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# A Spending Analysis of Housing Adaptations in Wales

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# A Spending Analysis of Housing Adaptations in Wales

## Report by Opinion Research Services

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Views expressed in this report are those of the researcher and not necessarily those of the Welsh Government

For further information please contact:

Katy Addison

Social Research and Information Division

Welsh Government

Cathays Park

Cardiff

CF10 3NQ

Tel: 0300 025 6292

Email: [SustainableFuturesResearch@gov.wales](mailto:SustainableFuturesResearch@gov.wales)

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## Glossary of terms

<i>Acronym/key word</i>	<i>Definition</i>
Adapted property registers	Registers that help match individuals living in the social and private sectors with adapted properties that suit their needs.
Age Standardised	A statistical technique which allows data about two populations to be compared when the populations have different age structures. It is used in this study because areas with an older population are likely to have more adaptations than areas with a younger population.
Care & Repair Cymru	Care & Repair Cymru is a national charitable body and actively works to ensure that all older people have homes that are safe, secure and appropriate to their needs. It provides services to a network of Care & Repair Agencies across Wales.
Community Housing Cymru (CHC)	Community Housing Cymru (CHC) represents more than 70 not-for-profit housing associations and community mutuals in Wales.
Core funding for Care & Repair agencies	The Welsh Government contributes to the core funding of individual Care & Repair agencies quarterly on the recommendation of Care & Repair Cymru, who have responsibility for scrutiny.
Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	Means tested mandatory grants available to owner occupiers, tenants (in both the social and private sectors) and licensees to help with the cost of works required to help disabled occupiers get in, around and out of their home <sup>1</sup>
ENABLE Support for independent living	The Welsh Government's ENABLE – Support for Independent Living initiative brought together a number of programmes that were already in operation for delivering housing adaptations. These have largely

<sup>1</sup> [Senedd Research, 2019. Home adaptations in Wales - a guide for constituents.](#)

	<p>continued as before, but ENABLE was designed to simplify them under one 'brand'. The programmes and other provision that are united under ENABLE are: general provision of small adaptations by local authority social services departments; Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs); additional discretionary powers that local authorities can make use of in the provision of adaptations; the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme; and Physical Adaptations Grants for social housing properties<sup>2</sup>.</p> <p>Enable is also a specific grant to local authorities to deliver small and medium adaptations more quickly and flexibly without need for recourse to DFG processes.</p>
Integrated Care Fund (ICF)	<p>ICF was established in 2014-15 to support older people to maintain their independence, avoid hospital admission and prevent delayed discharge. It also aims to drive partnership working and the delivery of integrated services across health, social services, housing and the third sector through Regional Partnership Boards (RPB). ICF includes revenue and capital programmes. RPBs have discretion to use some of the capital funding for aids and adaptations.</p>
Key performance Indicators (KPIs)	<p>Measurable values that demonstrate how effectively an organisation is achieving key objectives.</p>
Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT)	<p>The transfer of the whole or a substantial part of a local housing authority's housing stock to a private registered provider of social housing.</p>
LSVT Funding	<p>Adaptations funded by an LSVT</p>
Median	<p>One of the three types of average or 'measures of central tendency'. The mode is the middle value in a list of all the values put in order from the smallest to largest.</p>

<sup>2</sup> [Age Cymru, 2019. Obtaining disability equipment and home adaptations in Wales.](#)

	In this report, the mode is generally the most appropriate of the three averages to use as it is affected less by a few very small or very large values than the mean.
Mean	One of the three types of average or 'measures of central tendency'. The mean is calculated by adding all the values and dividing by the number of values
Means Testing	A means test determines if a person or household is eligible to receive some sort of benefit, payment or intervention.
Mode or modal	One of the three types of average or 'measures of central tendency'. The mode is the most common value in a set of data.
Occupational Therapist (OT)	An occupational therapist helps people of all ages overcome the effects of disability caused by illness, ageing or accident so that they can carry out everyday tasks or occupations. An occupational therapist will consider all of the patient's needs - physical, psychological, social and environmental.
Physical Adaptations Grant (PAG)	Traditional housing associations deliver adaptations through the Physical Adaptations Grant (PAG) process. PAGs are funded by the Welsh Government. PAG guidance must be followed.
Rapid Response Adaptations Programme (RRAP)	Care & Repair agencies deliver the Rapid Response Adaptations programme with Welsh Government funding. It is available to owner occupiers and private tenants to fund minor adaptations, such as handrails, to enable people to return from hospital to their own homes, or where quick preventative works are needed, for example to prevent slips and falls.
Registered Social Landlord (RSL)	Not-for-profit housing providers approved and regulated by Government. The vast majority of Registered Social Landlords are also known as Housing Associations.

<p>Small/Medium/ Large Adaptations</p>	<p>Small adaptations: inexpensive items which can be provided very quickly. It would generally fit into the description of ‘immediate falls prevention’ or ‘urgent for hospital discharge’ and can be assessed and installed within days or the same day if urgent. It can be identified by a number of health/ social services/ other appropriately trained staff e.g., RSL staff, Care &amp; Repair staff. Some examples are: grab rails; stair rails; small ramps; accessible taps; key safes; mop stick hand rails; outdoor rails; external / staircase lights; and additional electrical sockets<sup>3</sup>.</p> <p>Medium adaptations: anything which is not classed as a small or large adaptation. Some examples are: walk-in showers; stair lifts; large ramps; or a combination of adaptations installed as one job<sup>4</sup>.</p> <p>Large adaptations: these are works which will require specialist assessments and major adaptations to a property. An Occupational Therapist assessment will be required and planning permission may be needed. Some examples are: building an extension to provide a downstairs bedroom and/or bathroom; a through floor lift; or significant internal structural modifications e.g. relocation of a bathroom or kitchen<sup>5</sup>.</p>
<p>Traditional RSL Funding</p>	<p>Adaptations funded by ‘traditional’ RSLs; any RSL which is not an LSVT</p>
<p>Welsh Government Service Standards</p>	<p>Standards that set out the level of service expected for the delivery and installation of a housing adaptation that service users, regardless of their geographic location and tenure, can expect.</p>
<p>WG</p>	<p>Welsh Government</p>

<sup>3</sup> [Welsh Government, 2019. Housing Adaptations Service Standards.](#)

<sup>4</sup> [As above](#)

<sup>5</sup> [As above](#)

# 1. Introduction and Background

## Context for the research

- 1.1 Housing adaptations play a key role in allowing disabled and older people to live safely and independently. They support the provision of care close to home, reduce pressures on frontline services such as health and social care, and enhance well-being for the individual and their families. Indeed, the provision of housing adaptations reflects the principles of the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015<sup>6</sup> and Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, and objectives set out in Prosperity for All<sup>7</sup> and Healthier Wales<sup>8</sup>.
- 1.2 The current funding system for providing Housing Adaptations in Wales is complex. This is a reflection of the evolution of legislation, the variety of funding regimes over a long period of time, and involvement of multiple stakeholders in the care and support arrangements of disabled and older people. It is estimated that there are approximately 70 organisations delivering adaptations in Wales, spending nearly £60 million and assisting over 32,000 people<sup>9</sup>. In addition, these figures do not capture the Housing Adaptations which are self-funded by individuals across Wales.
- 1.3 Since 2005 there have been six reviews in Wales that have covered or commented on housing adaptations:
- Jones, C. (2005). *Disabled Facilities Grants and Adaptations Review*. Cardiff: Welsh Government<sup>10</sup>
  - National Assembly for Wales. (2009). *Still Waiting: Home Maintenance and Adaptations Services for Older People in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> [Welsh Government | Well-being of Future Generations \(Wales\) Act 2015](#)

<sup>7</sup> [Welsh Government, 2017. Prosperity for All, the national strategy.](#)

<sup>8</sup> [Welsh Government, 2019. A Healthier Wales: Our Plan for Health and Social Care](#)

<sup>9</sup> [Wales Audit Office, 2018. Housing Adaptations,](#)

<sup>10</sup> [C. Jones, 2005. Review of housing adaptations including disabled facilities grants – Wales.](#)

<sup>11</sup> [National Assembly For Wales Equality of Opportunity Committee, 2009. Still Waiting: Home Maintenance and Adaptations Services for Older People in Wales.](#)

- Bibbings, J., Boniface, G., Campbell, J., Findlay, G., Reeves-McAll, E., Zhang, M. and Zhou, P. (2015). *A review of independent living adaptations*. Cardiff: Welsh Government<sup>12</sup>
- Equality and Human Rights Commission. (2018). *Housing and Disabled People: Wales's Hidden Crisis*. London: Equality and Human Rights Commission<sup>13</sup>
- Wales Audit Office. (2018). *Housing Adaptations*. Cardiff: Wales Audit Office<sup>14</sup>
- Welsh Government Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population in Wales. (2017). *Our Housing AGEnda: meeting the aspirations of older people in Wales*. Cardiff: Welsh Government<sup>15</sup>

1.4 Each report identified the issues of funding complexity and the challenging arrangements for accessing services across Wales. The Wales Audit Office<sup>16</sup> in particular identified that multiple organisations and funding streams contributing to the delivery of Housing Adaptations have resulted in an overly complex system. There is a broad consensus from these reviews that the current system would benefit from being simplified and streamlined to ensure it is fit for purpose and able to meet increasing demands and pressures.

### **Project aims**

1.5 There are three main issues of concern relating to the provision of housing adaptations which lead to an inequitable system of provision of adaptations:

- Grants and other aspects of housing adaptations have long been subject to a “*postcode lottery*”, primarily due to different local authorities and Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) applying different rules;
- The complex funding regime, with different funding routes being available depending on tenure (the five main routes are Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG); Rapid Response Adaptations Programme

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<sup>12</sup> [Bibbings et al., 2015. A review of independent living adaptations.](#)

<sup>13</sup> [Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018. Housing and Disabled People: Wales's Hidden Crisis.](#)

<sup>14</sup> [Wales Audit Office, 2018. Housing Adaptations.](#)

<sup>15</sup> [Welsh Government, 2017. Our Housing AGEnda: meeting the aspirations of older people in Wales.](#)

<sup>16</sup> [Wales Audit Office, 2018. Housing Adaptations](#)

(RRAP); Physical Adaptations Grant (PAG); ENABLE funding for Local Authorities; and core funding for Care & Repair agencies); and

- The range of different organisations providing access to adaptations further complicates the system and makes it difficult to implement and measure achievement against standards.

1.6 In light of all this, Opinion Research Services (ORS) - an independent social research company - was commissioned by Welsh Government to undertake research into the allocation of grants and how they are accessed/spent on Housing Adaptations to support disabled and older people to live safely and independently in Wales. Essentially, the project was designed to understand the allocation of funding and how it reflects population need - and particularly whether it is based around factors such as tenure and area/organisation rather than need.

1.7 Alongside supporting the general aim of equality for disabled people, the research was designed to inform the provision of a geographic and socially equitable system for people who require adaptations to their home and more equal provision of adaptations across Wales to support local Health and Social Care systems.

### **Research specification**

1.8 As part of the project, ORS undertook four strands of research:

- A review of the relevant data/literature to provide further insight to underpin results of this study and provide focus for the questions to be included in the qualitative interviews;
- Scoping interviews with six key organisations to understand the current picture across Wales;
- In-depth telephone interviews with those in receipt of housing aids and adaptations to gather views on the process of accessing them and how it might have been improved; and
- Two stakeholder workshops to explore the key research themes and discuss potential indicators for an allocation process for housing

adaptations and how these could relate to the Welsh Government Service Standards.

- 1.9 These four research strands are covered in detail in the chapters that follow, the key findings from which are brought together in a final concluding chapter.

## 2. Methodology

### Scoping Review

#### A literature/policy review

2.1 In order to contextualise the research and explore the main issues and key challenges in terms of delivering housing adaptations in Wales, the policies and reviews listed in the bibliography in Annex A (page xx) were reviewed to identify key themes. This review has focused on more recent literature, but where possible we have compared the findings from these with two prominent previous reviews to identify either where progress has been made, or where challenges remain. The two earlier reviews are:

- Jones, C. (2005). Disabled Facilities Grants and Adaptations Review. Cardiff: Welsh Government.
- National Assembly for Wales. (2009). Still Waiting: Home Maintenance and Adaptations Services for Older People in Wales. Cardiff: Welsh Government.

#### Stakeholder interviews

2.2 To examine whether the issues arising from the literature review are applicable 'on the ground' and to inform the topic guides for the service user interviews and stakeholder workshops, six interviews were undertaken with key stakeholders to gather their perspectives on the current picture in relation to allocating housing adaptations across Wales.

2.3 Stakeholders, who were selected by Welsh Government for their knowledge of various aspects of the adaptations systems and processes across Wales, included:

- Representatives of three local authorities (who manage mandatory disabled facilities grants in line with housing regulations and equalities legislation). Two spoke from a funding perspective, and the other from a social services perspective;
- A registered social landlord (RSL) representative;
- A housing charity representative; and

- A representative of an independent Home Improvement Agency.

2.4 The interviews lasted between 45 and 75 minutes, and covered the following key areas:

- The current system for allocating funding for housing adaptations – and whether this is sufficiently designed to meet the needs of older and disabled people in Wales;
- The Welsh Government Service Standards;
- The application, assessment and allocation processes;
- The delivery of adaptations;
- The impact of funding for home adaptations on meeting the needs of elderly and disabled people in Wales;
- The systems in place to measure and evaluate the impact of this funding; and
- Collaborative approaches and good practice in the area of housing adaptations.

2.5 As the findings from these interviews were primarily intended to inform the design of the later stages of the research, they have been included in Annex B. The discussion guide is also reproduced in Annex C.

### **Spending Analysis by Funding Stream**

2.6 A data analysis exercise was undertaken to assess the current levels of spend of each housing adaptation funding program and identify how each programme supports the delivery of housing adaptations in Wales. This element of the project was intended to strengthen understanding of funding allocation and how it reflects population need in each local authority.

2.7 The analysis examined the following capital funding programmes:

- Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG);
- Rapid Response Adaptations Programme (RRAP);
- Physical Adaptations Grant (PAG);

- ENABLE funding for Local Authorities; and
- Core funding for Care & Repair agencies.

2.8 In addition, it considered:

- The Integrated Care Fund (ICF);
- Housing association traditional funding; and
- Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) Funding of adaptations.

2.9 Adaptations are classified as being in one of three categories for the purpose of analysis<sup>17</sup>:

- Small e.g. installation of grab rails or stair rails.
- Medium e.g. walk-in showers, stair lifts, ramps.
- Large e.g. major structural changes to a property, including extensions.

2.10 The analysis is based on the monitoring returns from Care & Repair agencies, housing associations, including LSVT housing associations, and local authorities. The cleaned data set comprised 30,236 records and variables including: recipient demographics; adaptation provider, type and cost/funding; timescales; predicted outcomes; and customer satisfaction.

2.11 In addition to the analysis by funding stream, the data was analysed by geography. It was not possible to carry out the geographic analysis by local authority area because of gaps in the data and the areas that Care & Repair schemes worked in was used instead.

2.12 Several issues were present with the data, generally with missing data, notably with no data being returned by Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Wrexham councils. It was possible to include Bridgend local authority area in the analysis because of data from Care & Repair and housing associations being available for Bridgend, but Merthyr Tydfil and Wrexham are omitted completely. Consequently, this is a limitation of the analysis by local authority area and by funding stream; it will particularly affect any analysis that involves data on Local Authority (Mandatory DFG) and Local Authority (Other) funding streams.

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<sup>17</sup> [Welsh Government, 2020. High level analysis of data on housing adaptations 2018-19](#)

- 2.13 The most important improvement in the data would be to address gaps in the data. The most significant gap is geographic; the 2018/19 data set does not include a field for the location of the adapted properties.
- 2.14 There is no measure of disability that can be compared to Census statistics for long term health problem or disability. Having a suitable measure of disability would allow a fully comparable analysis of spending by local authority area, using standardised disability rates.
- 2.15 Similarly no data on ethnicity is available. Given that some minority communities are recognised as being disproportionately affected by lack of access to services, it would be useful compare spending across ethnicities.
- 2.16 There is also no identification of urban and rural areas to allow a comparative analysis of spending by population in rural and urban areas. Such an analysis, using, for instance, anonymised datasets provided by WG and coded to urban or rural areas based on postcodes, would help identify whether there is any inequality of access or delivery of adaptations between rural and urban areas.

### **In-depth Interviews with Service Users**

- 2.17 Eighteen interviews were undertaken with service users to understand their lived experiences of having a housing adaptation. The original intention was to undertake 20 interviews, but this element of the research was curtailed by the Covid-19 pandemic as it became increasingly difficult for gateway organisations (such as TPAS Cymru, Disability Wales and carer representative organisations) to offer assistance with recruitment.
- 2.18 The original intention was to place 'quotas' on the recruitment process to ensure a precise mix of participants across adaptation type, funding stream, age and geographic location. However, the Covid-19 situation rendered this impossible and the research team could therefore only interview those who were able to participate. Nonetheless, as the table below shows, service users included a mix of homeowners, private renters and council / RSL tenants spread across Wales. They varied in age and mobility status and had received a mix of small, medium, and large adaptations.

Characteristic	Category	Number of Participants
Type of Adaptation	Small	6
	Medium	7
	Large	5
Funding Stream Used	DFG	4
	Physical Adaptations Grant	3
	RRAP	3
	ENABLE	3
Age	18-55	6
	56-64	3
	65-74	3
	75+	6
Tenure	Owner Occupied	6
	Social Rented (Local Authority)	5
	Social Rented (RSL)	6
	Private Rented	1
Geographic location	Mid Wales	4
	North Wales	6
	South Wales	8

2.19 The interviews lasted around 30 minutes, and sought to gather people's views around the following:

- Making the application for an adaptation;
- Any grants they received to have the adaptation installed;
- The support (if any) they had through the process - and any problems they experienced in accessing that support;
- Having the adaptation installed;

- Whether the adaptation has helped; and
- How, if at all, the process of having an adaptation could have been improved?

2.20 The discussion guide is reproduced in Annex C.

### **Workshops with Stakeholders**

2.21 In order to ensure the research was solution-focused and provides clear and actionable suggestions of indicators for an allocation process, two stakeholder workshops were held to sense-check the key themes and proposals for indicators to emerge from the research.

2.22 Given the Covid-19 situation, the workshops were held online. Ten attended the first and twelve attended the second from across the organisations listed in Annex D. Attendees were assured of complete anonymity.

2.23 Verbatim quotations are used throughout, in indented italics, for their vividness in capturing points of view. The views expressed by participants may or may not be supported by available evidence. The research team cannot arbitrate on the correctness or otherwise of people's views when reporting them.

### **Representativeness**

2.24 It should be noted that qualitative approaches cannot be certified as statistically representative samples of opinion. The outcomes of the interviews and workshops reported here should thus be seen as examples of the reflections and opinions of a range of informed people on housing adaptations in Wales.

### **A Note on Covid-19**

2.25 The impact of the Covid-19 pandemic on some aspects of this research, particularly the proposed timetable, has been considerable.

2.26 When the United Kingdom went into lockdown on 23<sup>rd</sup> March 2020, ORS had completed the scoping phase (the literature review and stakeholder interviews) and had begun to recruit for the interviews with service users. The latter, unfortunately, then became impossible for several months as the gateway agencies on which ORS was relying to source participants were unable to assist

due to resource pressures – and several events at which the project was due to be promoted were cancelled.

- 2.27 Furthermore, while recruitment resumed in late summer, the gateway agencies were understandably still unable to offer as much assistance as they would have in ordinary times, and the specific service user quotas ORS was aiming for (in terms of adaptation type, funding stream, age and geographic location) proved unachievable. Nonetheless, as demonstrated earlier in this chapter, a good mix of service users were able to take part.
- 2.28 The other research strands (the data analysis and the stakeholder workshops) were largely unaffected in terms of methodology, although the latter evidently had to be held virtually rather than face-to-face as originally intended. The main impact was again around timetable, particularly as the workshops were intended to ‘sense check’ the research findings - and so delays to other parts of the project inevitably meant that these were held far later than intended.

