 –Housing CABE’s response to the governments consultation

¹⁹ Code for sustainable homes CABE’s response to the governments consultation

English Partnerships

English Partnerships (EP) is the national regeneration agency helping the government to support high quality sustainable growth in England. As a major landowner (and as a facilitator for the purchase and re-use of surplus public sector land) EP seek to promote homes that are flexible and adaptable.

House builders purchasing land from EP are required to adopt Lifetime Homes as a minimum standard (which is enforced by a legal agreement).

The Housing Corporation

The Housing Corporation fund and regulate the provision of affordable homes in England. In practice, 23% of housing currently funded by the Corporation meets Lifetime Homes standards, and the Housing Corporation uses development standards that already include many Lifetime Home and wheelchair housing standards as noted in **Appendix 2**.

The Corporation has made clear in its Disability Equality Strategy²⁰ that it intends to review incorporation of all the Lifetime Homes criteria into its designs standards by Dec 2007, increase the numbers of Lifetime Homes built in its 2008-11 National Affordable Housing Programme and ensure that all housing funded by them is compliant with Lifetime Homes standards from 2011 onwards.

South East England Development Agency (SEEDA)

SEEDA is the Government funded agency set up in 1999 responsible for the economic and social development of the South East of England. SEEDA works with partner organisations to invest in a range of economic and social development programmes – including land for new homes.

SEEDA has committed to establish performance standards for its own development projects which will incorporate adoption of Lifetime Homes standards.²¹

South East Regional Housing Strategy

The 2006 regional housing strategy identifies that homes should be built to Lifetime Homes standards where appropriate and that the needs of those with disabilities should be met in new and existing developments. Eastleigh Borough Council will seek to work with its PUSH partners to produce a co-ordinated approach to accessibility issues.

The London Plan

All Local Authorities across London have begun to implement planning requirements for all new homes on the basis of the London and Sub-Regional Strategy Support Studies report,²² which provided detailed information about the barriers experienced by different groups of disabled people both inside and outside their homes, and

²⁰ Disability Equality Scheme and Action Plan 2006-09; Housing Corporation: Dec 2006

²¹ SEEDA - Disability Equality Scheme 2006-2009 04/12/06

²² London and Sub-Regional Strategy Support Studies GLA, Association of London Government, London Boroughs August 2005

highlighted that they are twice as likely to be living in unsuitable housing as non-disabled people.

All 30,500 new homes or conversions that are needed in London every year, as identified in the London Plan, are to be built to Lifetime Homes Standards, with 10% of them being built to wheelchair accessible housing standards. The 10% requirement for wheelchair accessible homes “should be applied to both market and affordable housing, should be evenly distributed throughout the development, and cater for a varying number of occupants.”²³

National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society

The government have consulted on this strategy²⁴ which is due for publication in early 2008, with a vision of setting ‘a new direction of travel with housing, neighbourhoods and communities which are inclusive, attractive and sustainable for an ageing population. Older people’s housing options will be planned, integrated and sustained as part of the mainstream’,

Stated aims of the strategy include increasing:

- The numbers of inclusive, mainstream and specialist housing appropriate for older people in areas of under-supply
- The percentage and numbers of people over 80 living safely in own homes, and
- The percentage of Lifetime and Inclusive (i.e. wheelchair accessible) homes.

Existing Homes

Review of Disabled Facilities Grant

The Government have recognised that the existing Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Programme needs updating and improving. In 2004 an interdepartmental review of DFG was established to consider what changes were necessary and an independent review of the programme from the University of Bristol commissioned.

The Bristol Report in 2005 identified a number of problems and challenges facing the DFG programme, including delays in processing applications and works, and made recommendations to the Government on how to improve the programme. The Government implemented the recommendation to exempt children’s cases from means testing straight away. This means that families needing to adapt their homes to care for a disabled child are no longer subject to means testing.

