



# **Customer Senate Scrutiny Report - Aids & Adaptations Process**

**Winter/Spring 15/16**



## **1.0 Introduction**

1.1 This report has been written by the Customer Senate. It provides feedback from their investigation into the Aids and Adaptations process and makes recommendations for improvement.

## **2.0 Background**

2.1 The Customer Senate decided to look at an area of service delivery that was not about to be reviewed as part of the systems thinking project for this investigation. The first exercise they undertook started ahead of the systems thinking project but was overlapped and the recommendations they ultimately made were in some cases duplicated by the project.

2.2 Two of the Customer Senators had previous personal experience of the process with family members.

2.3 The purpose of the initiative was to engage with customers to allow the Customer Senate to determine how the process had worked for the customers and whether the work undertaken was cost effective for River Clyde Homes. They also wanted to gain an understanding of how properties were allocated if previously adapted to ensure they remained tenanted and income was continually being generated.

## **3.0 The Customer Senate**

3.1 The Senators carrying out this investigation were Hamish MacLeod, Marion Wilson, Andrew Hurrell, Mark Anderson, Joyce Stephens, Ian McArthur, Sam Wilson and Peter Harris.

3.2 The Customer Senate were supported in their investigation by Siobhan O'Kane, Governance & Executive Team Support Manager, RCH, Anne Ross, Customer Involvement Officer, RCH, Tony Kelly TPAS(S) and Sandra McLeod Executive Director, RCH.

## **4.0 Report Structure**

4.1 The report outlines the investigative methods used and the Customer Senate's findings.

## **5.0 Methods used**

5.1 The exercise was conducted as follows:

- Met with Sandra McLeod to discuss areas not being looked at by the Vanguard systems thinking project until a later date. This done with a view to which areas of service delivery might then be investigated.
- Tony Kelly TPAS(S) facilitated a workshop to agree the objectives of the investigations and ways of gathering information.
- Interactive meetings with the ExtraCare Manager, Specialist Services Manager, Allocations Manager and the Senior Occupational Therapist from the Inverclyde Centre of Independent Living.
- Requested up to date information on the number of RCH properties which currently have adaptations in situ.
- Visited the showroom of the supplier of kitchen and bathroom equipment
- Contact made with 200 service users approx. to request participation in survey and also to permit the Customer Senate to make contact with them.
- Completed customer surveys by telephone, letter or home visit for twenty nine service users who had experience of the process between April 2014 and April 2015.
- Obtained and made comparisons of RCHs' policy and other Housing Authority Aids & Adaptations policies.

5.2 All comments have been treated in the strictest confidence. Customer Senators have signed a code of conduct and confidentiality agreement and feedback will not be attributed to individual managers or tenants who took part in the inspection process.

5.3 Minutes of all meetings are available on request to support this report.

## 6.0 Customer questionnaires

6.1 We contacted our customers as follows:

<b>Number of customers contacted</b>	<b>200</b>	<b>Were contacted by telephone and asked to take part</b>
<b>Number who agreed</b>	<b>29</b>	
<b>Posted questionnaires</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>8 returned completed</b> <b>1 returned addressee moved</b> <b>1 returned tenant deceased</b>
<b>Telephone questionnaires</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>4 successful calls</b>
<b>Home visits</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>3 completed</b>

6.2 Referrals for Aids and Adaptations can come in a variety of ways and we found the following:

<b>Self</b>	<b>0</b>	<b>CiL</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>OT</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>NHS/GP</b>	<b>3</b>	<b>Other RCH</b>	<b>1</b>
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6.3 We found the following in relation to the adaptations undertaken:

<b>TYPES OF ADAPTATION</b>		
<b>MINOR</b>		
	<b>Handrail</b>	<b>5 internal/external</b>
	<b>Raised toilet seat</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Seat for shower</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Seat over bath</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>MAJOR</b>		
	<b>Stair lift</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>Walk in shower</b>	<b>3</b>
	<b>Wet room</b>	<b>4</b>
	<b>Upstairs shower</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Downstairs toilet</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Lowered worktop</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Door widened</b>	<b>1</b>
	<b>Ramp</b>	<b>1</b>
<b>MAJOR plus</b>		<b>0</b>

6.4 Additional notes relating to the questionnaires:

None of the customers the Customer Senate contacted had to vacate their homes to allow for the work to be undertaken. The timescales for works being completed ranged from hours to 4 weeks maximum.