### 3. Findings: Literature review

#### Main Findings

##### The current system for allocating funding is complex and inequitable

- 3.1 There is consensus across the literature reviewed that the housing adaptations system is complex, reactive, inefficient and inequitable. Particular reference is made to the different access points via various funding streams (and associated criteria and service standards), which result in people with similar needs receiving different standards of service because of where they live and who is providing the adaptation – the often quoted ‘postcode lottery’.
- 3.2 However, an alternative view is offered by Bibbings et al. (2015) who, in addition to outlining the complexity of the multi-stream system, suggested that this is an inevitable reflection of the fact that housing and the way it is funded is inherently complex. The authors also indicate that the existence of multiple funding streams is beneficial since it relieves pressure across the adaptations system.

##### The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is considered the most problematic funding stream

- 3.3 The DFG appears to be the most problematic funding stream: it is described as a “*long, drawn-out and complex process*” (Bibbings et al., 2015, p.43). Excessive bureaucracy and long timescales are particular issues (Equalities and Human Rights Commission, 2018; Bibbings et al., 2015) – and in some cases delays are caused by the £36,000 limit for a DFG, as individuals have to find additional funding for major adaptations (Wales Audit Office, 2018). It is worth noting that these issues were raised 15 years ago in the Jones Review (2005), in which the legislation around the DFG and the administrative processes and systems arising from it was described as “*very complicated*”.
- 3.4 Several sources suggest that the DFG process would work more effectively and efficiently were it to be modelled more on the ‘fast-track’ Physical Adaptations Grant (PAG) system. Indeed, the latter is described it as simple, quick, responsive, person-centred and effective (Bibbings et al., 2015) – although the Welsh Audit Office (2018) notes some issues with Welsh Government approval

processes delaying housing associations delivering PAGs, particularly for larger works, which require approval prior to the commencement of work.

- 3.5 In terms of other funding streams, the 2005 ‘Jones Review’ described the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme (RRAP) as “*highly successful*” in delivering minor adaptations and small repairs quickly and effectively, resulting in: people returning home from hospital and care in a timely manner; the prevention of admissions and readmissions; and the facilitation of closer partnership work between service providers in these different sectors (Jones, 2005). It is, though, important to note that these are relatively low value adaptations and thus not directly comparable with DFGs or most PAGs.
- 3.6 Encouragingly, the RRAP system is still viewed as simple, effective, person-centred and very fast, with small works being completed in up to eight days through the fast-track scheme – and is estimated to lead to £7.50 in cost savings for the NHS and social care services for every £1 spent (Bibbings et al., 2015).
- The main inequalities are by tenure, though there are also geographical differences
- 3.7 Significant inconsistencies in access to and delivery of housing adaptations exist between agencies and geographical areas (National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee<sup>18</sup>, 2018; Zhou, 2019). For example, the Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018) notes a wide range of practice among local authorities on how major and minor cost adaptations are delivered to tenants, leading to different service levels between areas.
- 3.8 Particular reference, though, is made to inequity by tenure in the literature. In particular, RSL tenants seemingly have much easier access to funding, lower costs and significantly shorter waiting times than those in owner occupation, local authority accommodation and especially the private rented sector (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018; Wales Audit Office, 2018; Bibbings et al., 2015; National Assembly for Wales, 2009; Jones, 2005).
- 3.9 Indeed, the private rented sector is a particular issue: tenants are reluctant to ask landlords for adaptations due to a lack of knowledge on both sides about funding

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<sup>18</sup> Now the Senedd Public Accounts Committee.

and processes, confusion over who is responsible for maintaining the adaptation, the local authority's flexibility around the DFG assessment criteria and fear over being viewed as a 'problem' tenant. (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018). The Equality and Human Rights Commission (2018) suggests that there is an opportunity to address this in Wales through the private sector licensing scheme<sup>19</sup>, whereby the funding schemes for and benefits of adaptations could be promoted to landlords.

3.10 The literature also outlines further inequalities for LSVT tenants, as their ineligibility for PAG funding means they have to rely either on their landlords' own funding or apply for a DFG (Bibbings et al., 2015; National Assembly for Wales, 2009); and the Wales Audit Office (2018) reports inconsistencies and gaps in the range, detail, and quality of information and advice, particularly regarding entitlement and changes to eligibility criteria, available to them.

3.11 Moreover, LSVT housing associations have not been included in the ENABLE review work to date (which is seeking to enhance oversight of local authority and housing association performance and expenditure), reinforcing inconsistencies and resulting in different, typically poorer, standards of service for LSVT tenants (Wales Audit Office, 2018; National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee, 2018).

Tenure-based inequality is compounded by means testing (or the 'Test of Resources') – but there are mixed views about whether it should be abolished

3.12 The fact that DFG funding is means tested (with an upper grant limit of £36,000) whereas PAG is not, means those with similar needs receive different responses depending on their tenure (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018). Essentially, the inclusion of a means test within the DFG process puts those applying via this route at a disadvantage compared to those using the other funding options available (National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee, 2018). Furthermore, the complexity, intrusiveness and delays involved in the means testing process itself again places those applying for DFG at a disadvantage compared to those accessing other funding streams that don't

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<sup>19</sup> [Rent Smart Wales](#)

involve means testing (Wales Audit Office, 2018; National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee, 2018; Bibbings et al., 2015;).

- 3.13 Means testing can also be cost-ineffective as there is a lack of consistency among providers around what is classified as a minor or major adaptation. As such, some smaller adaptations are delivered through the DFG process, and so are subject to means testing (which is expensive to administer) and delays (Bibbings et al., 2015; National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee, 2018).
- 3.14 Despite this, Bibbings et al. (2015) highlight some difference of opinion over the abolition of means testing for DFGs. While there is a view that DFG spending would be better spent on delivering adaptations rather than meeting the costs of administration, and that removing the means test would lead to greater cross-tenure equality of outcome. Bibbings et al (2015) also highlight concerns around potential increases in demand and subsequent budgetary pressures.
- 3.15 There is, though, broad agreement that small and potentially medium-level adaptations should be available without the need for a means test, which should be reserved for complex works such as adaptations – a suggestion first made in the 2005 Jones Review. Furthermore, where means testing remains, it is agreed that the process should be carefully reviewed and refined to address its over-complexity and ensure it takes account of living costs in addition to assets and income (Munro, 2019; Bibbings et al., 2015).
- 3.16 Indeed, this is reflected in the 2018 Equalities and Human Rights Commission report, and by Welsh Government in its suggestion that where adaptations are required, service providers should ensure they are fit for purpose by including the end user in the design and decision-making process (Welsh Government, 2019).

System redesign is underway – but there are mixed views on a single funding stream

- 3.17 In terms of reducing the bureaucracy involved in accessing small adaptations particularly, Welsh Government has accepted that it is possible to undertake small and medium scale adaptations without creating complex and overly bureaucratic approval processes (National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee, 2018) – and work is underway through the Welsh Government's

ENABLE programme to introduce more equitable standards and waiting times based on the level of adaptation rather than the grant needed.

- 3.18 While there is support in some quarters for developing a single pooled budget for housing adaptations across Wales to address the issues reported above, Bibbings et al. (2015) note that while this may seem like the simplest solution, it would likely be a complex and expensive undertaking and one that would not result in better outcomes for service users. Rather, there would be a strong likelihood of ‘bottlenecks’, longer waiting times for many (RSL tenants in particular) and reduced budgets for some providers.
- 3.19 There is also concern that changes of this nature could negatively impact on those areas of the overall system that are working well currently. For example, creating a single system could potentially involve imposing means testing on adaptations currently accessed via PAG (unless the means test is abolished completely, which in itself may not be welcomed by local authorities). Indeed, that any new unified system might be more reflective of the DFG process as opposed to seeking to replicate the apparently more responsive PAG, is a worry (Bibbings et al., 2015).

#### The Welsh Government Service Standards are a welcome introduction

- 3.20 The issues reported in this chapter are long-standing ones that have yet to be addressed by Welsh Government and delivery bodies (Wales Audit Office, 2018). However, some recent progress has been made: for example, the 2018 Wales Audit Office report and the National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee’s inquiry into its findings suggested that national service standards would help overcome some of the variations outlined above and ensure disabled and older people receive the same standard of service irrespective of where they live, who their landlord is and whether they own their own home. These were introduced by Welsh Government in April 2019<sup>20</sup> and were seen to have the potential to establish a robust, transparent and measurable framework for delivering adaptations (Munro, 2019).
- 3.21 The Wales Audit Office (2018) report discusses the issue of Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) more widely and in some detail. It suggests that the existence

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<sup>20</sup> [Welsh Government, 2019. Housing Adaptations Standards of Service](#)

of only a small range of national publicly-reported indicators covering the work of local authorities in delivering DFGs (specifically average time taken, the number of DFGs completed by tenure, and the amount spent in the financial year) presents only a partial picture of expenditure and performance - and means it is not possible to fully evaluate and understand the performance or effectiveness of individual agencies, or the efficiency and impact of the 'whole' adaptation system. For instance, there are no nationally-reported performance indicators for housing associations for their delivery of PAGs, and while Welsh Government receives information on the performance of Care & Repair agencies in respect of the Rapid Response Adaptation programme, this information is not published. In essence, having the right performance indicators and regularly reporting performance against these are important for public bodies to manage operational performance, identify areas of improvement and evaluate the positive impact of adaptations on beneficiaries' lives (Wales Audit Office, 2018).

- 3.22 One final issue to note in terms of performance indicators is that raised by Bibbings et al. (2015), who say that the way in which the time taken to complete an adaptations process is measured differs between areas, leading to markedly varied waiting times. The most common variation is between starting points, with some providers 'starting the clock' at first enquiry (which is, in fact, in line with Welsh Government guidance) and others only doing so when the OT recommendation is made. In doing the latter, the aforementioned OT delays are masked and delivery times look more impressive than they are in reality.

Information provision for service users is apparently poor

- 3.23 Both the 2005 'Jones Review' and the National Assembly for Wales' 2009 'Still Waiting' report described the quality of information and advice offered to service users about adaptations and how to navigate the system as "*poor*". Several more recent sources report the same lack of information around assessment processes, eligibility, waiting times etc. (Munro, 2019; Royal College of Occupational Therapists, 2019; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018; Bibbings et al., 2015;). Importantly, this lack of information can lead to people not seeking assistance as they assume 'there is no money' available for the help they need (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018).

- 3.24 Particular issues are that the information that is available is skewed towards older people or those with an obvious physical disability (implying that younger people and those with more ‘hidden’ impairments/disabilities or mental health issues are not seen as potential beneficiaries), and is often complex and inaccessible to those who do not know ‘the system’ (Bibbings et al., 2015). Moreover, the availability of communication support or information and advice in alternative formats (for those with sensory loss for example) appears to be lacking (Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018; Wales Audit Office, 2018).
- 3.25 As for the practicalities of making an application, the forms for doing so are considered complicated, an issue particularly alluded to in the Wales Audit Office 2018 report, which notes a wide variety of systems and processes, many of which do not meet needs.
- Process delays are common due to resource pressures, but some good practice exists
- 3.26 Delays are often experienced in receiving housing adaptations, primarily due to pressures on occupational therapists (OTs), resulting in long waits for assessments (Royal College of Occupational Therapists, 2019; Wales Audit Office, 2018; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018; Bibbings et al., 2015). This situation has arisen in part because legislation pertaining to the funding of major adaptations has been misinterpreted as being dependent on an occupational therapy assessment and recommendation (Royal College of Occupational Therapists, 2019).
- 3.27 This issue could be overcome via an initial screening of service users to determine a need for OT input – or by using properly recruited, trained and supervised support workers, OT assistants and trusted assessors where possible for minor adaptations to minimise delays and demands on the OT service (Royal College of Occupational Therapists, 2019; Wales Audit Office, 2018; Bibbings et al., 2015; National Assembly for Wales, 2009). This, though, requires better published guidance as to the difference between simple issues and complex situations that need the expertise of an OT (Royal College of Occupational Therapists, 2019).

- 3.28 OTs themselves have noted delays caused by some housing associations querying the need for adaptation and often delaying or refusing permission, as well as growing concerns that the length of time taken by delivery organisations to process applications is rising, often because of financial pressures and staffing reductions. Overall, their experience is that local authorities have established more effective systems and processes to deliver adaptations than those used by most housing associations (Wales Audit Office, 2018).
- 3.29 It is recognised that service delivery and good practice also improve when multi-disciplinary delivery teams work together in an integrated way (Wales Audit Office, 2018; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018; National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee, 2018). For example, improvements in average waiting times have been seen where housing departments have their own OTs (Bibbings et al., 2015; National Assembly for Wales, 2009). However, only a small number of local authorities have developed integrated approaches to housing adaptations, drawing together grants, building surveyors and OTs into single teams (Wales Audit Office, 2018).
- 3.30 Some other examples of good practice are: the use of trusted contractors or framework agreements to minimise delivery delays and achieve savings through economies of scale; bringing the delivery of works in-house to retain better control over the process; using ‘progress chasers’ and ‘case officers’ to work with different agencies and departments to ensure applications are ‘pulled’ through the system; and categorising certain adaptations (such as ceiling tracking hoists) as equipment so they can be processed quickly with no means test (Wales Audit Office, 2018; Bibbings et al., 2015)

Adapted property registers are desirable but rare

- 3.31 Chris Jones, in his 2005 Review, highlighted the desirability of providers maintaining effective adapted property registers and matching schemes in order to ensure people are appropriately and satisfactorily re-housed, and to ensure substantial cost savings within housing adaptation budgets. However, at the time of this Review, the development and use of such registers and schemes was low.

- 3.32 More recent reviews show that this is still the case to some extent, with some areas in Wales still not having a fully functioning Accessible Housing Register. As a result, providers are removing adaptations (that could potentially be used by new tenant with matching needs) quickly after properties became vacant in order to make housing available for general needs and prevent voids. This leads to inefficiencies in that allocations systems cannot effectively match availability to need (Bibbings et al., 2015; Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018).
- 3.33 Encouragingly, though, the picture in Wales is more positive than that in other parts of the UK: across the UK only 22% of local authorities have an accessible housing register. In Wales however, where the Welsh Government has actively encouraged the development of accessible housing registers, 52% of local authorities have one in place (Munro 2019 citing Equality and Human Rights Commission, 2018). Moreover, Welsh Government has expressed its intention to work with the housing sector, disabled people and other stakeholders to co-produce an Accessible Housing Register standard, which will *“facilitate better understanding of the current level of development of registers in Wales by providing a definition, supported by a set of principles against which progress can be assessed and measured on a local and national level”* (Welsh Government, 2019).

Data collection on impacts and outcomes has historically been poor, but is improving

- 3.34 Data collection and reporting around the effectiveness and efficiency of housing adaptations in Wales has historically been poor, resulting in an inability to enable comparisons between funding streams, understand variances in provision, scrutinise performance and examine impacts on service users (Bibbings et al., 2015; National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee, 2018; National Assembly for Wales, 2009; Jones, 2005).
- 3.35 The National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee – in the report of its inquiry into the findings of the 2018 Wales Audit Office report – also notes that despite the various different sources of funding for housing adaptations, there is only a small range of national publicly reported performance indicators. The Committee is also concerned that while discussions have been made on the

merits of improved impact evaluation, no action has occurred on the part of Welsh Government to take this forward.

- 3.36 In terms of improvements to data collection and reporting, the Welsh Government ENABLE review (introduced in January 2017) was thought to have at least begun to improve this with respect to collecting standardised information (Wales Audit Office, 2018).
- 3.37 Limitations are acknowledged though, particularly in relation to the measures being reported against not being focused in the right areas. Specifically, monitoring continues to focus primarily on the mechanics of delivering adaptations (while evidently important) and not enough on impact and benefit – and equality data is not collected widely enough to demonstrate and ensure fair access to services. Moreover, delivery bodies not submitting information or providing incomplete data remains an issue – making it impossible to fully judge whether the new performance management and reporting system is fit for purpose (Wales Audit Office, 2018; National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee, 2018).
- 3.38 In terms of measuring impact, the Wales Audit Office report states that “user satisfaction with housing adaptations masks a hugely complicated, reactive and inequitable system that is not delivering for all those who may need it” (Wales Audit Office, 2018, p.7). The report specifically notes that while the importance of housing adaptations in enabling disabled and older people to live independently and in preventing demand on health and social-care services is widely recognised, robust evaluation of these wider and longer-term benefits of adaptations is rare. Even when post-adaptation satisfaction surveys are undertaken, they are usually undertaken at the point the physical building works have been completed, which does not allow for a full consideration of the benefits of the work in terms of independence, well-being, reductions in accidents or falls and greater independence. As such, using data to judge performance and support future decision making in respect of adaptations continues to have many limitations (Wales Audit Office, 2018).
- 3.39 Bibbings et al. (2015) advocate an outcomes-based way of working to ensure sustainable and measurable long-term impacts – and that inasmuch as positive

outcomes are seen as more important to service users than delivery times, it may be prudent to supplement data on delivery times with client-focused, outcome-based measures such as customer satisfaction data and/or qualitative information on the impact of adaptations on applicants' lives. Moreover, the Welsh Government Expert Group on Housing an Ageing Population in Wales (2017) is strongly supportive of the development of more comprehensive performance indicators that acknowledge the importance even small-scale adaptations can make to a person's quality of life.

Collaboration and joint working is essential, but patchy

- 3.40 Providers and other stakeholders are generally clear on the providing person-centred outcomes through a more integrated and collaborative approach to the assessment, design and installation of adaptations (Royal College of Occupational Therapists, 2019).
- 3.41 However, partnership working – especially across the housing, health and social care sectors – is currently seen as ineffective to address need, with too many organisations working in isolation on their individual responsibilities, rather than working collaboratively and strategically to better address people's housing and health requirements. (Wales Audit Office, 2018). Moreover, the National Assembly for Wales Public Accounts Committee report (2018) refers to the importance of regional partnership boards (RPBs) in taking forward the integration of work in these areas, but also cites a view that RPBs often do not recognise or value the work of housing and third sector organisations and so miss opportunities to integrate services and maximise benefits for service users.

Consistency is key to future improvement

- 3.42 Bibbings et al. (2015) argue that the most important consideration moving forward is to improve the consistency of the adaptations process (in terms of means testing, information provision and waiting times) across geographical area and tenure so that all recipients of adaptation services can expect similar levels of service.
- 3.43 Specifically, Bibbings et al. (2015) also say that establishing an agreed definition of exactly what constitutes small, medium and large adaptations will help create greater fairness and consistency, and will lead to the collection of more

meaningful performance indicator data, regardless of which other policy solutions or models for change are adopted. It is hoped that the steps taken by Welsh Government thus far to review and improve the home adaptations system – particularly launching the ENABLE scheme – will achieve this in organising grants according to type of aid or adaptation – small, medium or large – regardless of housing tenure (Munro, 2019).

Housing adaptations must remain a political priority

- 3.44 Finally, evidence shows that in recent years Welsh Government has made adaptations services a higher political priority than England and Scotland and provided a higher level of funding toward them. For example, funding to the tune of £2,212,500 per local authority was provided in Wales in 2014/15, in contrast to £723,650 per local authority in England and £687,544 in Scotland (Zhou, 2018).