The Government has considered the recommendations in the Bristol Report alongside recent policy developments and following consultation, have indicated their proposals to improve the grant system to:

- Increase the maximum limit of DFG to £30,000 to reflect the increased costs of carrying out DFG work
- Put a recoverable charge on portions of grant above £5,000 but limit this to a maximum of £10,000

²³ Supplementary Planning Guidance ‘Accessible London: achieving an inclusive environment’ Implementation Point 13: Wheelchair Housing; GLA 2004

²⁴ National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society; A Pre Strategy Document; DCLG; May 2007

- Transfer the limited amount of Social Housing Grant available to housing associations through the Housing Corporation for funding adaptations to DFG, and
- Make access to the garden a specific purpose for which a grant must be approved.

However, they have indicated further work is required to clarify how recommendations will work effectively between partner agencies involved, and that once this further work is complete and the future funding position for DFG is known (in particular increased costs likely from the recommendations) they will announce a package of changes to improve and raise the quality of support provided through DFG.

Decent Homes

Decent Homes is a programme and target set by the government in 2002 to bring all social housing into a decent condition and increase the proportion of private housing in decent condition occupied by vulnerable groups by 2010. Social Housing landlords have spent billions in recent years in order to bring properties up to the specified reasonable standards of repair, facilities and services and thermal comfort.

In order to meet the Disability Equality Duty, decent homes work and asset management strategies of which they are an integral part should improve accessibility standards and remove barriers for disabled people within homes and external environments, and investments should deliver demonstrable improvements towards disability equality.²⁵

However, research by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation with several social housing providers has suggested that implementation of the Decent Homes Standards has been a missed opportunity for increasing accessibility of properties and may inadvertently make accessibility worse.²⁶

Accessible Housing Registers

The concept of a Disability or Accessible Housing Register, which aims to match accessible properties to the individual needs of disabled people, was established in the 1990s, and local authorities and voluntary agencies in many areas of the country set up their own versions of a register. Registers have already been developed in Bradford, Reading, Liverpool, Edinburgh, and Glasgow and, of late across the whole of London.

These large authorities estimate that they have saved anything between £200,000 and £800,000 per year through having such registers from not 'unadapting' empty properties and reducing delay in discharging people who need accessible properties from hospital or institutional care.²⁷

²⁵ A guide to the Disability Equality Duty and Disability Discrimination Act 2005 for the social housing sector; DRC; 2006

²⁶ Implementing Decent Homes Standards: How Housing Associations are addressing accessibility issues; JRF; 2006.

²⁷ Accessible Housing Registers: Helping you comply with the law and provide a better service; John Grooms; www.johngrooms.org.uk/ourview.asp

In order to comply with the Disability Equality Duty, housing organisations have been strongly recommended to develop Disability Housing Registers to maximise disabled people's housing choice.²⁸

The Audit Commission inspect local authorities and social housing providers to ensure quality services are being delivered to agreed standards (Key Lines of Enquiry). One of the key requirements for an 'excellent' service within the Audit Commission's Key Line of Enquiry 7 'Allocations and Lettings' supports the establishment of Accessible Homes Registers.

The requirement is for local authorities to 'have an allocation policy that records, collects and takes account of individual's needs and support requirements in order to match their needs with appropriate housing', and 'knows, records, analyses and monitors information about the ethnicity, vulnerability and disability of service users and uses it to ensure services are delivered appropriately and to prioritise resources.'

Homelessness & Housing Advice

The government have encouraged a wide range of measures to prevent homelessness and halve the number of households in temporary accommodation by 2010, and are committed to build on the findings from the Social Exclusion Unit's 2004 Breaking the Cycle report which highlighted the importance of delivering homelessness solutions for older and disabled people.²⁹

Priorities to prevent homelessness including provision of housing advice, maximising Housing Benefit take-up, tenancy sustainment schemes, mediation services, sanctuary schemes for victims of domestic violence, and rent deposit schemes to help people access the private rented sector will impact on disabled people. This especially given the evidence (outlined earlier) of the increased number of homeless acceptances by local authorities of households containing a disabled member in recent years and the potential problem of 'hidden homelessness'; people with mental health conditions or learning disabilities who want to leave institutions or the parental home to live independently.

In particular, given that accessible private rented housing is almost non-existent (Scope 2001) and that the reliance of disabled people on the social sector has grown as the place where accessible housing is located,³⁰ there are challenges in relation to the use of the private sector to resolve homelessness.