Quality Assurance checks - 10 carried out and 4 customers advised none carried out. The QA checks took place anywhere between a few days and up to three weeks after the work was completed.

Maintenance is carried out between RCH and a stair lift company.

## **7.0 Investigation supporting notes**

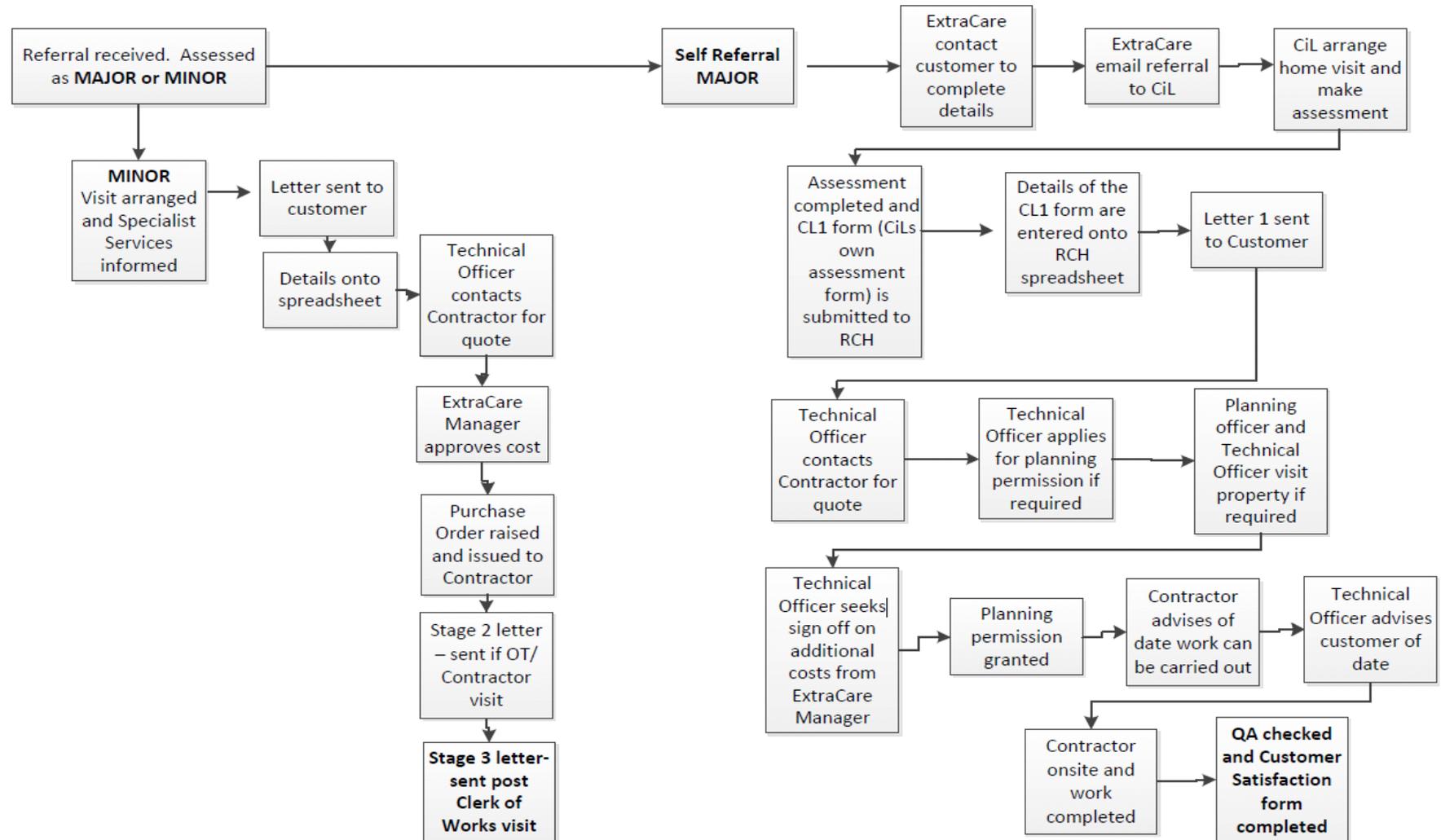
7.1 Prior to undertaking the investigative tasks the Senate contacted other housing authorities to request where possible, copies of their Aids & Adaptations Policies.