## 4. Findings: Spending analysis

### Introduction

- 4.1 This analysis focuses on how well each funding stream meets the purpose it is designed for by presenting statistics for a range of potential indicators for each funding stream. Before considering those results, we present summary background information about spending across Wales by local authority area. This is followed by a summary table of how well funding streams meet their stated aims against a very small number of selected metrics followed by more detailed analysis of the funding streams.
- 4.2 The detailed analysis of the funding streams is in three sections:
- Costs across the defined local authority areas
  - Costs by funding stream
  - Costs by size category, by provider, by age group to identify the characteristics of adaptations and recipients by funding stream
- 4.3 A summary of results using four indicators to assess how well each funding stream meets its stated aims is included at Annex G.
- 4.4 The analysis should be contextualised by the purpose of each funding stream. As this dictates to a large extent the amount of money allocated through each funding stream, the number of adaptations, the size of adaptations and how long they take to complete. There are also external factors such as family situations which affect the delivery of some funding streams more than others; the timing of large adaptations may be affected by family circumstance that are unlikely to affect small adaptations.

### Categories of adaptation

- 4.5 The cost of adaptations along with disruption to the life of the household and often the eventual benefit depends on the amount of work which needs to be carried out. For this reason, adaptations are classified as being in one of three categories<sup>21</sup>:

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<sup>21</sup> [Welsh Government, 2020. High level analysis of data on housing adaptations 2018-19](#)

- Small e.g. installation of grab rails or stair rails.
- Medium e.g. walk-in showers, stair lifts, ramps.
- Large e.g. major structural changes to a property, including extensions.

### **Limitations of the data**

- 4.6 The limitations of current data collection on the costs and benefits of adaptations are discussed in Chapter 3 Literature Review (above) at paragraph 3.34. The analysis in this section is based on the monitoring returns from Care & Repair agencies, housing associations, including Large Scale Voluntary Transfer (LSVT) housing associations, and local authorities from the year 2018/19. This analysis is indebted to and builds on the report “High-level analysis of data on housing adaptations 2018-19” published on the Welsh Government website<sup>22</sup>.
- 4.7 The cleaned data set included 30,236 records. The size of the data set allows for a robust analysis across a range of variables. Nevertheless, as with any data set, there are limits to the analysis that is possible. The main points that would have improved the analysis undertaken for this report are set out at paragraph 2.12.
- 4.8 There are three geographies involved:
- The geographic area covered by each local authority (local authority area).
  - The geographic area that each Care & Repair works in (Care & Repair operating area), which can cover one or more contiguous local authorities to form a single whole.
  - The geographic area that each housing association works in (the housing association operating area), which can cover one or more non-contiguous local authorities.
- 4.9 Where a local authority has provided the adaptation then it can be inferred that the property is within that local authority area. The local authority area that the property is in can also be inferred if a Care & Repair or housing association works solely within that local authority area. However, most Care & Repair and housing associations work across more than one local authority and in these

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<sup>22</sup> [As above](#).

cases it is not possible to separate which adaptations are provided in which local authority area.

- 4.10 Without the location being specified, it is not possible to define a geography that includes a complete set of data for all areas. This means that any comparison between areas will always be imperfect.
- 4.11 The contiguous areas with the most complete data are Care & Repair operating areas where it is possible to include all data from Care & Repair and the local authorities within the operation area. However, even these areas cannot include data from housing associations that work in several local authority areas for the same reason outlined above; it is not possible to identify which local authority area any particular adaptation lies. It is, of course, possible to include the data from any housing association that works only in the local authorities within the Care & Repair area.
- 4.12 There is rarely, if ever, complete data for any particular local authority or Care & Repair area. Therefore the choice of which to include is a matter of which local authority and Care & Repair areas have sufficient data to be useful. On balance, taking a pragmatic view, we have excluded two local authority areas where there is effectively no useable data. We have included two local authority areas where the data was significantly less complete than for all the other local authority and Care & Repair areas, but still provides a view, albeit incomplete, of what is happening in those areas.
- 4.13 Data was missing completely for Bridgend, Merthyr Tydfil and Wrexham councils. Merthyr Tydfil and Wrexham are omitted completely from the analysis. It is relevant to include Bridgend local authority area in the analysis because data was present from Care & Repair and housing associations for that council area to provide a view on a significant amount of adaptation work in the Bridgend area, though it is important to add a caveat that the Bridgend data does not allow a full comparison with other local authority and Care & Repair areas.
- 4.14 Flintshire is included in the analysis for completeness, though the results for Flintshire are not directly comparable to other local authority or Care & Repair areas. This is because North East Wales Care & Repair covers Flintshire and Wrexham. Had Wrexham provided data then it would have been possible to

provide analysis at a 'Flintshire and Wrexham' area level. However, it is not possible to identify which adaptations carried out by North East Wales Care & Repair were in Flintshire and which were in Wrexham. Therefore the information for Flintshire only includes adaptations carried out by the local authority and housing associations. Again, it is relevant to include Flintshire because the data that is available provides a view of a significant amount of adaptation work in the Flintshire area, though this needs the caveat that the Flintshire data does not allow a full comparison with other local authority and Care & Repair areas. All other reported local authority areas include adaptations carried out by their respective Care & Repair agencies. An analysis of Flintshire Council data compared to other local authorities data shows that spending in Flintshire by the local authority is comparable to other authorities across Wales.

- 4.15 It is worth repeating that while some improvement is possible in order to better answer the research and policy questions, the size of the monitoring returns data set allows for a robust analysis overall.

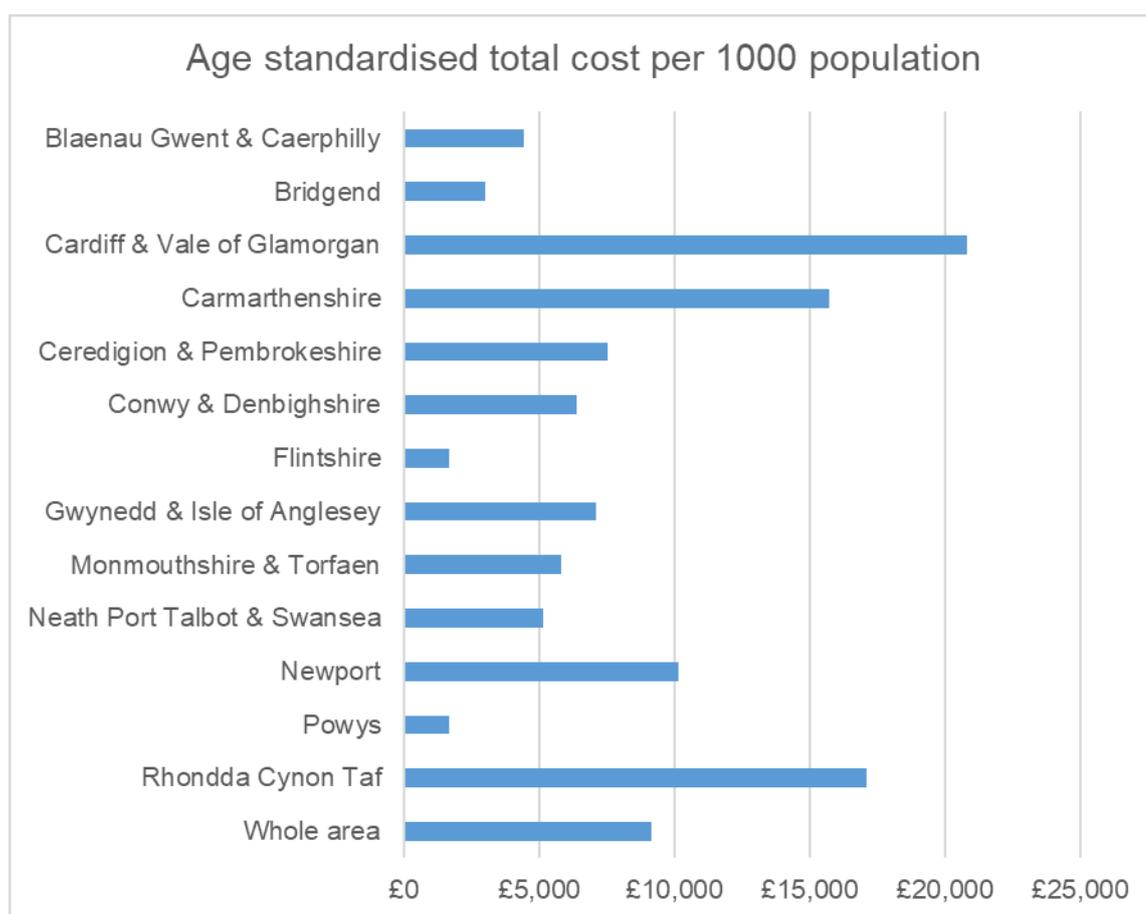
#### **Defining local authority areas**

- 4.16 While it would be useful to analyse spending within each individual local authority area, it is not possible to precisely identify all spending at that geography using existing data. There are three main types of organisation working within each local authority area: the relevant local authority; Care & Repair services; and housing associations. The second two of these often work across more than one local authority area, and housing associations may work across several local authority areas.
- 4.17 The most precise definition which can reasonably be applied is Care & Repair area, which is the area that each Care & Repair work across. Using this approach, each local authority is designated as a local authority area, except where a Care & Repair scheme covers two local authorities, in those cases those two local authorities are considered together. Housing associations which work in a single defined local authority area are designated as being within the relevant local authority area. Housing associations which work across more than one defined local authority area are classed as 'unassigned'.
- 4.18 Details of the defined local authority areas used are given in Annex F.

### **Costs across the defined local authority areas and by funding stream**

- 4.19 The following set of charts are standardised across all local authorities for which there is data. This method removes disparities in the results and facilitates better comparison between areas that have a greater percentage of older people and those that have a smaller percentage of older people. Similarly for other age groups. There is likely to be greater demand for adaptations in areas with a greater percentage of older people and a lower demand in areas with a smaller percentage of older people. Age standardisation also equalises levels of disability to some extent as greater levels of disability are seen with increasing age. It also has a small equalising effect on affluence because of the impact of equalising the percentage of working age people between areas, though this has a relatively small effect.
- 4.20 Three groupings of local authorities can be identified in the age standardised cost figures:
- Group 1 - Over £15,000 per 1,000 persons (Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan, Rhondda Cynon Taf and Carmarthenshire).
  - Group 2 - £5,000 to £15,000 per 1,000 persons (Newport, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire, Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey, Conwy and Denbighshire, Monmouthshire and Torfaen, and, Neath Port Talbot and Swansea). In fact, the highest cost among these authorities is Newport at £10,133 per 1,000 persons. All others are below £10,000 per 1,000 persons.
  - Group 3 - Under £5,000 (Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly, Bridgend, Flintshire and Powys). However, data is missing from some local authorities which can lead to them showing lower cost than in reality, especially Bridgend and Flintshire.
- 4.21 It is clear that there are notably different levels of cost between local authority areas. To paraphrase discussion in the two stakeholder workshops, there is a complex system behind these figures and some of the difference in cost is explained by the existence of health and community services that can increase or decrease the demand for adaptations by providing support which avoids the need for adaptations or by proactively promoting adaptations. It is likely that both approaches will be at play in each local authority area.

**Chart 1: Age standardised total cost per 1000 population**



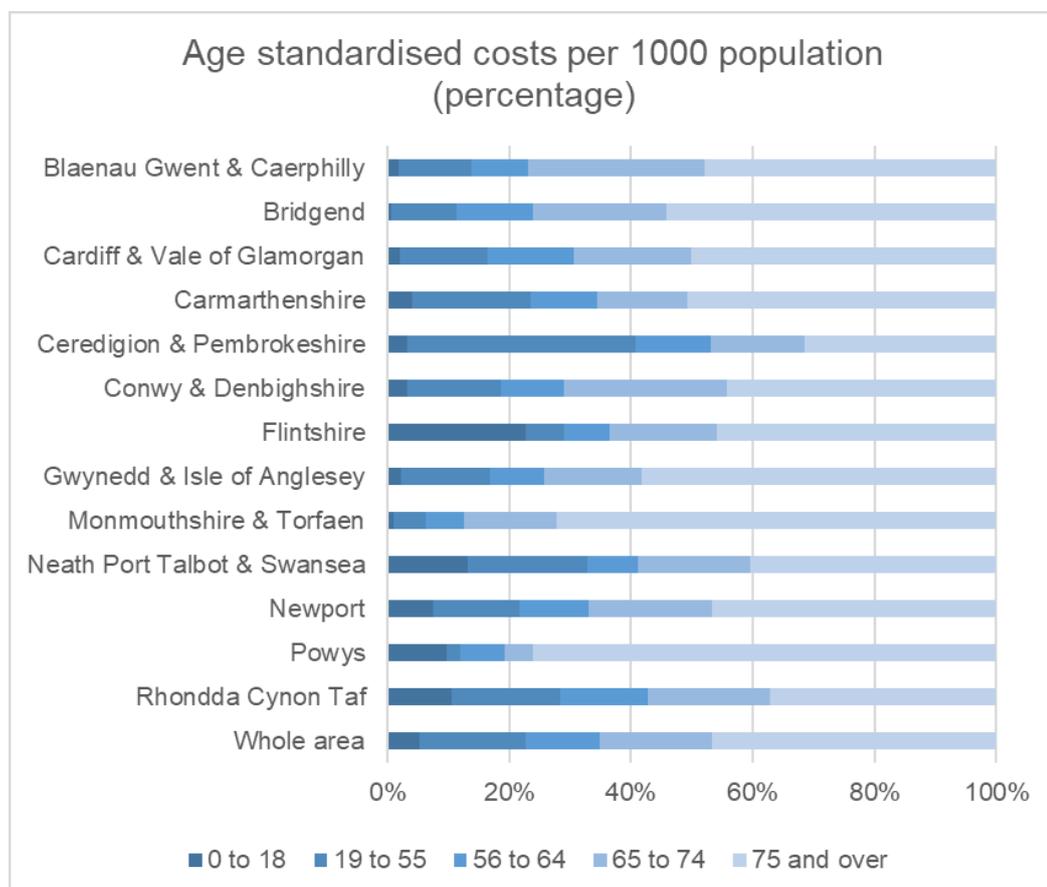
Source: Welsh Government, ONS population estimates 2019

- 4.22 The amount of funding allocated to different age groups varies by local authority area, noting that the age standardisation eliminates the question of whether one local authority area has a greater percentage of any particular age group. Some allocate a greater proportion of their funding on older age groups and others allocate a greater proportion on younger age groups. Again this may be related to local health and community services, but may also reflect other factors such as priorities in the local authority and what information on adaptations is available to different sections of society.
- 4.23 **Chart 2** shows the same age standardise data by percentage of cost by each age group.
- 4.24 There is evidence of different take up of adaptations by different age groups in different local authority areas. Therefore, there is a need to consider the

proportions of the budget spent per 1,000 of each age group alongside the actual cost.

- 4.25 Some local authority areas spend a greater proportion of the cost per 1,000 people aged 75 and over than do other authorities; Powys, and Monmouthshire and Torfaen allocate a greater proportion compared to Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, and Rhondda Cynon Taf. In contrast, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire allocate a greater proportion per 1,000 people aged 19 to 55 than any other local authority area, and also a greater proportion per 1,000 people aged 19 to 55 age group than per 1,000 people aged 75 and over.
- 4.26 Considering the age standardised actual costs as opposed to percentages; Rhondda Cynon Taf spends over £6,000 per 1,000 people aged 75 and over compared to around £1,250 in Powys. Similarly, Rhondda Cynon Taf distributes over £3,000 per 1,000 people aged 19 to 55 compared to around £2,800 in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire.

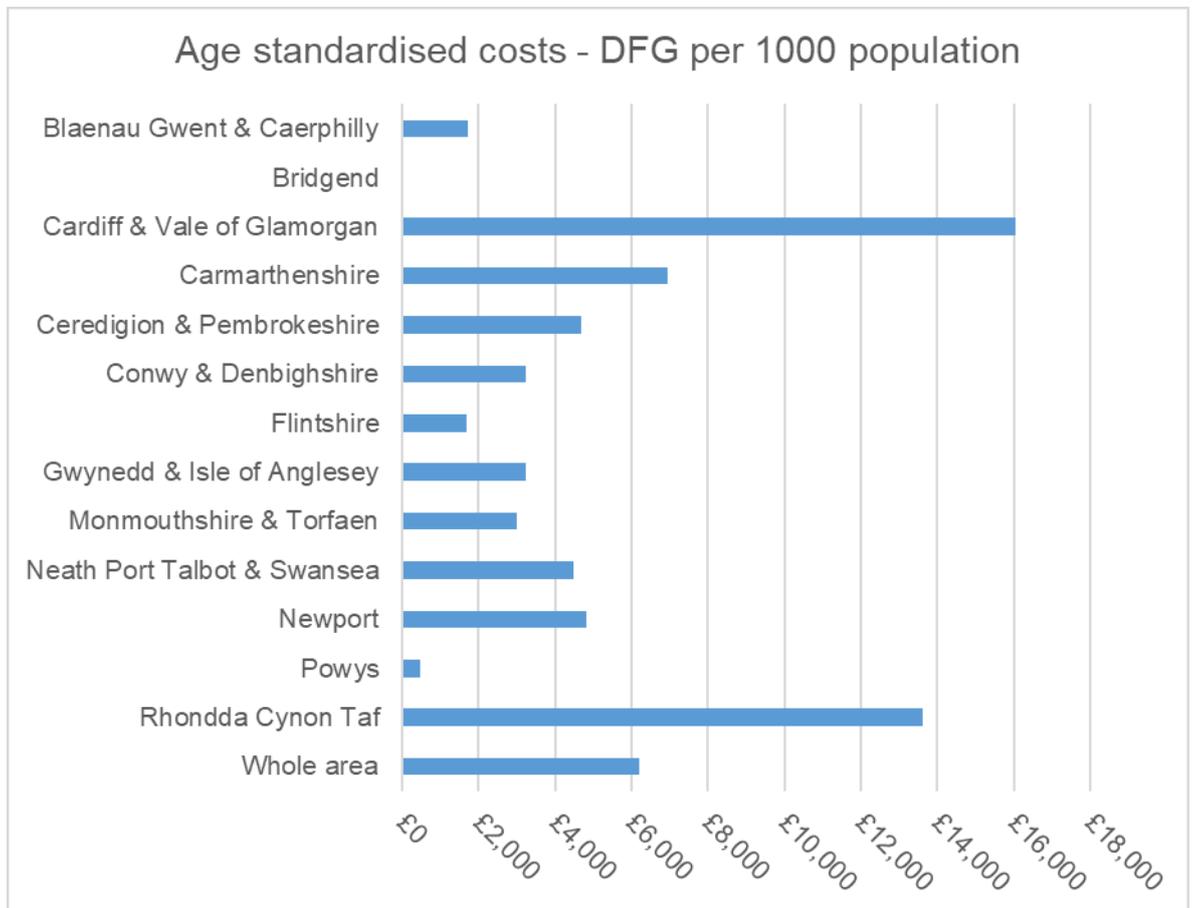
**Chart 2: Age standardised total cost per 1000 population (percentage)**



Source: Welsh Government; ONS population estimates 2019

4.27 Age standardised costs of DFGs mostly reflects age standardised costs overall. For example, Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan, and Rhondda Cynon Taff distribute the most per 1,000 people through DFGs. There is no DFG data available for Bridgend, as discussed in paragraph 4.13.