²⁸ A guide to the Disability Equality Duty and Disability Discrimination Act 2005 for the social housing sector; DRC; 2006

²⁹ Sustainable Communities: settled homes; changing lives; A strategy for tackling homelessness; ODPM; March 2005.

³⁰ Build for Equality; John Grooms' submission to The Disability Debate; www.johngrooms.org.uk/ourview.asp

6. THE LOCAL CONTEXT

Supply of Accessible Homes

New Homes

Although one of the recommendations from the Borough's 2002 Housing Needs Survey was to incorporate targets for new homes being developed to Lifetime Homes standards, this was not taken forward on a universal basis. Neither Lifetime nor Wheelchair Accessible Homes standards are currently specific objectives contained within the Local Plan or Supplementary Planning Guidance for the Borough. Policy 62BE of the Local Plan requires the needs of people with impaired mobility to be taken into account in the design and layout of public access to buildings.

The standards have, however, been applied on a scheme by scheme basis with new affordable housing. All homes on the redevelopment at the Gardens by Atlantic Housing are Lifetime Homes compliant and those to be developed on Velmore are expected to meet 80% of Lifetime Homes criteria in keeping with current Housing Corporation Scheme Development Standards.

Existing Homes

Currently around 9% of all dwellings in the Borough are adapted, with just under a third of these found in the social rented sector.³¹

There are also some 34 Supporting People funded accommodation based units of housing for people with learning disabilities, and 1400 sheltered housing units throughout the Borough, although their accessibility and adaptability in Lifetime or Wheelchair Accessible Homes standards has not been fully assessed.

The Council receives some £330,000 per year by way of DFG funding from central government towards the cost of DFG's on the basis of the current 60/40 central/local government split, and subsidises this to the tune of £220,000 per year from its own capital fund. A government funded Home Improvement Agency, Intouch, works in the Borough to assist, amongst other key areas of maintaining disabled people in their homes, with applications and specifications of works for DFG funded grants.

Of the circa 100 DFG funded adaptations carried out each year, 50% (approximately £250,000) of adaptations are on Atlantic Housing's existing stock: the majority of which entail adaptations through the provision of level access showers and stair lifts, but which also include ground floor extensions.

The combined current spend between the Government, the Council and Atlantic Housing per annum within the Borough on adaptations to make existing homes more accessible is some £650,000 – at an average cost of £2,600 per property/household.

The Council has been proactive in pursuing improvements to the quality, availability and value for money of DFG's, through;

- Employing a dedicated Occupational Therapist on a part time basis to ensure better strategic outputs and speed of assessment

³¹ Older Person's accommodation Strategy 2004-07, Eastleigh BC

- Offering relocation grants where they are more appropriate and better use of money than adaptations, and
- To assist homeowners stay in their own homes the Council has participated in the establishment of the Southern Home Loans scheme; offering secured loans for home owners to improve or adapt their properties. Eligible works include ramping, widening ground floor doors and adapting ground floor WC compartments.

A recent survey found that 92% of adaptations carried out between 2003-05 were still being used for the purpose they were intended for.³² The Council have also recently agreed with Atlantic Housing to co-ordinate refurbishment work with known adaptation requirements, with the costs apportioned appropriately and shared between the DFG fund and Atlantic Housing, resulting in efficiencies and savings for both the Council and Atlantic Housing.

There is, however, no formal register of all currently Accessible Housing in the Borough or surrounding areas, although the Council's part time Occupational Therapist has developed effective partnerships with key stakeholders to establish details of all known accessible new build and adapted properties, and uses these to ensure where possible that accessibility features are maximised by households who require them.

Atlantic Housing holds manual details of all DFG funded works undertaken to their properties, and is in the process of ensuring these are reflected in their IT database and available as an accessible housing register of their stock to all their staff and partners over the course of 2007-08.

Demand for Accessible Homes

Housing Register/Homechoice

The Council's part time Occupational Therapist works with Housing staff to identify and make contact with applicants who register and provide details of their disability.

Approximately 5% (275) of the current 5,500 applicants have been identified as needing accessible housing because of a household member with disabilities, while 1.5% (83) need wheelchair accessible housing.