7.2 They received both CUBE Housing Association and Glasgow Housing Association policies but were advised they are both currently under review. Link Housing Association emailed to advise that their current policy was not available however they advised that they allocated adapted properties to applicants needing that type of property. They also stated they do not remove adaptations to revert properties to mainstream allocations.

- 7.3 There was a data protection issue identified early on as the Customer Senate, not being employed by RCH, were therefore not allowed to have access to customer details which meant contact with customers could not initially happen.
- 7.4 On the group's behalf, the Customer Involvement Officer called approx. 200 customers to ask them to take part in the investigation and to ask their permission to allow the Customer Senate to contact them for this purpose. The 200 customers were picked randomly from the Aids and Adaptations spreadsheet of customers who had used the service in the designated timescale i.e. April 2014 to April 2015. Of the 200 customers, 29 agreed to take part and granted permission for the Senate to contact them, 3 of them requested home visits, some were telephoned and some were written to, at their request. This exercise caused a time delay to the overall project.
- 7.5 Many of the customers called were elderly and or due to their condition unable to speak for long on the telephone. Some asked carers and family to speak on their behalf. One had been admitted to hospital the day before a telephone call was made to him.
- 7.6 Some customers struggled with the idea of the Customer Senate not being employed by RCH.
- 7.7 During this investigation one of the Customer Senators resigned due to ill health and two took some time out due to personal commitments. There was also one new member recruited during the period.

## 8. The Current Process

### Aids & Adaptations Process



## 9.0 Comparisons with Cube Housing Association and Glasgow Housing Associations Policies

Point	RSL	Comments
Maintaining records	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. GHA – is in policy</li>   <li>2. CUBE HA – is in policy</li>   <li>3. RCH – not mentioned in current policy</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Mention in Policy the updating of a database to record all ‘major’ adaptations</li> <li>2. States in section 6 of their policy that the Association will maintain records of characteristics of adapted properties</li> <li>3. n/a</li> </ol>
Info / Communication	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. GHA – is in policy</li>   <li>2. CUBE – is in policy</li>   <li>3. RCH</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Provide user friendly information on adaptations</li>   <li>2. Advises where information will be published</li>   <li>3. Referred to in policy but no mention of the format or where it is available from</li> </ol>
Staff Training	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. GHA – is in policy</li>   <li>2. CUBE – not mentioned in policy</li>   <li>3. RCH – not in policy</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Indicating raising awareness and joint training with statutory and voluntary organisations</li>   <li>2. n/a</li>   <li>3. n/a</li> </ol>

## 10.0 Summary

10.1 In Summary, the Policy is adhered to in all cases and there is sufficient funding for the required adaptations. There is, however, some feeling that tenants should have clarity at 'sign on' of the tenancy as to their responsibility if the need for the house is no longer required at any point in the future, i.e. giving up the tenancy if RCH has another tenant requiring an adapted house of that calibre.

10.2 In order to carry out future investigations it would be hoped that the Hubs could be utilised to engage with a larger number of customers and also to speed up issues around data protection and the Senate not being RCH employees. There will be support and supervision in the Hubs from employees.