**Chart 3: Age standardised costs for DFG funding per 1000 of population**

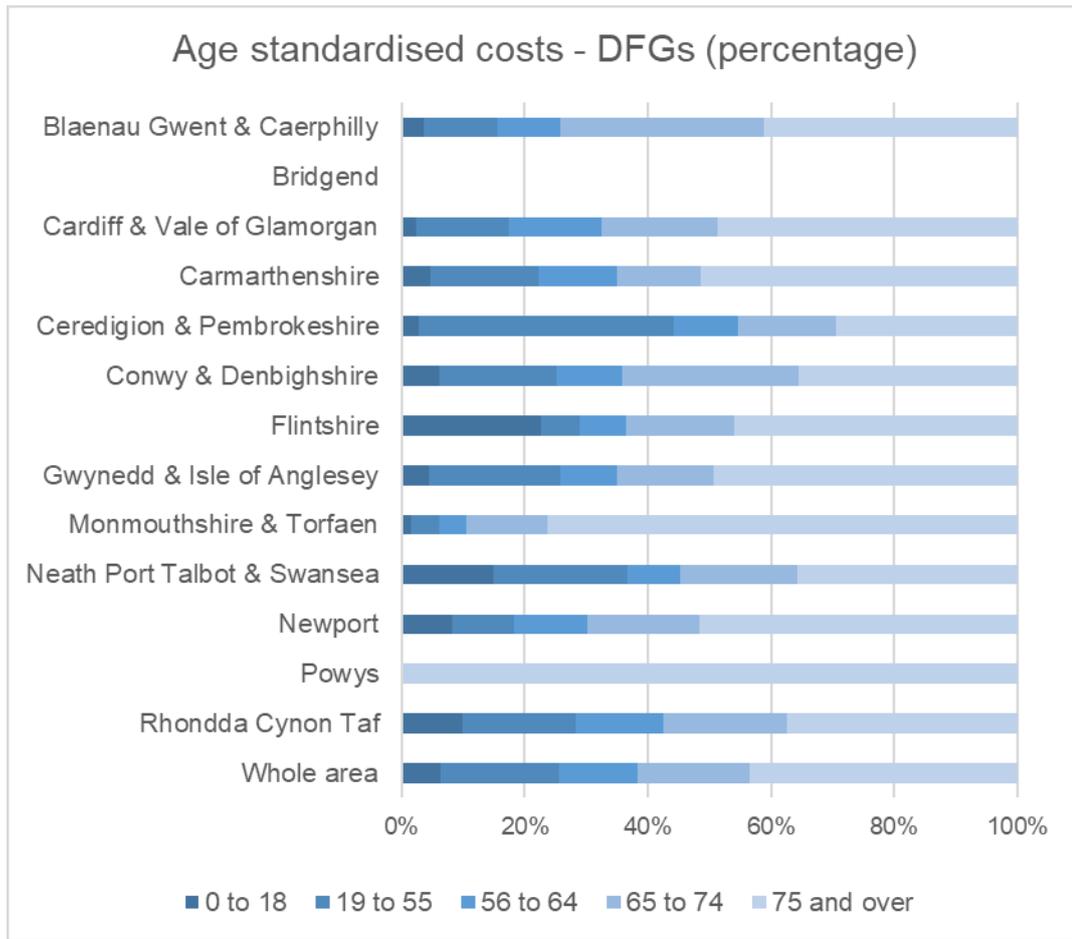


Source: Welsh Government, ONS population estimates 2019

4.28 The age standardised proportion of funding through DFGs to the different age groups is shown in

4.29 Chart 4. The percentage of DFG funding varies by local authority area. Monmouthshire and Torfaen distribute over 75% of their DFG funding to the 75 and over age group whereas Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire distribute around 40% to the 19 to 55 age group. It is notable that Powys spent all DFG funding on the over 75 age group.

**Chart 4: Age standardised costs - DFGs (percentage)**



Source: Welsh Government, ONS population estimates 2019

**Costs by funding stream**

- 4.30 The total cost for all Welsh Government funding streams varied from the smallest funding stream, Traditional RSL Funding at £25,112, to the largest funding stream of Local Authority Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) at £18.79 million. The total cost was £31.44 million for 30,010 adaptations. The mean cost per adaptation was £1,048, which includes a few very large adaptations that could raise the mean average. The median average of £130 probably better represents the cost of the ‘typical’ adaptation.
- 4.31 The cost of Local Authority DFGs is over 50% larger than all other funding streams together (excluding ‘Other’ funding); £18.79 million compared to £12.46 million. This is due to the combination of DFGs having the highest median and second highest mean cost per adaptation and delivering a relatively high number of adaptations compared to other funding streams.

4.32 The number of adaptations ranges from 192 under Traditional RSL Funding to 10,456 smaller adaptations under the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme (RRAP). The number of adaptations carried out reflects the objectives of the funding stream as well as the level of funding available and the management of the funding stream. Therefore, it is difficult to isolate management from the other factors.

**Table 4.1: Number of adaptations and total cost by funding stream**

	Number	Total cost (£)
WG (ENABLE)	5,356	2,727,590
WG (PAG)	717	3,418,762
LA Funding (DFG)	4,135	18,788,788 <sup>23</sup>
LA Funding (Other)	6,827	3,993,530
RRAP	10,456	1,297,228
ICF	989	130,648
Traditional RSL Funding	194	25,112
LSVT funding	849	866,652
Total (Excluding 'Other')	29,523	31,248,310
Other	487	188,753
Total (Including all 'Other')	30,010	31,437,063

Source: Welsh Government

4.33 StatsWales records £32.32m spent on DFGs alone in 2018/19<sup>24</sup>. This suggests large gaps in the data. The difference between the spend on DFGs recorded in the data and that from StatsWales is not reconciled simply by adding in the Local Authorities who did not provide data. Similarly, the spend on some of the other funding streams recorded in the data is lower than the spend on the same funding streams from other sources.

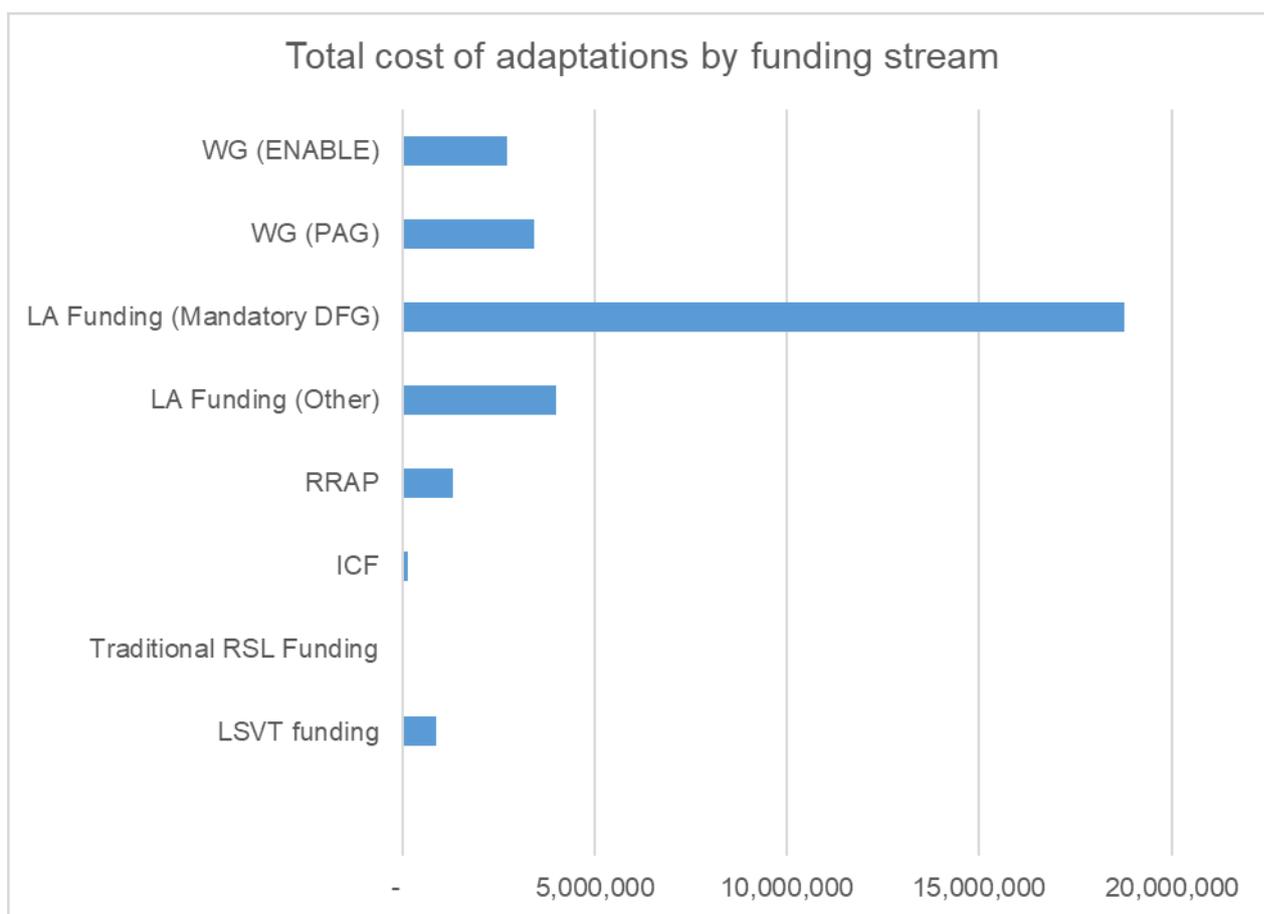
4.34

<sup>23</sup> This number has been checked; the repetition of 788 is correct

<sup>24</sup> [Stats Wales, 2019. Disabled Facilities Grants by local authority area and type of grant](#)

4.35 Chart **5** shows the same data as Table 4.1 in graphical format and demonstrates the predominance of DFGs at £18.79 million. The next three largest funding streams by cost were ENABLE, Physical Adaptations Grant (PAG) and Local Authority Funding (Other). Together, these contributed £10.14 million in costs.

**Chart 5: Total cost of adaptations by funding stream**



Source: Welsh Government

- 4.36 It should be noted that Traditional RSL funding counts for £25,112 in total and is too small to show on the scale when considered against larger funding streams
- 4.37 The analysis of ‘Other’ funding below excludes records which also record one of the main funding streams. What remains is funding which is not from one of the funding streams above. Most of the analysis following this table excludes ‘Other’. ‘Other’ funding is distinct from ‘Local Authority (Other)’ funding which is funding via local authorities other than DFG.
- 4.38 Funding from sources other than the main funding streams provided a comparatively small number of adaptations; approximately 258 for a comparatively modest cost of at least £141,102. While ‘Other’ funding makes a modest contribution to the total of adaptations, each individual adaptation can make a considerable difference to a household’s quality of life. Therefore, the ‘Other’ category is included in the customer outcomes section below.

- 4.39 Several funding streams recorded examples of lowest costs for an adaptation being under £10; ENABLE, DFGs, LA Funding (Other), RRAP and LSVT funding. The lowest cost for PAG was £40, the lowest costs for all other funding were below £40.
- 4.40 The highest cost was recorded by DFG: £109,279, while the highest costs for ENABLE, PAG and Local Authority Funding (Other) were in the £40,000 to £80,000 range. The highest LSVT Funding cost was £21,186 and for 'Other' was £11,029. RRAP, ICF and Traditional RSL Funding were all below £1,700. Again, these lowest costs reflect the objectives of the different funding streams.
- 4.41 The median probably reflects this data most realistically of the three averages of mean, median and mode<sup>25</sup>. The median costs for PAG and DFGs were a little over £3,500. For all other funding streams, the median fell into an £81 range between £90 and £171.
- 4.42 The mean tends to be the highest of the three averages and shows the greatest range of average costs. The mean is susceptible to producing skewed results via a small number of very small or, more likely, very large outliers. This is one reason the median reflects the data more realistically.
- 4.43 It is noticeable that the modal average for all but two of the smaller funding streams shows that numerically, most adaptations fell into a narrow (£80) range between £90 and £170.

**Table 4.2: Averages and range of cost by funding stream**

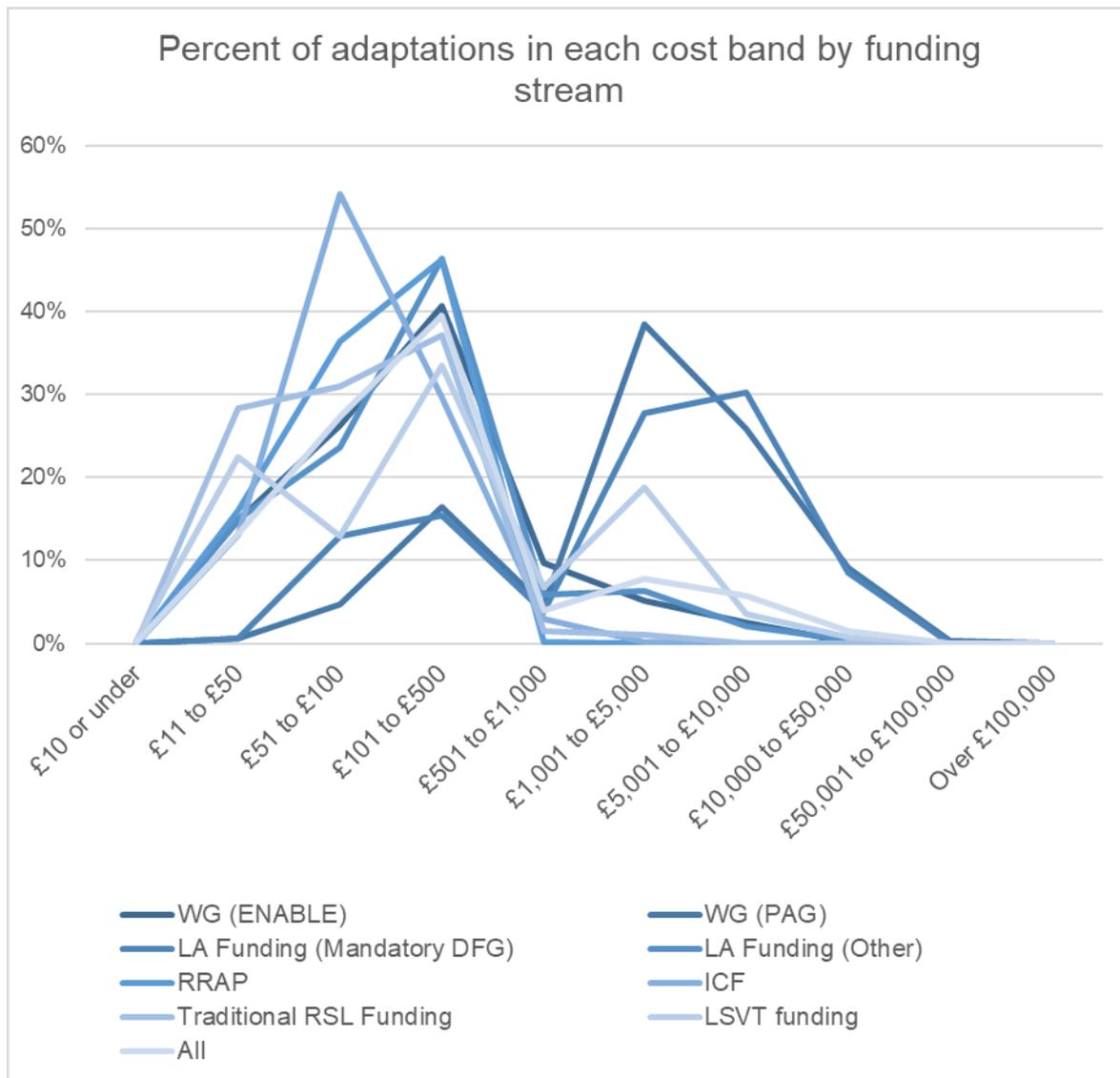
	<b>Mean (£)</b>	<b>Median (£)</b>	<b>Mode (£)</b>	<b>Highest (£)</b>	<b>Lowest (£)</b>
WG (ENABLE)	512	146	98	43,516	3
WG (PAG)	4,768	3,570	168	78,247	40
LA Funding (DFG)	4,566	3,780	96	109,279	3
LA Funding (Other)	586	135	96	64,144	3
RRAP	126	96	90	894	1
ICF	132	90	90	1,167	30
Traditional RSL Funding	131	91	101	1,682	18
LSVT funding	1,032	171	41	21,186	6
Other (all 'Other')	390	138	350	11,029	11
All funding?	1,053	130	90	109,279	1

Source: Welsh Government

<sup>25</sup> The mode is one of the three types of average or 'measures of central tendency'. The mode is the most common value in a set of data.

- 4.44 The costs of each individual adaptation were allocated to one of the following cost bands to allow a more nuanced comparison of costs than the range and median of costs allows.
- £10 or under
  - £11 to £50
  - £51 to £100
  - £100 to £500
  - £501 to £1,000
  - £1,001 to £5,000
  - £5,001 to £10,000
  - £10,000 to £50,000
  - £50,001 to £100,000
  - Over £100,000
- 4.45 There are two peaks in the cost bands across the whole data set. Some funding streams exhibit one peak, others exhibit both peaks.
- 4.46 For most funding streams, the first peak occurs in the £101 to £500 cost band. The exception being ICF, with 54% of all adaptations funded costing £51 to £100. ENABLE, LA Funding (Other), RRAP, ICF and Traditional RSL Funding do not exhibit a second peak and under 10% of adaptations in each of these streams fell into any single cost band over £500.
- 4.47 A small proportion of adaptations cost between £501 and £1,000.
- 4.48 PAG, DFG and LSVT Funding (including from their own resources) exhibit a second peak. LSVT Funding has a higher first peak followed by a lower second peak at £1,001 to £5,000. PAG and DFG both show a lower first peak and higher second peak. For PAG the peak is at £1,001 to £5,000 (38% of adaptations) while for DFG the second peak continues from £1,001 to £5,000 (28% of adaptations) to £5,001 to £10,000 (30% of adaptations).

**Chart 6: Percent of adaptations in each cost band by funding stream**



Source: Welsh Government

**Characteristics of adaptations and recipients by funding stream**

4.49 The charts below show the percentage of adaptations in each category for each funding stream. The first (Chart 7) is based on the number of adaptations within each size category, while the second (Chart 8) is based on the total cost within each size category. Full data for each funding stream is shown in Annex F.

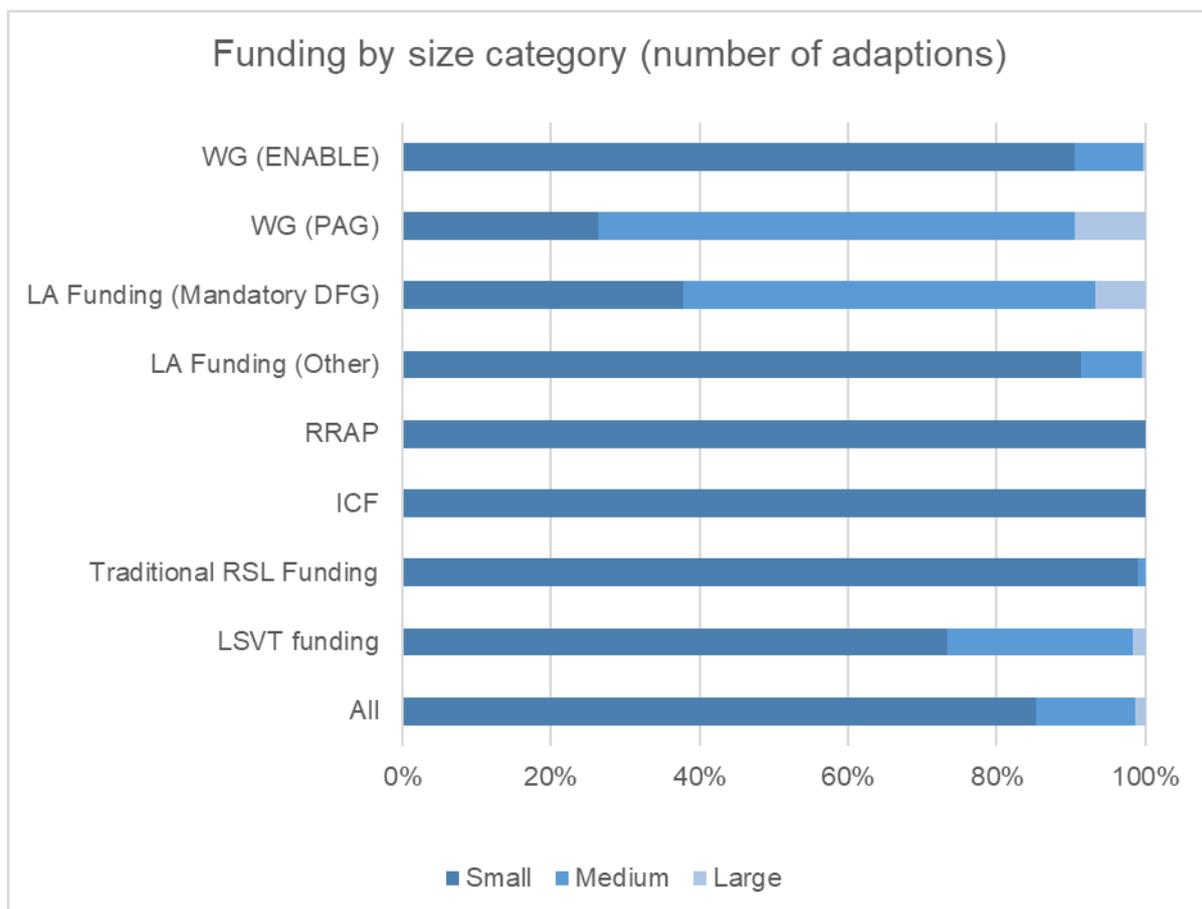
4.50 Considering the number of adaptations, over 70% of all adaptations under all but two funding streams were in the small category, including 99% or 100% of RRAP, ICF and Traditional RSL funding. The 2 exceptions are PAG and DFG,

but it is notable that of these two, 26% of PAG and 38% of DFG are in the small category.