Homelessness

The Council does not currently monitor priority need homeless acceptances robustly enough to accurately assess the numbers with disabilities as defined in Appendix 1, in that priority need acceptances are primarily monitored by categories such as households with dependent children, pregnancy, 16-17 year olds etc., which does not capture for example whether households with dependent children were homeless because of a household member's disability or not.

The national trends of increasing acceptances due to disability cannot therefore be demonstrated, but within the narrow definitions in use, in the 5 years from 2002-07, 4% (18) of homeless acceptances were due to physical disability, while 10% (45) were due to mental illness.

³² Study into the Effectiveness of Major Adaptations in Eastleigh; Eastleigh Borough Council Housing Services; April 2007.

Concealed Households & Needs

The Council's Housing Needs Survey identified 2,906 concealed households, of which 92% were adult children of existing households – based on a definition of people who cannot afford to be in the housing market and are currently living with another household. Given that nationally 1 in 7 households contain people with a disability, as many as 415 of these households may have some need for accessible accommodation, although further work is required to correlate and substantiate this.

Older Persons Aspirations

The results of research in 2006 jointly commissioned by the Council into older people in Eastleigh's aspirations found that most do not wish to face moving from family homes until compelled by circumstance, but the most popular option if they were to move would be two bedroom accessible accommodation. The conclusions of the research were that as population forecasts show significant increases in older people, and especially those over 85 in the Borough, a matching increase in availability of appropriate housing and accessible services to meet a wide variety of needs is necessary.³³

Supporting People

Hampshire County Council's Supporting People strategic objectives are to move towards more flexible delivery of support through floating support models and to redress the current imbalance of focus on learning disabilities by ensuring greater access to and availability of services for people with physical disabilities and mental health issues.

However, their Strategic Review of Disability in 2006-07 has concluded that although the majority of services provided in Eastleigh are accommodation based services for people with learning disabilities, they remain strategically relevant and continue to meet the needs of individuals and objectives of stakeholders.

7. CONCLUSIONS

There is a compelling social, economic and demographic case for implementing Lifetime and Wheelchair Accessible Homes standards across all forms of new housing in the Borough, and ensuring that refurbishment of existing housing stock takes accessibility issues into account.

Current and future needs for accessible housing at the national and local level, widespread adoption of the standards across government, regulators, funders of housing and local authorities in response to these, and rising awareness of the issues through the Disability Equality Duty are apparent.

Implementing Lifetimes Homes standards once they become an established requirement would not significantly increase development costs for either social housing providers or private builders as they would be planned in from the outset, but will potentially have a significant impact upon the future cost and quality of service for

³³ Bleak Housing: Needs and Aspirations in Retirement: Eastleigh Southern Parishes Older People's forum May 2007.

DFG funded adaptations to existing stock, and improve the quality of life for those who need adaptations to continue to live independently in their own home. Homes built to accessible standards with minimal requirements for adaptation will ensure that scarce DFG funding can go further and assist more people.

The direction of travel of both government policy and the country's demographic profile suggests that mandatory Lifetime Homes standards are inevitable in the near future, alongside ensuring that a percentage of new homes are wheelchair accessible.

In complying with the Disability Equality Duty, the Council is expected to show how its proposals for the local area are consistent with the national, regional and sub-regional policies for disabled people, and how the wider priorities can be translated and implemented at the local level.

The Council could adopt a selective approach to Lifetime Homes or wheelchair accessible housing as it has to date by focussing on the standards being applicable to affordable housing only but this could be subject to challenge on their consistency with the national, regional and sub regional policies for disabled people.

The adoption of a planning need for all new homes to meet Lifetime Homes Standards; for 3 % of these to be Wheelchair Accessible, and of an expectation that refurbishments and improvements to existing stock take into account Lifetime Homes Accessibility issues will, however, meet this requirement. It should be noted that 3% wheelchair accessible housing has been selected as a target as this should meet current need and assist in meeting the backlog in demand.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