## 11.0 Follow on Senate activities

- Senate to meet to agree and sign off report
- Present final report to Board in May

## 12.0 Recommendations

12.1 The Senate discussed and expanded on the individual recommendations and agreed thirteen recommendations as follows:

<b>Recommendation</b>	<b>Additional comments/suggestions</b>	<b>Reason</b>
1. Stock survey carried out as soon as possible	We have been advised that this will form part of a new tenancy audit to populate the new Housing Management system.	There is a requirement that this should be done sooner rather than later as the information currently held is not up to date and so we feel allocations could be compromised.
2. Introduce one single easily accessed database which should be available to all staff	There appears to be the current Housing Management System as well as Apex (an asset management computer application) which is an asset management database /tool and these do not interface to store the most up to date information. We have been advised that even with the new Housing Management System in place, Apex will still need to	This would reduce information being missed and allow all staff to see the same actual information held in relation.

	be used. It would make more sense to have one system used by all.	
3. Introduce a function in the system to allow for updates.	The Technical Officer should be the only person able to enter details of Aids and Adaptations onto the system.	This will ensure the system is always up to date and accurate.
4. All minor and major works up to the value of £10k to go straight to the Technical Officer without going through the ExtraCare Manager	Any major plus (£10k+) requirements to go to the ExtraCare Manager for signoff as is currently happening	This will reduce the steps needed and the entries onto the many columns of the spreadsheet.
5. Engage with CiL at the design stage of all new builds and all refurbishment works and if cost effective put hand rails and such like in at that time.	Wider door openings throughout properties for wheelchair access. Customer engagement of all tenancies undergoing refurbishments to identify needs before refurbishment takes place.	This can be more cost effective as some newly installed kitchens and bathrooms have had to be removed in the past, very soon after having been installed.
6. Provide user friendly leaflets highlighting what aids RCH can install and ensure wide distribution of these.	Should be given out in 'Sign on' packs, fun days, events, in GP surgeries, in hubs, in the customer magazine and on RCH website	To raise awareness of what can be done for any tenant to help them stay in their own home longer.
7. Provide cross service training with all partner organisations.	Partnership working and standardised information sharing	Would allow any staff to make limited assessments of minor adaptation requirements for all customers.
8. Produce a central combined list of all adapted properties in Inverclyde.	Speak to other RSLs in Inverclyde to collaborate on generating one list.	Would help those need specially adapted houses possibly find suitable accommodation sooner. It would speed up the tenancy uptake of adapted houses lying void and therefore

		increase income for all RSLs.
9. Increase and ensure better interdepartmental communication and knowledge around what is available.	Encourage wardens, caretakers and all staff to assist customers to make self referrals and or make referrals on the customer's behalf.	This should increase customer satisfaction.
10. Ensure potential tenants are aware that there are some houses that RCH would not consider installing major adaptations	A discussion around this should be done at tenancy viewing and reiterated at sign on stage.	To avoid future legal wrangles whereby a tenant then requires a major adaptation carried out equipment installed.
11. Free up adapted houses when the tenant requiring the adaptation is no longer living in the house	Discuss at viewing and at sign on the need for other family members to move out of the house when that person is no longer in the house.	Cost savings as adaptations will not need to be removed and or added into another property for someone else.
12. Extend Policy on same building moves in Sheltered Housing to include Multistorey and tenement blocks.	Give priority to those tenants already living at the address.	There may on occasions be a cost saving.
13. Give tenants a wider choice of finishes on bathroom/wetrooms e.g. wetwall	The contractor has multiple choices available and other Housing Authorities do give customers a choice	It is felt that this gives better customer service having the customer involved and offering a choice

### 13.0 Review

13.1 The Customer Senate will meet to discuss the feedback from the Board.

13.2 If any recommendations are agreed by the Board, an Action Plan will be generated by the Executive Management Team.

13.3 Recommendations not accepted by the Board will be reported back to the Customer Senate with reasons for non agreement.

13.4 The Performance & Services Committee will monitor and report on the progress of the actions. Members of the Customer Senate will attend every committee meeting when the Action Plan is on the Agenda to ensure they are progressed according to the timescales.

## **Glossary**

CiL	Centre for Independent Living
TPAS(S)	Tenant Participation Advisory Service (Scotland)
RCH	River Clyde Homes
EMT	Executive Management Team
QA	Quality Assurance
CBL	Choice Based Lettings
OT	Occupational Therapist
Link HA	LINK Housing Association
GHA	Glasgow Housing Association
CUBE	Cube Housing Association