4.51 A quarter (25%) of all LSVT Funding adaptations are in the medium category along with 9% of ENABLE and 8% of LA Funding (Other). The majority of adaptations carried out under PAG (64%) and DFG (55%) fall into the medium size category.

4.52 Much lower proportions of adaptations that fall into the large category are carried out: 9% of PAG; 7% of DFG; and 2% of LSVT Funding.

**Chart 7: Funding by size category (number of adaptations)**



Source: Welsh Government

4.53 Considering the percentage of adaptations falling into each size category by costs shows a complementary view to considering the percentage by size category.

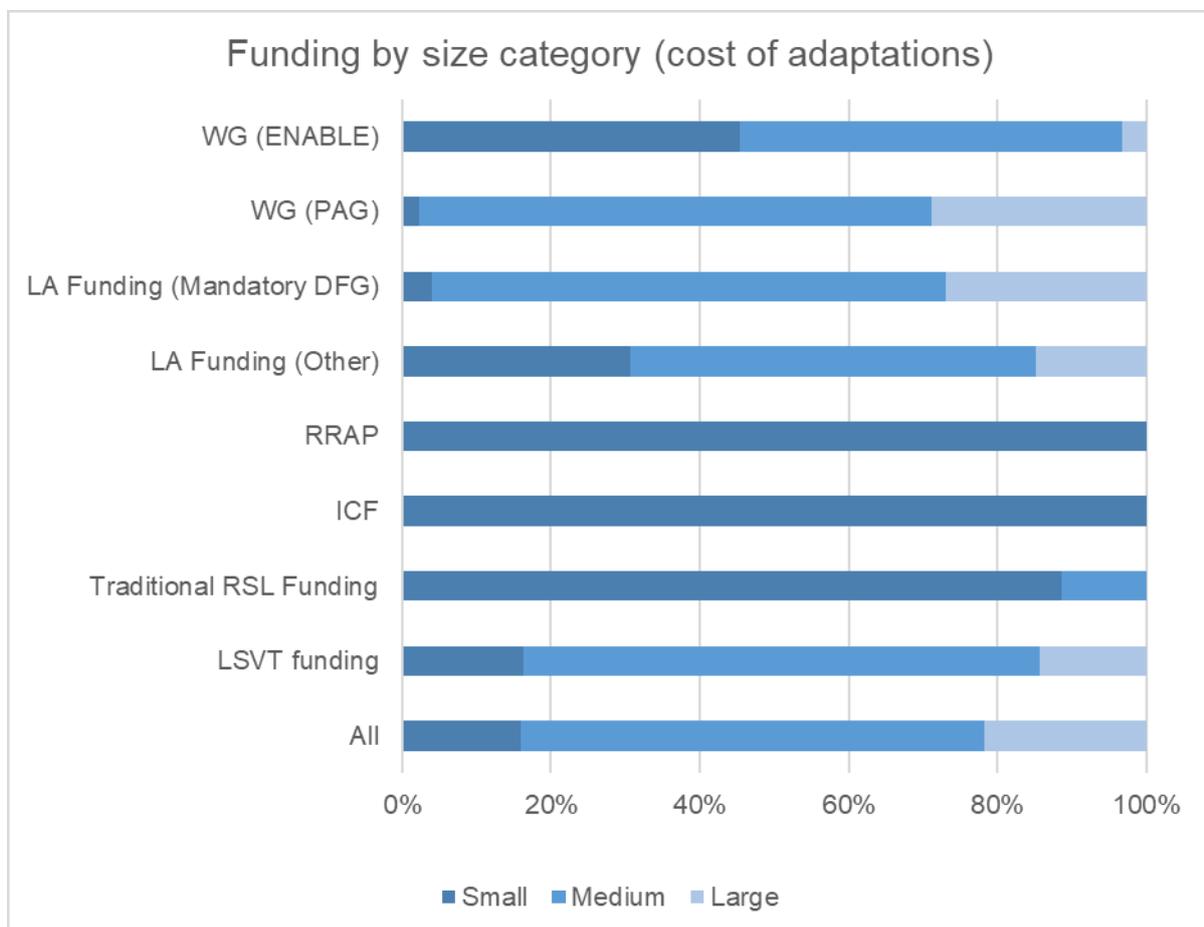
4.54 Most of the cost of adaptations under RRAP (100%), ICF (100%) and Traditional RSL Funding (89%) is on small adaptations, as is 45% of the cost under

ENABLE and 31% under LA Funding (Other). Inevitably, this reflects the focus of the individual funding streams.

4.55 By contrast, over half the costs for each of ENABLE, PAG, DFG, LA Funding (Other) and LSVT Funding are for adaptations classed as medium, ranging from 51% of costs under ENABLE to over two thirds (69%) of costs under each of PAG, DFG and LSVT Funding.

4.56 The largest proportions of costs for large adaptations are under PAG (29%) and DFG (27%), with smaller but significant percentages of costs.

**Chart 8: Funding by size category (cost of adaptations)**



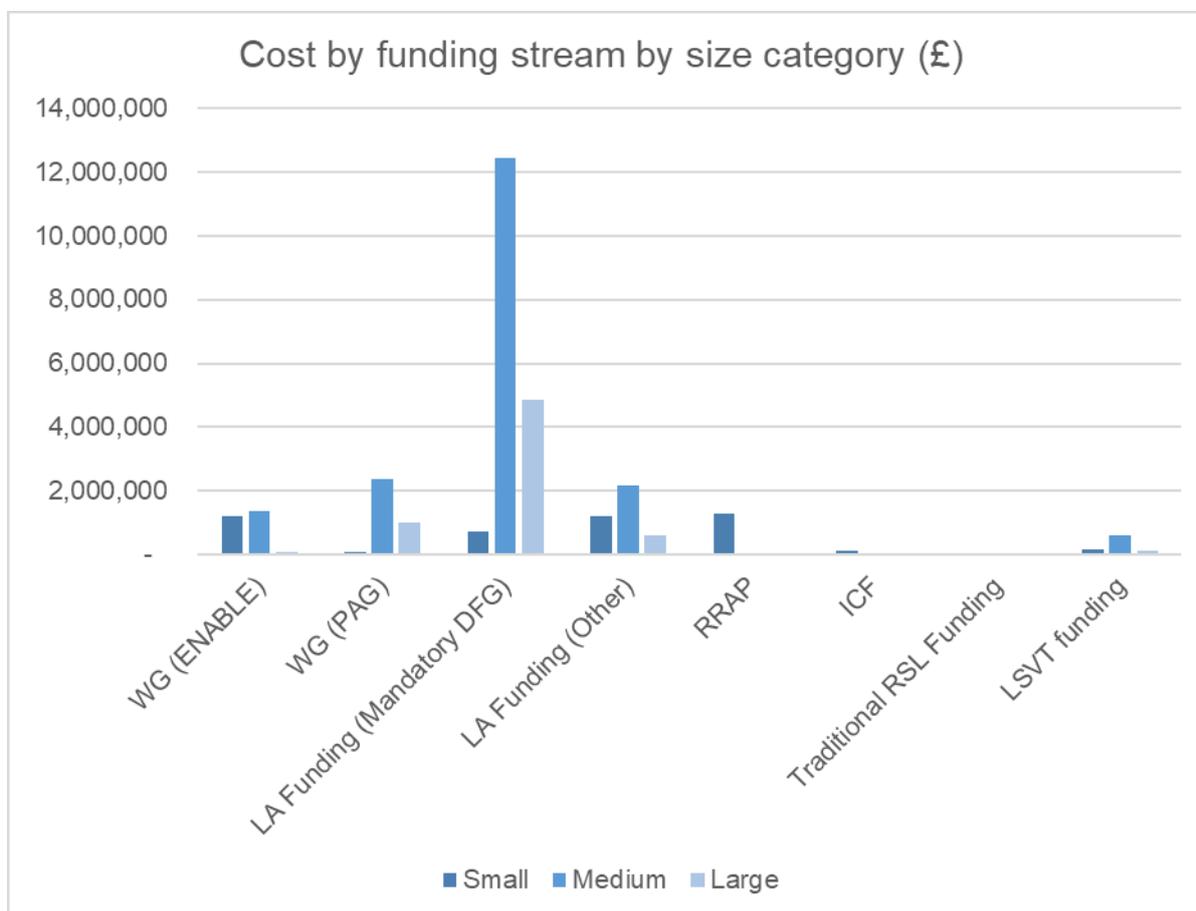
Source: Welsh Government

4.57 The following chart (9) and table (4.3) show the cost for each funding stream by size category, demonstrating the magnitude of the costs.

4.58 LA DFG funding of medium and large adaptations were by far the largest costs; £12.42 million and £4.84 million respectively. PAG and LA Funding (Other) each funded over £2 million worth of medium adaptations.

4.59 In total, medium adaptations attracted £18.91 million of funding compared to £6.62 million for large adaptations and £4.82 million for small adaptations.

**Chart 9: Cost by funding stream by size category (£)**



Source: Welsh Government

**Table 4.3: Costs by funding stream by size category (Totals may not sum exactly due to rounding)**

	Small (£)	Medium (£)	Large (£)	Total (£)
WG (ENABLE)	1,209,204	1,373,755	85,566	2,668,525
WG (PAG)	79,899	2,353,991	984,871	3,418,762
LA Funding (DFG)	731,675	12,424,235	4,837,976	17,993,886
LA Funding (Other)	1,212,988	2,155,552	586,068	3,954,608
RRAP	1,297,228	-	-	1,297,228
ICF	130,648	-	-	130,648
Traditional RSL Funding	22,243	2,869	-	25,112
LSVT funding	140,973	601,985	123,694	866,652
All	4,824,858	18,912,386	6,618,175	30,355,420

Source: Welsh Government

- 4.60 Table 4.4 below shows the proportion of each funding stream that was used by each of the three main provider groups (Care & Repair, housing associations and local authorities). The figures are based on the number of adaptations delivered. To some extent, the objectives of the individual funding streams will govern which of the main provider groups will be allocated funding. Nevertheless, there are some points of interest from the data.
- 4.61 The largest proportion of each funding stream was directed to a single major provider, often with a lesser amount to only one secondary provider. For example; 92% of ENABLE funded adaptations are through Care & Repair with 9% funded through local authorities. The exception to this is LA Funding (Other) where 44% of funded adaptations are through Care & Repair and 56% through local authorities. This situation limits the comparison that can be made between funding streams and between providers because spending is a function of the funding stream and the provider. If a funding stream or provider appear ineffective, it may be difficult to identify whether the problem lies with the funding stream, the provider, or the interaction between the two.
- 4.62 Overall, two thirds (66%) of funded adaptations are provided by Care & Repair, just over a quarter (28%) by local authorities and 6% by housing associations.

**Table 4.4: Percentage of funding stream by provider (by number of adaptations)**

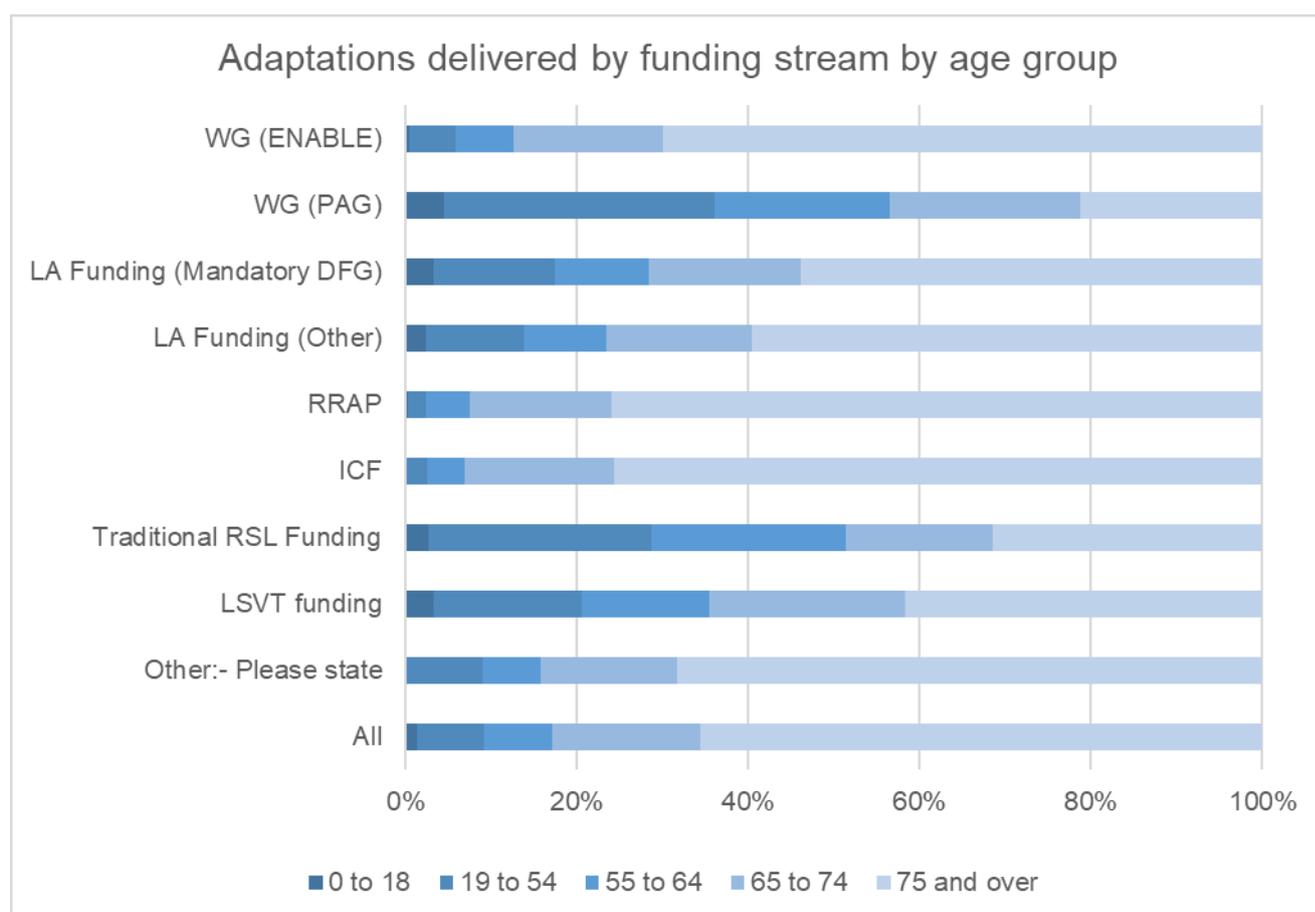
	<b>Care &amp; Repair</b>	<b>HA</b>	<b>LA</b>	<b>Total</b>
WG (ENABLE)	92%	0%	9%	100%
WG (PAG)	9%	91%	0%	100%
LA Funding (DFG)	<1%	<1%	99%	100%
LA Funding (Other)	44%	0%	56%	100%
RRAP	100%	0%	0%	100%
ICF	100%	0%	0%	100%
Traditional RSL Funding	12%	88%	0%	100%
LSVT funding	0%	100%	0%	100%
Other (all 'Other')	86%	14%	<1%	100%
All	66%	6%	28%	100%

Source: Welsh Government

Note: Rows may not sum to total due to rounding.

- 4.63 Most adaptations across Wales are provided for older people. Overall, 66% are carried out for people aged 75 and over, with a further 17% to people aged 65 to 74.

**Chart 10: Adaptations delivered by funding stream by age group**



Source: Welsh Government

**Table 4.5: Adaptations delivered by age group by funding stream**

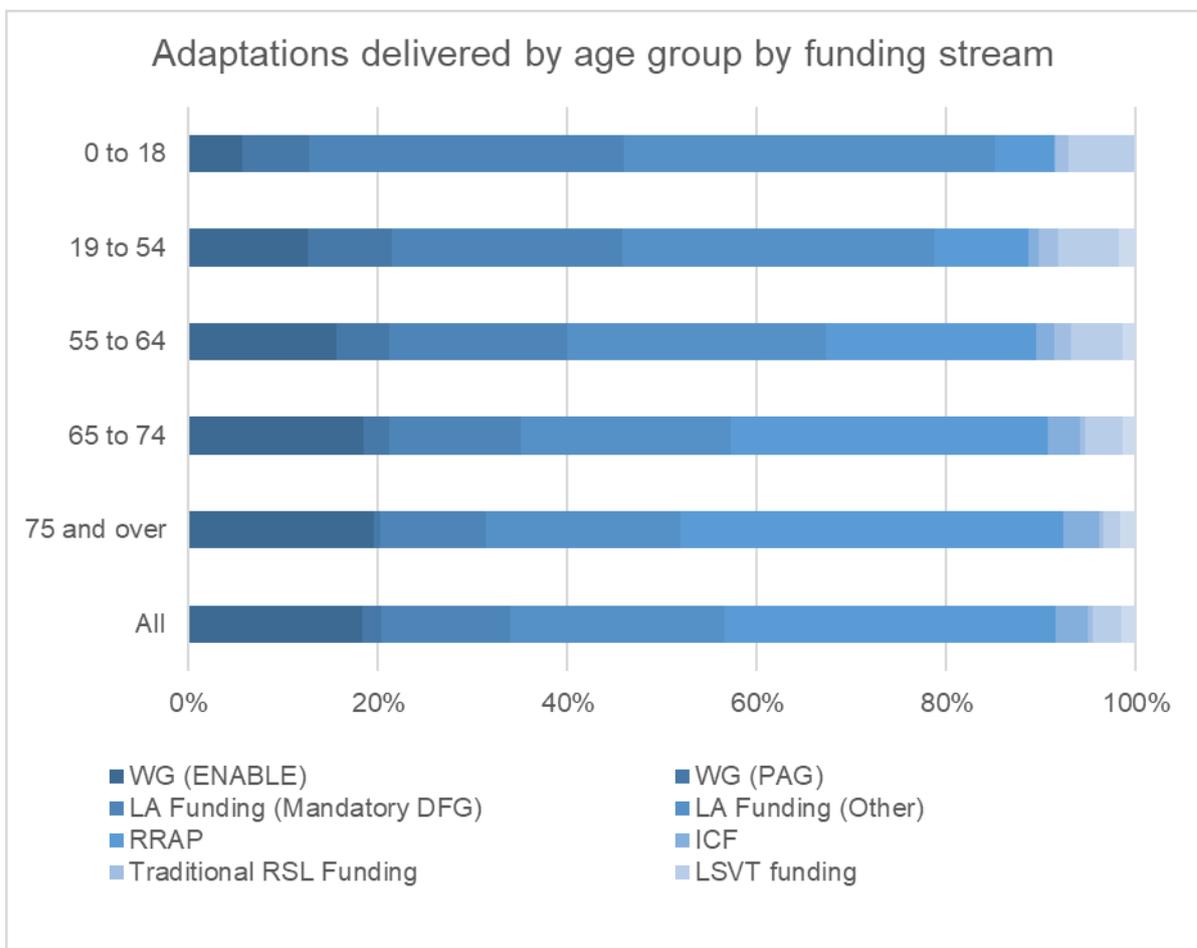
Funding stream	0 to 18	19 to 54	55 to 64	65 to 74	75 and over	Total
WG (ENABLE)	<1%	5%	7%	17%	70%	100%
WG (PAG)	5%	32%	20%	22%	21%	100%
LA Funding (DFG)	3%	14%	11%	18%	54%	100%
LA Funding (Other)	2%	11%	10%	17%	60%	100%
RRAP	<1%	2%	5%	17%	76%	100%
ICF	<1%	3%	4%	17%	76%	100%
Traditional RSL Funding	3%	26%	23%	17%	32%	100%
LSVT funding	3%	17%	15%	23%	42%	100%
Other: - Please state	<1%	9%	7%	16%	68%	100%
All	1%	8%	8%	17%	66%	100%

Source: Welsh Government

Note: Rows may not sum to total due to rounding.