1. Consult on and adopt a policy within the Borough's Local Development Framework core strategy and Supplementary Planning Documents that: "Developers should seek to ensure all new housing will be built to 'Lifetime Homes' standards, providing homes that are adaptable, flexible, convenient and appropriate to changing needs. 3% of this housing to be built to Wheelchair Accessible standards". Any policy adopted will need to take account of the practicality of delivering these standards both in terms of individual site issues and changing legal requirements eg through Building Regulations. In terms of meeting targets site location and type of development proposed may necessitate consideration of a higher target.
2. Consult on and adopt a minimum policy that: "All new affordable housing will be built to 'Lifetime Homes' standards, providing homes that are adaptable, flexible, convenient and appropriate to changing needs. 3% of this housing will be built to Wheelchair Accessible standards'. Concern has been expressed that any extra costs in meeting these standards will not be reflected in market value. This is likely to be the case until there is a mandatory requirement across all sections. Until then standards for low cost home ownership properties will be negotiated on a site by site basis.
3. Consult and work with RSL partners with stock in the Borough to develop a protocol which will ensure that the principles of inclusive design are adopted throughout their asset management and refurbishment functions – to ensure

essential lifetime homes issues such as level thresholds are incorporated into works alongside communal area improvements where practical.

4. Work with RSL and local authority partners within the PUSH area to adopt and develop a sub regional 'Accessible Housing Register' of properties and those in need of accessible housing.
5. Work with RSL and local authority partners within the PUSH area to identify existing properties which could most easily be made accessible through adaptation – to provide a wider choice of properties which may be better for family and support networks and would mean that they would not be subjected to long delays.
6. Ensure that all temporary accommodation utilised for homeless households or individuals is reviewed and that further wheelchair provision is made available. To meet government targets it is intended that 25 units in total of temporary accommodation should be available by April 2010. In practice, some existing properties are unlikely to be adaptable; therefore the aim will be to provide 3 properties accessible to wheelchair users, an increase from the current one.
7. Require Portsmouth Housing Association to give priority under the Private Sector Leasing scheme to private sector landlords who will allow basic adaptations such as stair lifts, grab rails, hoists, some showers and ramps to be fitted.
8. Identify, keep and promote records of additional private sector accommodation which is suitable for disabled people as either temporary or settled accommodation.
9. Enhance the level of information both recorded and analysed in relation to homelessness-prevention, application, acceptance and refusals, to identify the levels of disabled people using the services and those being classed as ineligible, not homeless, intentionally homeless or having no local connection etc.

Following on from these recommendations an action plan has been drawn up and is attached as **Appendix 4**.

9. CONSULTATION

A number of internal Council Units have been consulted over the production of this strategy, in particular the Planning Policy and Regeneration Unit and the Development Control Unit as progress with a number of the policy recommendations relies on their eventual incorporation within the Local Plan as part of a Supplementary Planning Document.

Externally to the Council, the strategy proposals have been discussed with partner housing associations as they will deliver most of the affordable new build housing and their stock accounts for around 50% of the DFG spend. Hampshire County Council Social Services, the local Health and Wellbeing Partnership Board, and a number of private developers have also been consulted.

10. MONITORING AND REVIEW

Progress against the strategy recommendations will be reviewed annually- taking into account key questions and monitoring questions identified in 'A guide to the Disability Equality Duty and Disability Discrimination Act 2005 for the social housing sector; DRC, 2006'

Appendix 1

Disability Discrimination Act 2005 definition of disability

When is a person disabled?

A person has a disability if he has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

What about people who have recovered from a disability?

People who have had a disability within the definition are protected from discrimination even if they have since recovered.

What does 'impairment' cover?

It covers physical or mental impairments; this includes sensory impairments, such as those affecting sight or hearing.

Are all mental impairments covered?

The term 'mental impairment' is intended to cover a wide range of impairments relating to mental functioning, including what are often known as learning disabilities.

What is a 'substantial' adverse effect?

A substantial adverse effect is something which is more than a minor or trivial effect. The requirement that an effect must be substantial reflects the general understanding of disability as a limitation going beyond the normal differences in ability which might exist among people.

What is a 'long-term' effect?

A long-term effect of an impairment is one:

- which has lasted at least 12 months, or

- where the total period for which it lasts is likely to be at least 12 months, or

- which is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected.

Effects which are not long-term would therefore include loss of mobility due to a broken limb which is likely to heal within 12 months and the effects of temporary infections from which a person would be likely to recover within 12 months.