- 4.64 Considering the data from the view of different age groups (see Chart 11) shows that most adaptations for the 0 to 18 age group are carried out under DFGs (33%) and the LA Funding (Other) funding stream (39%). These two funding streams are also predominant in providing adaptations for the 19 to 54 age group; DFGs 24% and the LA Funding (Other) 33%. The 65 to 74 and 75 and over age groups have most adaptations carried out under ENABLE, LA Funding (Other) and RRAP.
- 4.65 The proportion of adaptations carried out under DFGs decreases with age, from 33% of adaptations for the 0 to 18 age group to 11% of adaptations for the 75 and over age group.

**Chart 11: Adaptations delivered by age group by funding stream**



Source: Welsh Government

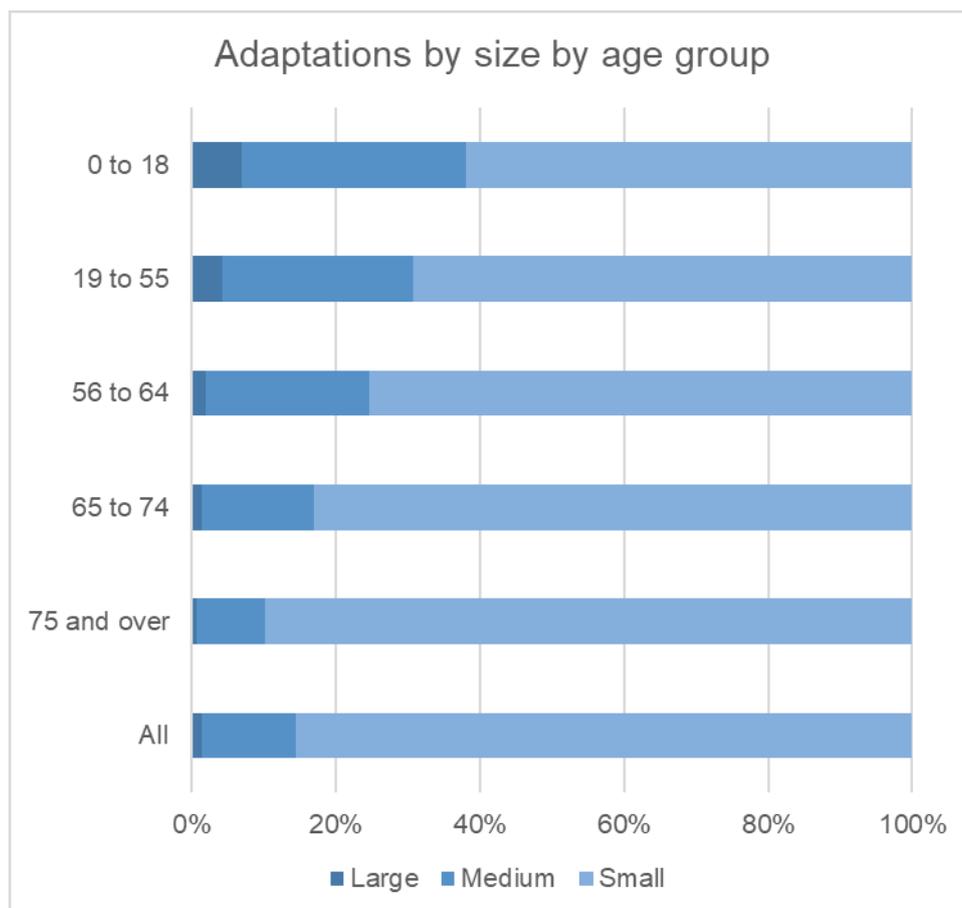
### Average costs by tenure

4.66 The mean cost of adaptations is highest for traditional housing association properties at £3,206 and lowest for owner occupied properties at £784 (excluding 'Other'). The mean cost of adaptations to all social landlord properties is £2,369 compared to £818 for all private sector properties.

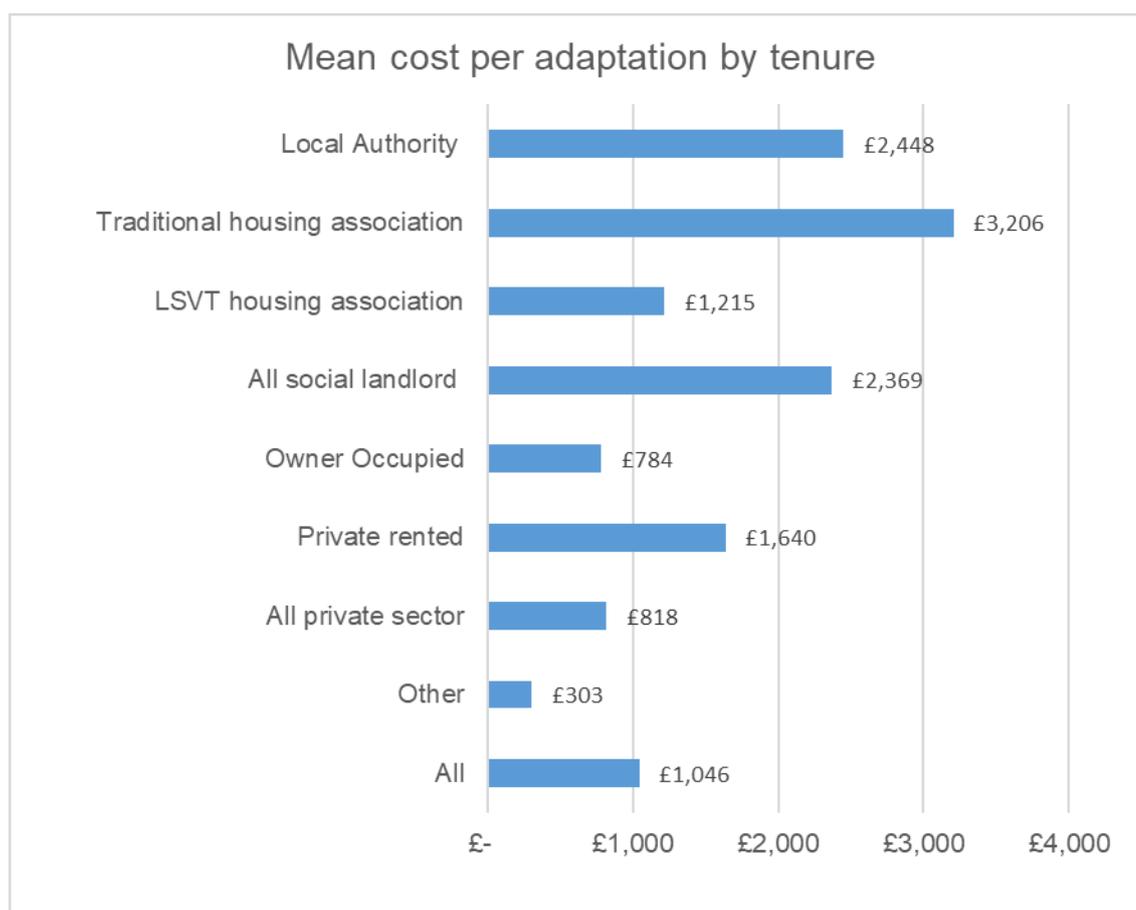
### The size of adaptation provided to each age group

4.67 The percentage of small adaptations increases with age; Small adaptations account for 83% of adaptations provided to the 65 to 74 age group, rising to 90% for the 75 and over age group. While in the younger groups, the majority of adaptations are also in the small category, almost a third (31%) of adaptations for the 0 to 18 age group are medium and 7% are large. For the 19 to 55 age group, a quarter (26%) are medium and 4% are large.

**Chart 12: Adaptations by size by age group**



**Chart 13: Mean cost of adaptations by tenure**



Source: Welsh Government

### **Measures of quality**

- 4.68 The time measured in days between the need for an adaptation being identified and the adaptation being ready for use is shown in the table and charts below. To be succinct, it is referred to as the 'process time' in this analysis.
- 4.69 The time to deliver adaptations will depend on several factors including the size and complexity of the adaptation, the bureaucratic processes and the personal circumstances of the household involved. While the literature review identified that it is beneficial to minimise the time and complexity of the bureaucratic process, as noted in paragraph 3.3, it is difficult to separate the bureaucratic process from other factors behind the data.
- 4.70 Two funding streams have high median process times compared to the 13 day process time for all adaptations; PAG (119 days) and DFG (99 days). These two

funding streams also have some of the highest maximum process times; 1,109 days and 1,737 days respectively. These times are consistent with each other and with the complexity of many adaptations carried out under the two funding streams.

4.71 Four funding streams have median process times that are close to the 13 days for all adaptations, but comparatively high maximum process times. This could be due to the complexity of the individual adaptations, or it could indicate that there has been a problem with a small number of adaptations carried out under these funding streams. Problems could include a delay caused by bureaucracy, by the personal circumstances of the household such as a vulnerable person struggling to cope with the process, by a combination of these factors, or by another factor. However, this cannot be gleaned from the data. The four funding streams are:

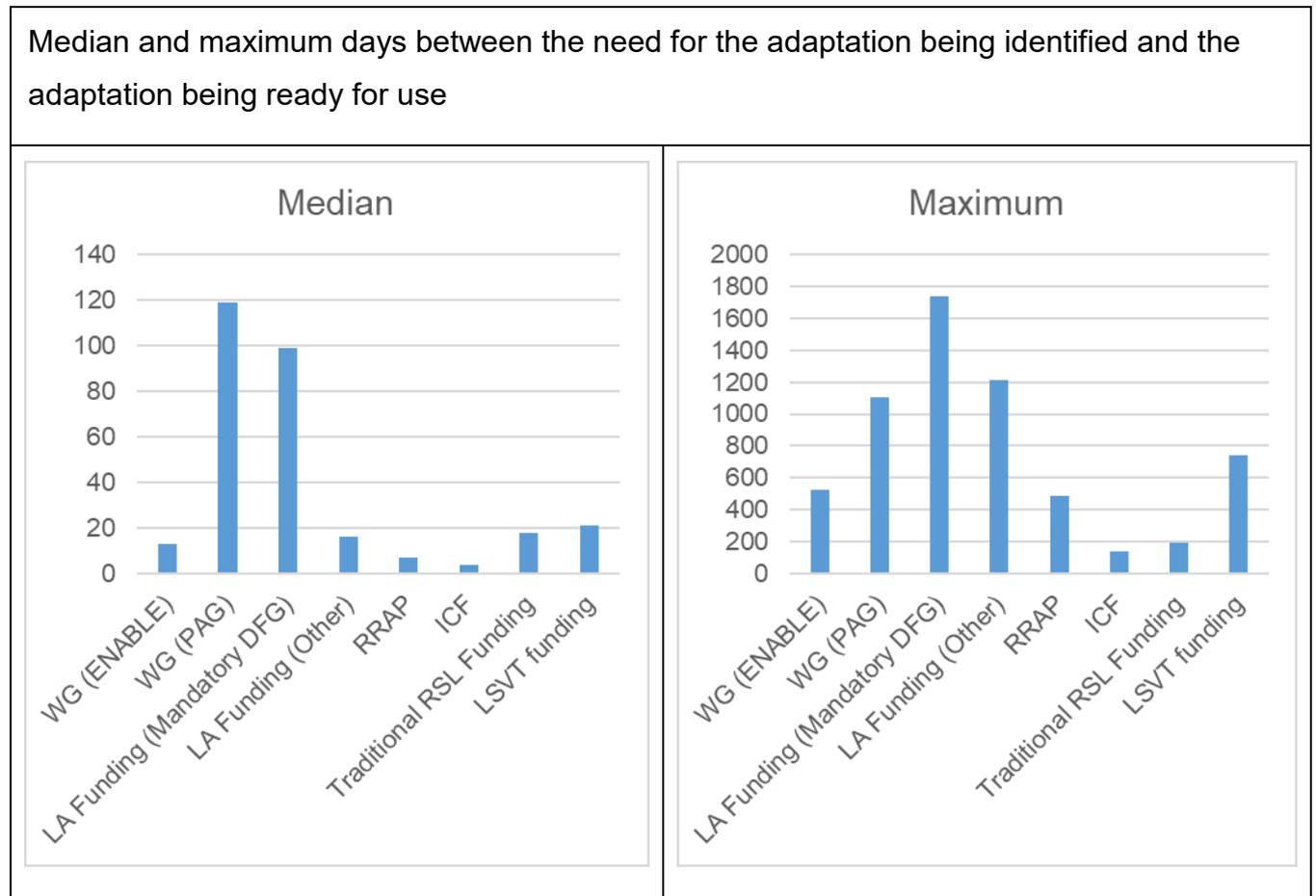
- ENABLE – median 13 days, maximum 526 days
- LA Funding (Other) – median 16 days, maximum 1,216 days
- RRAP – median 7 days, maximum 487 days
- LSVT Funding – median 21 days, maximum 739 days

**Table 4.6: Number of days between the need for the adaptation being identified and the adaptation being ready for use by funding stream**

	<b>Mean</b>	<b>Median</b>	<b>Maximum</b>	<b>Minimum</b>
WG (ENABLE)	24	13	526	1
WG (PAG)	161	119	1,109	1
LA Funding (DFG)	130	99	1,737	1
LA Funding (Other)	33	16	1,216	1
RRAP	13	7	487	1
ICF	7	4	141	1
Traditional RSL Funding	31	18	196	1
LSVT funding	58	21	739	1
Other: - Please state	24	9	247	1
All	38	13	1,737	1

Source: Welsh Government

**Chart 14: Median and maximum days between the need for the adaptation being identified and the adaptation being ready for use**



Source: Welsh Government

4.72 Table 4.7 and Table 4.8 show the length of time in years between the need for the adaptation being identified and the adaptations being ready for use based on just under 26,000 records where the relevant dates were recorded.

4.73 Almost all adaptations (99%) were completed within a year. The remaining 1% totalled 297 adaptations which took over a year to complete. Of these, 274 were completed within two years and a further 17 completed within 3 years. Five were completed within 4 years and a single adaptation took over 4 years. As might be expected, the adaptations which took longer to be completed tend to be funded by streams covering larger adaptations.

**Table 4.7: Time in years between the need for the adaptation being identified and the adaptation being ready for use by funding stream (Number of adaptations)**

	<b>Under 1 year</b>	<b>1 to 2 years</b>	<b>2 to 3 years</b>	<b>3 to 4 years</b>	<b>4 to 5 years</b>	<b>Total</b>
WG (ENABLE)	4,913	11				4,924
WG (PAG)	621	65	4	1		691
LA Funding (DFG)	2,862	141	7	1	1	3,012
LA Funding (Other)	5,648	24	4	3		5,679
RRAP	9,463	16				9,479
ICF	843					843
Traditional RSL Funding	182					182
LSVT funding	707	17	2			726
Other:- Please state	443					443
<b>Total</b>	<b>25,682</b>	<b>274</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>5</b>	<b>1</b>	<b>25,979</b>
<b>Percent of Total</b>	<b>98.9%</b>	<b>1.1%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Welsh Government

4.74 Table 4.8 below focuses on the funding streams where any adaptations took over 2 years to complete; PAG, DFG, LA funding (Other) and LSVT funding. On average across these 4 funding streams over 95% of adaptation were completed within a year and less than half a percent took 2 or more years. Over 9% of PAG funded adaptations and just under 5% of DFG took between 1 and 2 years, with a further 0.6% of PAG taking between 2 and 3 years.

**Table 4.8: Time in years between the need for the adaptation being identified and the adaptation being ready for use by funding stream (percentage of adaptations)**

	<b>Under 1 year</b>	<b>1 to 2 years</b>	<b>2 to 3 years</b>	<b>3 to 4 years</b>	<b>4 to 5 years</b>	<b>Total</b>
WG (PAG)	89.9%	9.4%	0.6%	0.1%	0.0%	100.0%
LA Funding (DFG)	95.0%	4.7%	0.2%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
LA Funding (Other)	99.5%	0.4%	0.1%	0.1%	0.0%	100.0%
LSVT funding	97.4%	2.3%	0.3%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%
<b>Average of 4 funding streams</b>	<b>95.4%</b>	<b>4.2%</b>	<b>0.3%</b>	<b>0.1%</b>	<b>0.0%</b>	<b>100.0%</b>

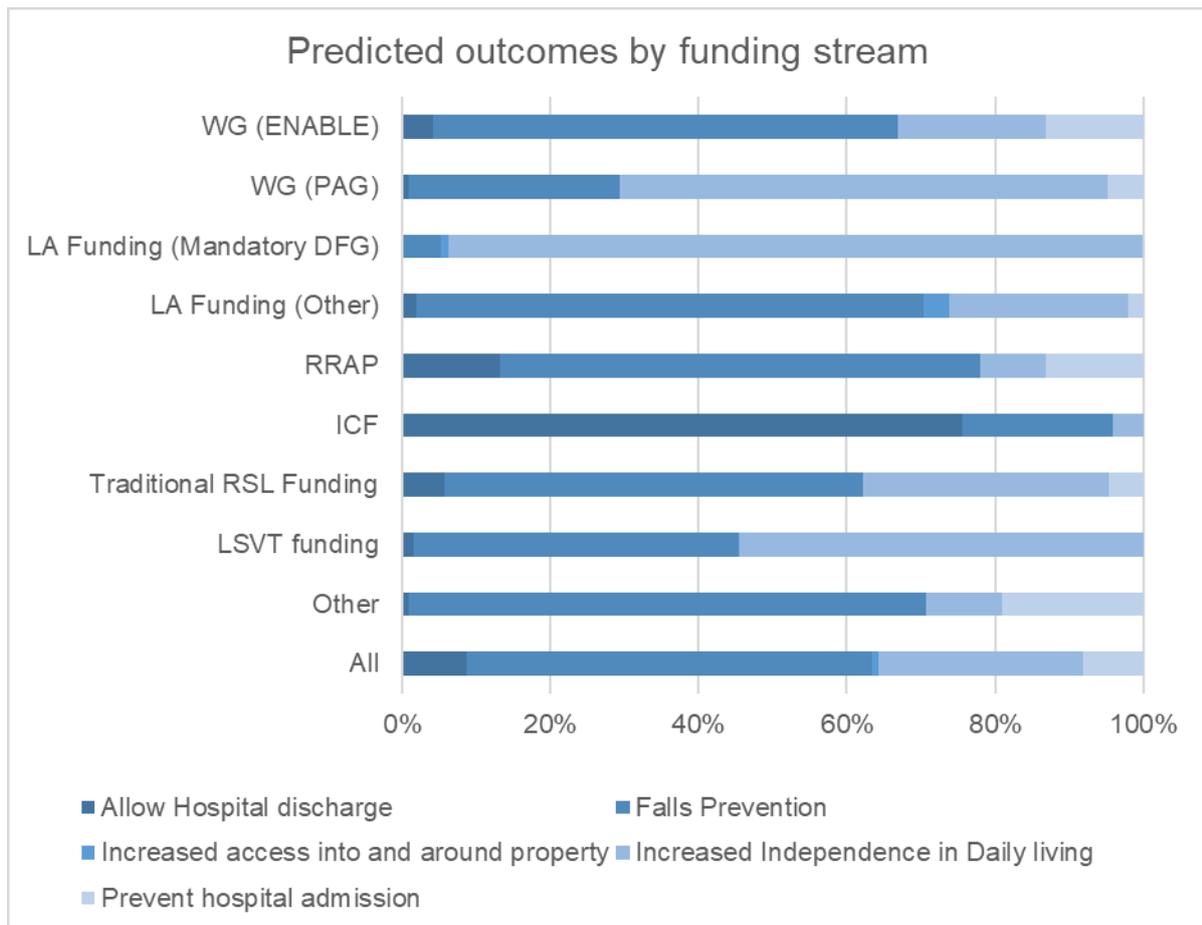
Source: Welsh Government

## **5. Findings: Analysis of Outcomes by Funding Stream**

### **Introduction**

- 5.1 This chapter discusses the qualitative outcomes recorded in the data. The first of these is the predicted outcomes of the adaptations. This is provided by social workers, occupational therapists and other professionals and shows the intended goal of each adaptation, such as preventing falls.
- 5.2 A total of 28,377 records had a predicted outcome; 93% of the 30,235 adaptations.
- 5.3 The predicted outcomes of adaptations by funding stream are shown in Chart 15 below. The main predicted outcomes are preventing falls, increasing independence in daily living and to a lesser extent preventing hospital admission and allowing hospital discharge.
- 5.4 Over 60% of adaptations carried out under ENABLE, LA Funding (Other) and RRAP are predicted to prevent falls, with 56% for Traditional RSL Funding and 44% for LSVT Funding. If these predictions are borne out in reality then this is evidence of the cumulative benefit of small individual interventions such as RRAP preventing falls and thereby producing financial savings in health budgets.
- 5.5 The second main predicted outcome is increased independence in daily living; notably 94% of DFG and 66% of PAG adaptations have this predicted outcome.

**Chart 15: Predicted outcomes by funding stream**

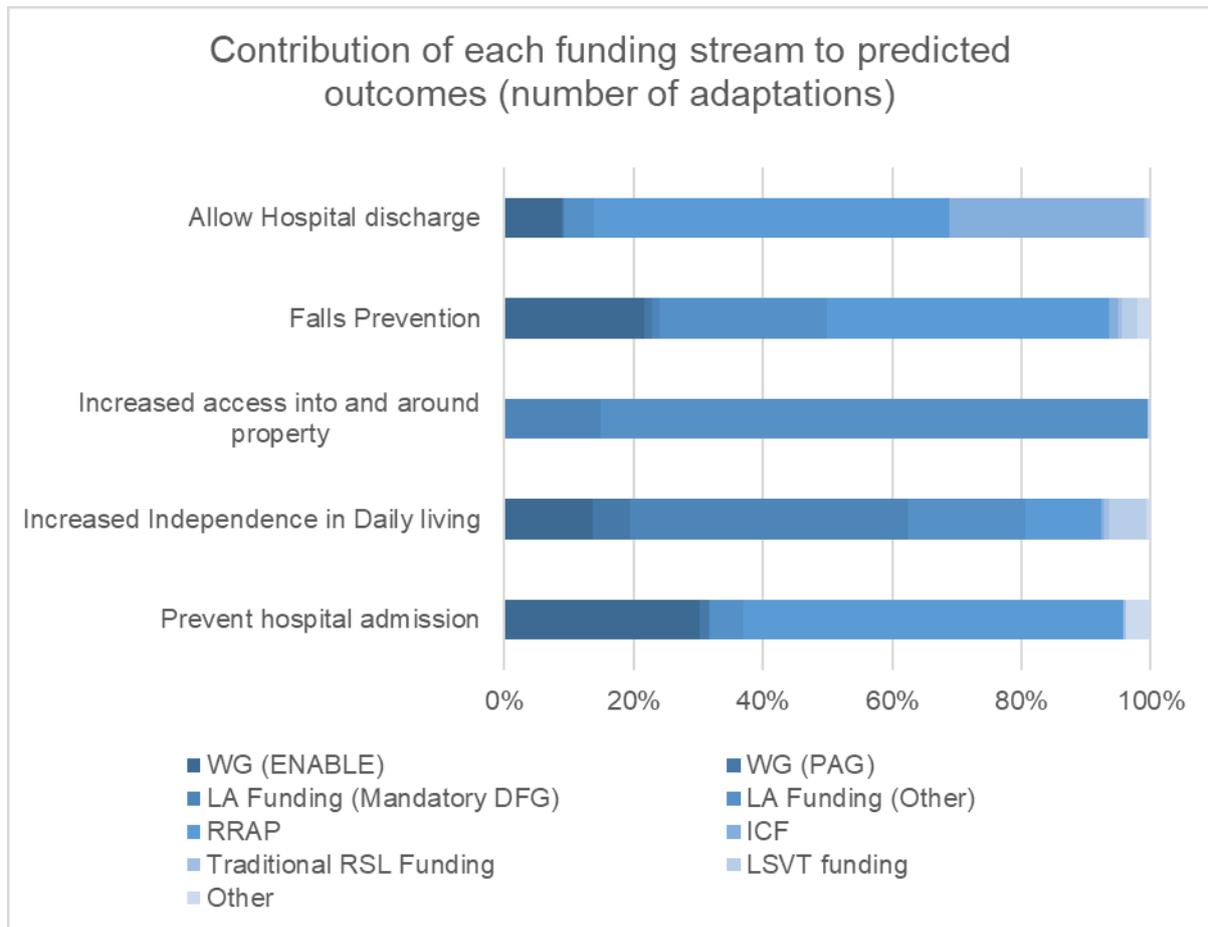


5.6 Chart 16 shows what proportion of each predicted outcome is expected to be delivered by each funding stream, again based on the number of adaptations. It is important to note that this measure is solely by the number of adaptations and takes no account of size or cost of the adaptations. Taking the two outcomes that account for the majority of funding:

5.7 The main predicted contributors to falls prevention are RRAP (44%), LA Funding (Other) (26%) and ENABLE (22%).

5.8 DFG delivers 43% of adaptations predicted to increase independence in daily living, followed by LA Funding (Other) (18%), ENABLE (14%) and RRAP (12%).

**Chart 16: Contribution of each funding stream to predicted outcomes (number of adaptations)**



Source: Welsh Government

5.9 In an ongoing customer satisfaction survey, follow up questionnaires ask recipients of adaptations:

- Has the installation of your adaptation given you increased independence?
- Has the installation of your adaptation improved your wellbeing?
- Has the installation of your adaptation reduced your need for carer?

5.10 Each of these three questions are addressed in turn followed by responses to a general satisfaction question. While the 6,132 satisfaction questionnaires returned is a large sample and covers 20% of the total number of adaptations recorded, a considerably lower return is seen for some funding streams, notably

8% return for DGFs. Because of this, the overall results are unlikely to be representative of all funding streams. The returns are shown in Table 5.1.

**Table 5.1: Satisfaction questionnaire returns by funding stream**

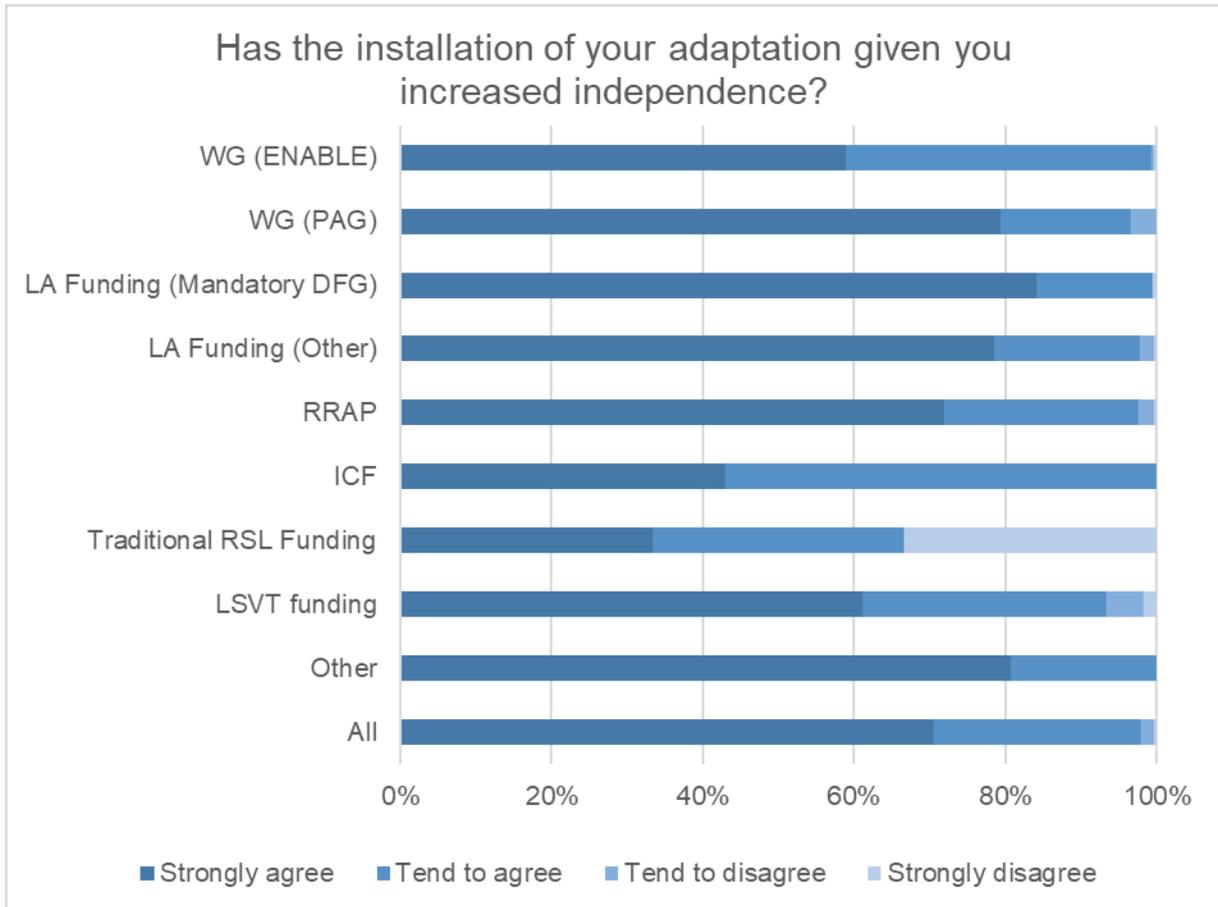
	<b>Number returned</b>	<b>Percent returned</b>	<b>Total</b>
WG (ENABLE)	1,107	21%	5,356
WG (PAG)	144	20%	717
LA Funding (DFG)	313	8%	4,135
LA Funding (Other)	1,187	17%	6,827
RRAP	3,120	30%	10,456
ICF	32	3%	989
Traditional RSL Funding	9	5%	194
LSVT funding	190	22%	849
Other	26	5%	487
<b>Total</b>	<b>6,128</b>	<b>20%</b>	<b>30,010</b>

Source: Welsh Government

Note: Table 5.1 excludes 225 invalid data points from the total of 30,235

- 5.11 The interviews with service users suggest that most adaptations have had a positive impact on quality of life (see Paragraph 7.20 onwards). The data from the satisfaction survey supports the interview findings.
- 5.12 A large percentage of households who have had adaptations provided through each funding stream people either strongly agree or tend to agree that the adaptation has increased their independence; ranging from LSVT Funding at 93% to ICF at 100%.

**Chart 17: Has the installation of your adaptation given you increased independence?**

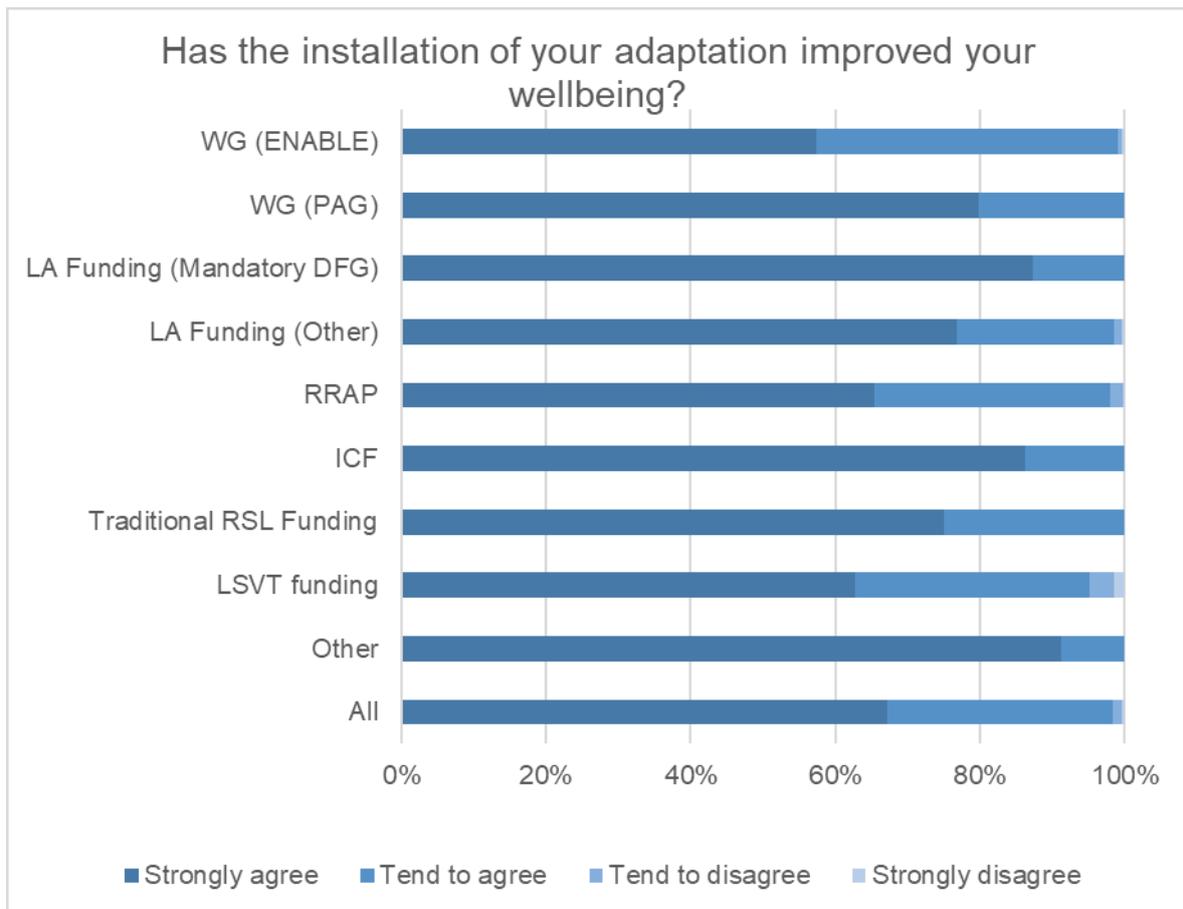


Source: Welsh Government

Note: Traditional RSL Funding is included for completeness, but percentages are based on a very small number of cases and are therefore not reliable.

5.13 A similarly high percentage of recipients of adaptations either strongly agree or tend to agree that the adaptation has improved their wellbeing; 100% of PAG, DFG, ICF and Traditional RSL Funding (based on a very small number of responses). The lowest, LSVT Funding, attained 95% agreement.

**Chart 18: Has the installation of your adaptation improved your wellbeing?**

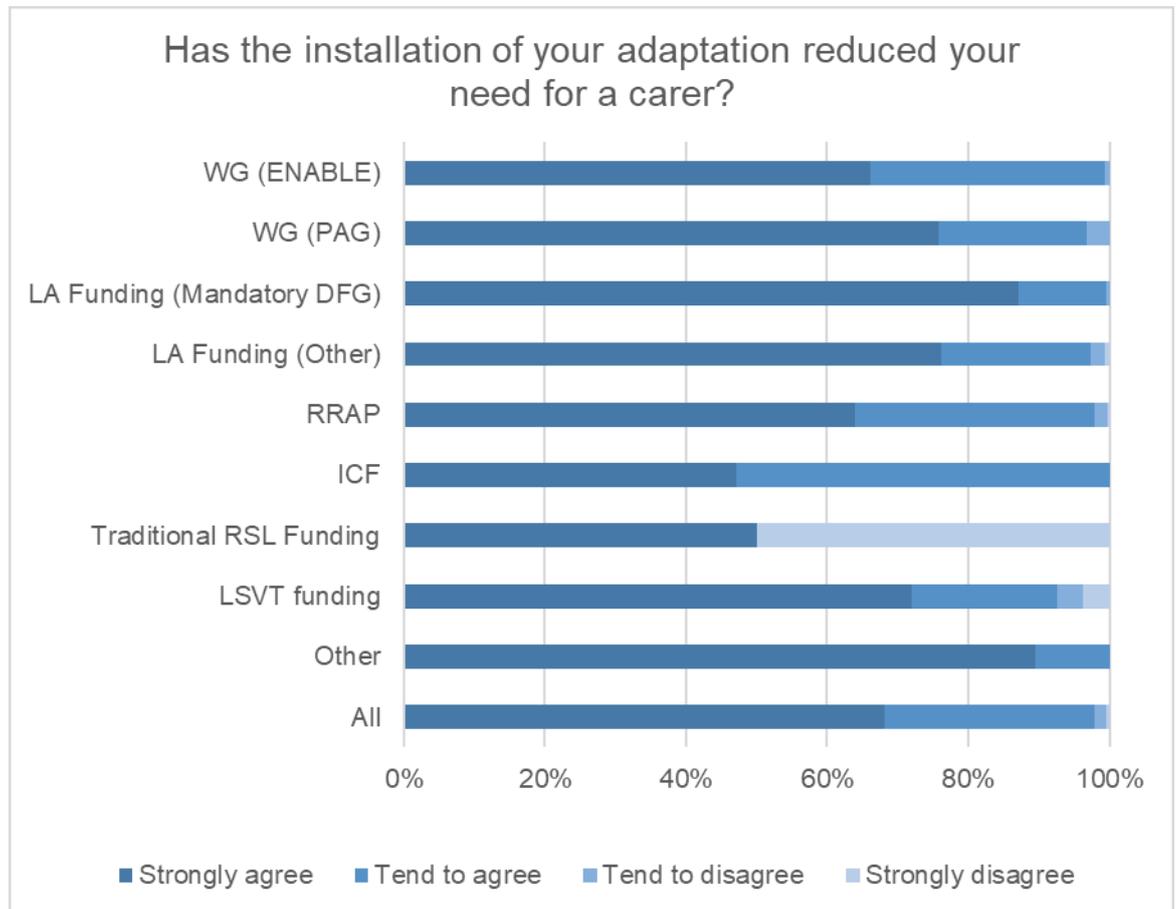


Source: Welsh Government

Note: Traditional RSL Funding is included for completeness, but is based on a very small number of cases and is therefore not reliable.