What if the effects come and go over a period of time?

If an impairment has had a substantial adverse effect on normal day-to-day activities but that effect ceases, the substantial effect is treated as continuing if it is likely to recur; that is if it is more probable than not that the effect will recur.

What are ‘normal day-to-day activities’?

They are activities which are carried out by most people on a fairly regular and frequent basis. The term is not intended to include activities which are normal only for a particular person or group of people such as playing a musical instrument, or a sport to a professional standard or performing a skilled or specialised task at work. However, someone who is affected in such a specialised way but is also affected in normal day-to-day activities would be covered by this part of the definition. The test of whether an impairment affects normal day-to-day activities is whether it affects one of the broad categories of capacity listed in Schedule 1 to the Act. They are:

- mobility
- manual dexterity
- physical co-ordination
- continence
- ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects
- speech, hearing or eyesight
- memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand, or perception of the risk of physical danger.

What about treatment?

Someone with an impairment may be receiving medical or other treatment which alleviates or removes the effects (though not the impairment). In such cases, the treatment is ignored and the impairment is taken to have the effect it would have had without such treatment. This does not apply if substantial adverse effects are not likely to recur even if the treatment stops (i.e. the impairment has been cured).

Does this include people who wear spectacles?

No. The sole exception to the rule about ignoring the effects of treatment is the wearing of spectacles or contact lenses. In this case, the effect while the person is wearing spectacles or contact lenses should be considered.

Are people who have disfigurements covered?

People with severe disfigurements are covered by the Act. They do not need to demonstrate that the impairment has a substantial adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Are there any other people who are automatically treated as disabled under the Act?

Anyone who has a diagnosis of HIV, cancer or multiple sclerosis is automatically treated as disabled under the Act. In addition, people who are registered as blind or partially sighted, or who are certified as being blind or partially sighted by a consultant ophthalmologist, are automatically treated under the Act as being disabled. People who are not registered or certified as blind or partially sighted will be covered by the Act if they can establish that they meet the Act's definition of disability.

What about people who know their condition is going to get worse over time?

Progressive conditions are conditions which are likely to change and develop over time. Where a person has a progressive condition he will be covered by the Act from the moment the condition leads to an impairment which has some effect on ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, even though not a substantial effect, if that impairment is likely eventually to have a substantial adverse effect on such ability.

Are people with genetic conditions covered?

If a genetic condition has no effect on the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, the person is not covered. Diagnosis does not in itself bring someone within the definition. If the condition is progressive, then the rule about progressive conditions applies.

Are any conditions specifically excluded from the coverage of the Act?

Yes. Certain conditions are to be regarded as not amounting to impairments for the purposes of the Act. These are:

- addiction to or dependency on alcohol, nicotine, or any other substance (other than as a result of the substance being medically prescribed)
- seasonal allergic rhinitis (e.g. hay fever), except where it aggravates the effect of another condition
- tendency to set fires
- tendency to steal
- tendency to physical or sexual abuse of other persons
- exhibitionism
- voyeurism

Also, disfigurements which consist of a tattoo (which has not been removed), non-medical body piercing, or something attached through such piercing, are to be treated as not having a substantial adverse effect on the person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

Appendix 2

The Lifetime Homes standards

The table below sets out the full Lifetime Homes standards for reference. Homes that meet all the standards are entitled to be designated 'Lifetime Homes'. They will also meet the Part M Building Regulations, the relevant parts of the Housing Corporation Scheme Development Standards as indicated in the table.

Lifetime Homes standards	Specifications and dimensions which meet Lifetime Homes standards	Housing Corporation Scheme Development Standards compliance (3rd Edition) (E=essential, R=recommended)
1 Where there is car parking adjacent to the home, it should be capable of enlargement to attain 3300mm width	The general provision for a car parking space is 2400mm width. If an additional 900mm width is not provided at the outset, there must be provision (e. g. a grass verge) for enlarging the overall width to 3300mm at a later date	1.1.3.4 E (requires actual provision at the outset rather than provision for later enlargement)
2 The distance from the car parking space to the home should be kept to a minimum and should be level or gently sloping	It is preferable to have a level approach. However, where the topography prevents this, a maximum gradient of 1: 12 is permissible on an individual slope of less than 5 metres or 1: 15 if it is between 5 and 10m, and 1: 20 where it is more than 10m.* Paths should be a minimum of 900mm width	1.1.3.2 E (but covers natural surveillance, not distance)
3 The approach to all entrances should be level or gently sloping	See standard 2 above for the definition of gently sloping	relevant parts of 1.3.1.1 E
4 All entrances should: a) be illuminated relevant parts	The threshold upstand should not exceed 15mm	1.1.1.12 E

of 1.3.1.2 E

b) have level access over the threshold and

c) have a covered main entrance

5 a) Communal stairs should provide easy access and b) where homes are reached by a lift, it should be fully wheelchair accessible	<i>Minimum dimensions for communal stairs</i> Uniform rise not more than 170mm Uniform going not less than 250mm Handrails extend 300mm beyond top and bottom step Handrail height 900mm from each nosing	1.4.1.5 E
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<i>Minimum dimensions for lifts</i> Clear landing entrances 1500x1500mm Min. internal dimensions 1100x1400mm Lift controls between 900 and 1200mm from the floor and 400mm from the lift's internal front wall	1.2.1.44 E 1.2.1.45 E
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6 The width of the doorways and hallways should conform to the specifications in the next column	<i>Doorway clear opening width (mm)</i>	<i>Corridor/ passageway width (mm)</i>	1.3.1.2 E 1.3.1.3 E 1.3.1.4 E
.	750 or wider	900 (when approach is head-on)	
	750	1200 (when approach is not head-on)	
	775	1050 (when approach is not head-on)	
	900	900 (when approach is not head-on)	

The clear opening width of the front door should be 800mm. There should be 300mm to the side of the leading edge of

doors on the entrance level

7 There should be space for turning a wheelchair in dining areas and living rooms and adequate circulation space for wheelchair users elsewhere	A turning circle of 1500mm diameter or a 1700x1400mm ellipse is required	1.3.1.12 R
8 The living room should be at entrance level		1.3.1.10 R
9 In houses of two or more storeys, there should be space on the entrance level that could be used as a convenient bed- space		1.6.3.6 R 1.3.1.11 R
10 There should be: a) a wheelchair accessible entrance level WC, with b) drainage provision enabling a shower to be fitted in the future	<p>The drainage provision for a future shower should be provided in all dwellings</p> <p><i>Dwellings of three or more bedrooms</i> For dwellings with three or more bedrooms, or on one level, the WC must be fully accessible. A wheelchair user should be able to close the door from within the closet and achieve side transfer from a wheelchair to at least one side of the WC. There must be at least 1100mm clear space from the front of the WC bowl. The shower provision must be within the closet or adjacent to the closet (the WC could be an integral part of the bathroom in a flat or bungalow)**</p> <p><i>Dwellings of two or fewer bedrooms</i> In small two- bedroom dwellings where the design has failed to achieve this fully accessible WC, the Part M standard WC</p>	1.3.1.5 E 1.3.1.9 R 1.6.3.6 R

will meet this standard

11 Walls in bathrooms and toilets should be capable of taking adaptations such as handrails	Wall reinforcements should be located between 300 and 1500mm from the floor	1.6.3.1 E
12 The design should incorporate: a) provision for a future stair lift b) a suitably identified space for a through- the- floor lift from the ground to the first floor, for example to a bedroom next to a bathroom	There must be a minimum of 900mm clear distance between the stair wall (on which the lift would normally be located) and the edge of the opposite handrail/ balustrade. Unobstructed 'landings' are needed at top and bottom of stairs	1.3.1. 6 E 1.6.3.6 R
13 The design should provide for a reasonable route for a potential hoist from a main bedroom to the bathroom	Most timber trusses today are capable of taking a hoist and tracking. Technological advances in hoist design mean that a straight run is no longer a requirement	1.6.3.2 E 1.2.1.31 R
14 The bathroom should be designed to incorporate ease of access to the bath, WC and wash basin	Although there is not a requirement for a turning circle in bathrooms, sufficient space should be provided so that a wheelchair user could use the bathroom	
15 Living room window glazing should begin at 800mm or lower and windows should be easy to open/ operate	People should be able to see out of the window whilst seated. Wheelchair users should be able to operate at least one window in each room	1.4.1.1 E 1.2.1.32 R
16 Switches, sockets, ventilation and service controls should be at	This applies to all rooms including the kitchen and bathroom	1.3.1.14 R (switches, door handles and

a height usable by all (i. e.
between 450 and 1200mm from
the floor)

thermostats at 900-
1200mm)
1.3.1.15 R (sockets at
450- 600mm)

* Providing there are top, bottom and intermediate landings of not less than 1.2m excluding the swing of doors and gates.
** But please note that it is important to meet the Part M dimensions specified to each side of the WC bowl in entrance level WCs (diagrams 10a and 10b). The Lifetime Homes standards for houses of three bedrooms or more require full side transfer from at least one side of the WC.

Wheelchair Housing Standards

Wheelchair Housing, i.e. housing specifically designed to meet the needs of wheelchair users, should be built according to the guidance available from 'Wheelchair Housing Design Guide' by Stephen Thorpe, 2006 edition, available from www.brepress.com (ISBN 1860818978, code ep70, £40.00) and should incorporate the following key features:

Approach

- Level or gently sloping route to all external entrances, and to external facilities such as storage, parking, binstore, garden and clothes drying area.
- Paths slip resistant and smooth, minimum width 1200mm.
- Ramps to be avoided.
- Path gateways to provide minimum 850mm clear opening width.
- Good cover at point of transfer from vehicle to wheelchair.

Parking

- Located adjacent to the front entrance
- Under cover
- 3.6metres wide
- Located beside a 900mm wide path connecting the front door, parking bay and the adjacent road

Entrance

- Entrance to be covered and well lit.
- Entrance landing to be level, and min 1500x1500mm
- All external doors to give 800mm clear opening and to have accessible thresholds.

Internal circulation

- Corridors minimum 900mm wide, 1200mm wide where 90° turn necessary and 1500mm wide where 180° turn necessary.
- Internal doorways to give minimum 775mm clear opening width and to have level thresholds.
- Provision for storage and recharging of battery-operated wheelchair.
- Minimum turning space inside entrance 1200x1500mm
- Rooms all on one level or accessible by wheelchair accessible lift. Where lift required, to comply with BS5900 (1991).

- Bedrooms, living rooms and dining rooms with adequate space for wheelchair users to turn through 180° with furniture in place i.e. turning circle 1500mm or ellipse 1800x1400mm.
- Main bedroom to bathroom connected by full height knockout panel, or other means.
- Suitable provision for future hoist to run between main bedroom and bathroom.
- Kitchen layout provides effective and appropriate space for use by a wheelchair user. Clear manoeuvring area minimum 1800x1400mm.
- Bathroom layout ensures independent approach/transfer to and use of all fittings, including manoeuvring space clear of fittings.
- Extra space in bathroom for both bath and shower with at least one to be fully installed. Shower area to be wheelchair accessible with floor drain.
- Suitable controls of mains water stopcock, gas and electric main consumer units. Suitable isolating valves to sink, washing machine etc.
- Glazing line in living/dining/bedrooms no higher than 800mm above room floor level.

Appendix 4

Action Plan	Lead Post	Target Date	Evidence
Protocol with RSL Partners on Asset Management and refurbishment	Housing OT and main RSL Partners	Winter 2008	Adoption of Protocol
Seek to work with Planning Policy on Core Strategy / LDF documents to include ambitions of Accessible Homes	Research and Development Manager * Indicators on build will only apply after policy adopted	Winter 2009 To prepare Core Strategy	% of Lifetime Homes % of Wheelchair Homes
Establishment of Accessible Homes Register across PUSH area	Housing Needs Manager and Housing OT	Spring 2010	Establishment of Register
List of existing properties most suitable for adaptation	Housing OT	Spring 2009	Completed list
Review of temporary accommodation to provide further provision accessible to wheelchair users	Housing Needs Manager and Housing OT	Spring 2010	Adaptation of 2 further properties
Records of suitable Private Sector accommodation suitable for disabled people	Senior Housing Adviser	Start collating from Spring 2008	List of accommodation