- 5.14 Across all funding streams, 98% agreed that the adaptation had reduced their need for a carer. LSVT Funding attracted the least agreement, but still had high levels (92%) either strongly agreeing or tending to agree that the adaptation had reduced the need for a carer.

**Chart 19: Has the installation of your adaptation reduced your need for a carer?**



Source: Welsh Government

Note: Traditional RSL Funding is included for completeness, but is based on a very small number of cases and is therefore not reliable.

5.15 Customers were asked whether they were satisfied with the adaptation using the following scale:

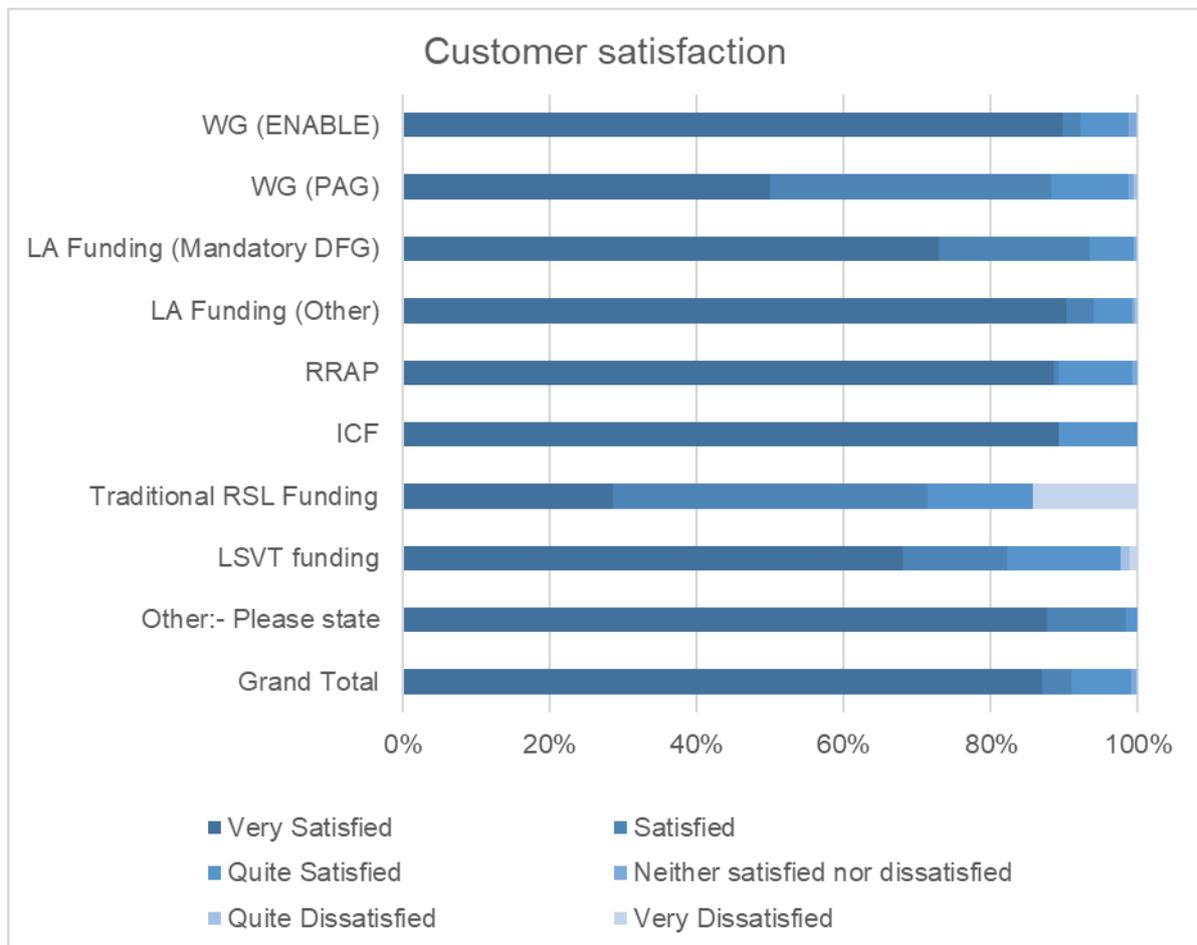
- Very satisfied;
- Satisfied;
- Quite satisfied;
- Neither satisfied nor dissatisfied;
- Quite dissatisfied;
- Very dissatisfied; and

- Not applicable

5.16 The results for this question need to be treated with caution as there were several anomalies in the data. Data cleaning included; a second 'Very satisfied' category and a 'Strongly agree' category. Also, responses saying 'Not applicable' were removed. Because of this, it may be wise to base measures of success on the three questions about outcomes centred on independence in this chapter; increased independence, wellbeing and the need for a carer.

5.17 Nevertheless, subject to a note of caution, high levels of satisfaction are recorded. Notably, 92% of ENABLE, 88% of PAG and 93% of DFG clients were very satisfied, satisfied or quite satisfied with the adaptation.

**Chart 20: Customer satisfaction**



Source: Welsh Government

Note: Traditional RSL Funding is included for completeness, but is based on a very small number of cases and is therefore not reliable.

## 6. Findings: Stakeholder Workshops

### Introduction

- 6.1 In order to ensure this research is solution-focused and provides clear and actionable suggestions of indicators for an allocation process, two stakeholder workshops were held to sense-check the key themes and proposals for indicators to emerge from the research.
- 6.2 Twenty-two stakeholders were engaged across the two online workshops held. The first included a range of sector stakeholders and the second included representatives from Housing Associations only. The participants were shown a presentation which included some headline findings of this study and asked for their feedback.
- 6.3 Although there was some crossover in their discussions, the key themes discussed in both groups were largely different. As such, the findings are reported in turn below.

### Main Findings: General Stakeholder Workshop

#### Equity of access to the system is variable, but must be set in context

- 6.4 Although the presentation contained some negative comments from the stakeholder interviews (see Annex A) relating to the complexity of the current system for allocating funding for adaptations, participants were keen to highlight that the majority of service user feedback is positive and that this report should reflect that. Specific concerns relate to equity or inequity in how the system is accessed which the stakeholders stressed is not usually a concern for the individual service user, it is a concern for those delivering and overseeing the process across Wales.
- 6.5 Where spending on allocation differs greatly across local authorities, participants feel that this should be placed in context and stated that there are external factors at play which could explain the disparity. One example is the fact that University Hospital Wales in Cardiff has a lack of bedspace available which might mean that patients are discharged sooner than they would be elsewhere, leading to higher spending on adaptations to make their homes immediately ready. Elsewhere, more intensive funding on care could be lessening the need for

adaptations in homes. Therefore, comparisons of spend purely on adaptations across Wales must be given with caution and contextualised.

*“I have difficulty with the spend side of things because that might just be covering up problems in the system that people shouldn’t have to have adaptations in the first place.”*

- 6.6 Stakeholders felt that type of tenure plays an important role in equity of access. Those renting through RSLs are more likely to be aware of the option of having an adaptation than owner-occupiers and private renters. Moreover, it was suggested that RSLs are more likely to be able to make those changes fairly quickly and with less bureaucracy standing in their way.

*“It’s a big challenge in the private rented sector in terms of inequality and there are differences between social tenants and that the majority that is available for owner occupiers would be means tested... there is definitely a tenure inequality that potentially needs to be looked at.”*

- 6.7 One of the biggest hurdles affecting equity of access is getting landlord approval for adaptations to be made in privately rented homes. This often relates to the risk, or perceived risk, by a landlord of making changes to a property where a tenant may move out within a short period of time.

*“...it is about doing an adaptation to a property where there is that lack of security of tenure because for the majority, these tenants are there under a shorthold tenancy so... if you can get the landlord consent, you can do the adaptation but that’s not to say, you know 12 months’ time, that tenant has to move on and find another property.”*

- 6.8 As a result, those representing RSLs reported seeing tenants move into their system as they have been unable to access adaptations in the private sector. Here, not only are tenants able to access adaptations comparatively easily, particularly small and medium ones, but there is assurance that any work will be maintained on an ongoing basis.

- 6.9 As a potential solution to this issue, one of the Local Authority representatives stated that they have started to look at rehousing as an option more often, particularly in preference to large, complex and expensive adaptations. By utilising the Social Housing Grants Programme, they have the option of

purchasing a suitable adapted property from an RSL or even building from scratch. Naturally, going down this route elongates the process for some tenants but could be away of addressing the inequality relating to tenure existing within the system.

- 6.10 Another marker of disparity in the system relating to geography is the fact that some local authorities will 'top up' the £36k spending cap on adaptations through DFG and others will not, depending on their internal policies. As a result, it was said some adaptations do not go ahead.
- 6.11 For service users, positive feedback stems from having effective access to the system and having the adaptations installed efficiently and, it was said, without expense to themselves, for the most part. Stakeholders agree that it is not therefore particularly important for the service user to understand which funding pot their adaptation was funded through. Although it may not be feasible to unify all funding streams, creating a consistent, single point of contact for service users accessing the adaptations system is desirable. This may offer a better perception of equity within the system.

#### Means testing is a complex issue

- 6.12 The issue of means testing was considered complex. There are differing views on the potential impact of abolishing means testing for adaptations but a general feeling that allowing small and some medium adaptations to take place without means testing carries a fairly low risk.
- 6.13 A small number of participants felt there is a risk that the floodgates will open and applications will pour in if means testing is abolished. However, the participating Occupational Therapists felt that their assessment process to ensure that only those with a real need receive adaptations would ensure this would not happen.

*“People don’t want disabled adaptations put in their home unless they really need them.”*

- 6.14 Abolishing means testing for some medium adaptations and large adaptations would carry much more risk in the view of the group. Some adaptations falling into the 'medium' category are comparatively large and an individual may receive more than one of them meaning that a significant investment could be given to someone that could have afforded to pay or contribute. At the larger end of the

scale, participants considered it would be difficult to compare DFG funded adaptations to the others as they are on a much larger scale. It was felt that means testing was very much an issue for WG to decide on.

*“We’re currently working with the system that we’ve got in terms of legislation. It’s very much based on those who can pay, should pay...it all depends on where the Welsh Government policy is at the end of the day in terms of where they want to move towards as far as means testing and providing a contribution towards adaptations.”*

*“There are people who can afford it and are happy to pay for that level of adaptation so we wouldn’t want to be funding them in that situation. It is a lot quicker if you can do it without means testing.”*

- 6.15 It was also noted that some people are means tested for their provision of care from Social Services and the criteria is different. It was questioned whether there would be merit in linking assessments for care and adaptations together for some service users, particularly from an occupational therapy perspective.
- 6.16 Another issue discussed in relation to means testing was the extent to which the process can extend the time it takes to install an adaptation. Many of the more complex, DFG funded adaptations are awarded to younger people with multiple needs. These younger people can often have complex family structures e.g. an ex-partner having a claim to home ownership. Applicants can also sometimes be reticent to share personal information due to these complexities. As a result, the process of means testing and proving ownership of some homes can extend the time it takes to complete an adaptation.
- 6.17 As there are examples of specific family situations and other external factors making applying for funding longer and more complex, participants felt that caution should be exercised when comparing completion times numerically. This is particularly true of DFG funding as the adaptations’ larger scale means that they are inherently more complex.

*“There are huge variations in our adaptation times because of the complexity really and we also have to look at staffing issues as well, that affects us...”*

Participants proposed some changes to funding streams

- 6.18 When discussing whether funding streams could be combined in an overhaul of the system, participants felt that care must be given to preserving the parts of the system that currently work well.

*“Baby and bathwater comes to mind here because there are bits of the system that work really well and it’s easy to pick on stuff like RRAP and Care & Repair work which is about being flexible, quick to respond and delivering without any delay or bureaucracy. I think we wouldn’t want to tamper with a system that put any of that at risk.”*

- 6.19 In an ideal world, some felt that a unified system is appealing, but is not considered practical. It is considered a better option to look at improving the individual streams where there are specific issues. There was a concern amongst some that by unifying streams, there is a risk of needing to dictate to local authorities how they should deal with their budgets, something that would not be popular. There was also concern how a unified budget would ensure that the spending on the different purposes of the individual streams was maintained equitably. It was however accepted that some kind of change is needed within parts of the current system.

*“We’ve been going round and round in circles for many years here, we need to start to take baby steps forward. Otherwise, we’re going to continue on this merry-go-round really”*

- 6.20 When talking about specific funding streams, participants felt that ENABLE funding is not used consistently across Wales. However, there was strong feeling among some participants that it was not designed to be consistent and therefore fulfils its purpose even though it adds complexity to the system.

*“At the time it was developed, it was a response to try and overcome some of the inherent problems with the pre-existing and complicated system. So, having a bit of extra money to direct at local priorities which are inevitably going to be different in different areas gave another funding stream, another response to bridge some of the gaps that were existing so it has in itself added to the complexity when you view it from that perspective.”*

- 6.21 There was universal agreement that the cap of £36k on DFG funding is too low in many cases. One suggestion to overcome this was to have a central 'pot' of discretionary funding held by WG whereby applications could be made for funding over and above the £36k in appropriate circumstances.
- 6.22 As previously mentioned, it is desirable to provide the service user with a single, consistent, entry point to the adaptation application process even if the funding they receive comes from the current variety of streams.

*“It’s the impression people are given and the simplicity and lack of confusion for them isn’t it, that’s important... it’s a complex area but for the person what they what is to know they’ve been listened to, they get what they need as quickly as they can and they can get on with their lives in a much better way. That’s what they need, I think.”*

Accessible Housing Registers and partnership working are key

- 6.23 Participants noted that accessible housing registers, or a lack of them, is a key issue. These are things they say should be in place but there is disparity across Wales. Registers can also be problematic, as a home may show as 'accessible' on a register but would not be suitable for someone with very complex needs or the adaptation in place may have been suitable for the very specific need of the previous occupier. There is also a gap in this information for the private rented sector with very little information being available, although the level of information could be improved over time by collecting data on new build properties.
- 6.24 Furthermore, it was said that partnership working is problematic across the health and social care sector. This is not specifically related to adaptations but as adaptations fall within the sector, there is a knock-on effect.

*“It is patchy and I think it’s important in moving forward that we develop this integrated pathway for adaptations is what we’re talking about really...it doesn’t matter where the funding comes from it’s about what the offer is for that individual who needs that adaptation. That could be via a health OT referring in, it could be via a social care OT, it could be housing, or it could be Care & Repair referring in for that work. So it is, how can we break down, it’s about the pathway, so we have to break down the silo working.”*

Outcomes and KPIs are important, but could be more ‘qualitative’ and shouldn’t be too prescriptive

- 6.25 Stakeholders are aware of the general positive feedback provided by service users but feel it is difficult to capture and quantify the preventative outcomes of adaptations such as savings to the NHS.
- 6.26 In terms of collecting information on outcomes, several participants said they had been involved in the process of developing a consistent questionnaire which is distributed to service users across Wales post-adaptation. They are satisfied with the type of data this produces and are supportive of collecting some qualitative data on outcomes along-side it.
- 6.27 Although having KPIs in place are expected and respected to an extent, the group did not feel it was wise for these to be too prescriptive.

*“There is room for having performance measures because at the end of the day it’s something we have...I can’t imagine a world without one”*

The WG Service Standards are a step toward improving consistency, and should now be evaluated

- 6.28 The introduction of the WG Service Standards was seen as another step towards achieving a consistency of approach across Wales. To this point, they had not been introduced for a long enough period to evaluate their effectiveness, but participants felt this would be a good time to begin reviewing how successful these have been. The key question they identified to ask at this stage would be: *“Have the standards achieved what they set out to achieve?”*, however the group felt this should be a cross-sector conversation, not just limited to those working on adaptations, as the Service Standards were designed to be wider reaching than adaptations alone.

**Main Findings: Housing Association Stakeholder Workshop**

Systemic inequity is evident within housing adaptations process

- 6.29 The stakeholders involved in this group were of the view that there is clear inequity around DFG funding. A participant mentioned being aware when they previously worked in an LA, that the DFG pot emptied quicker than other funding streams and questioned whether the money tends to ‘run out’.

6.30 Tenure was also mentioned as a cause of inequality around DFG as a legal charge may be placed on homeowners receiving adaptations through DFG costing more than £5000. It was felt that this leads to reluctance among some service users to go ahead with the adaptation.

*“You’ve got to recognise that with owner-occupiers they do put a charge on the property as well so there is an inequality if it goes over a certain value, they put a charge on your property”*

*“A lot were being cancelled because of the high contribution”*

6.31 Furthermore, there is felt to be geographical inequity in the system relating to the time it takes for an adaptations project to get under way, particularly ones being done through local authorities. There is a shortage of Occupational Therapists in some areas leading to longer waiting times.

*“The other things that makes it unfair and difficult for people that actually want adaptations is the length of time it takes to get the thing... there’s a very extensive wait within local authorities to even get the ball rolling by having an Occupational Therapist because many of them employ very few people and it can actually be very tricky to get the ball rolling and get that assessment done.”*

6.32 Echoing the discussion within the other stakeholder group, it was felt that delays in delivering adaptations are often linked to external factors, particularly in the case of larger, more complex adaptations. The system itself is not considered over-complicated.

*“The system’s relatively straight forward ... it’s just the capacity within each area”*

6.33 An issue specific to RSLs is that in many cases, the ‘easiest’ option would be for an individual to move to an already adapted property within the organisation’s stock as opposed to waiting for an adaptation, particularly as their current home may not be well suited to adaptations. Discussions around this can add time onto the process of receiving an adaptation as the individual rarely wishes to move.

*“If they’ve lived in the property for 30 years, they’re unlikely to want to move to somewhere else because it’s their home so you end up maybe doing the adaptation there... you can’t refuse the work because of discrimination.”*

- 6.34 It was said that there is often further expense for the RSL down the line as they have to remove these adaptations in order to let it as a ‘general needs’ property. It is difficult to re-let adapted properties to another disabled person as adaptations are personalised.

Means testing and pooled budgets are complex issues

- 6.35 There were, again, mixed views on whether abolishing means testing would work, with concerns once again being raised about the impact of this on the medium to large adaptations. A participant had anecdotal evidence from a past role where people chose not to go ahead with the application process because they became aware they would be means tested – perhaps not always because they can afford it but because they may assume it will only be awarded to those claiming benefits. This was echoed in the service user interviews and the stakeholder workshop, as well as in some of the literature reviewed.
- 6.36 It is felt that means testing gives some aspects of the process a ‘bad press’, in that they can be construed as complex. It is not considered helpful to apply a means test to a very small adaptation for example. Within RSLs the process is considered less complex without the need for means testing.

*“RSLs, we’re self-funded anyway so the adaptations are paid for by ourselves, we don’t go down the PAG route, we don’t have other sources so we can get that work done quickly without having to go through an application where we means test”*

- 6.37 Having said the above, it was felt that the DFG must be more bureaucratic in nature as it was designed to manage demand. However, by looking at the PAG system, which many argued is easier to access, it was considered important to note that the system is not overrun with applications. In the view of some, then, it was thought unlikely that abolishing means testing would bring about a large surge in applications.

*“People tend to have adaptations because they need them not because they fancy a bathroom refurb”*

- 6.38 As noted by the other stakeholder group, it is important not to consider spend within the adaptation system in isolation as it may be leading to lower expenditure elsewhere.

*“It is one of the aims of having an efficient adaptations system is that it should provide benefits elsewhere in the wider system, health and social care budgets for instance.”*

- 6.39 When asked about the prospect of pooling budgets (as raised by stakeholders during the scoping interviews), participants felt this would have to be done with great caution. They had concerns around how it would work in practice, felt they would have to be very well managed and stated that they may increase the capacity to disadvantage some groups and extend the inequity of access further.

*“They themselves are hefty systems and structures and can be quite resource intensive so I’m not saying that it wouldn’t be a good idea but I’m saying going into a pooled budget is something that any commissioner would have to go into with their eyes wide open because they need managing, they are complex budgets to manage”*

Outcomes-based assessments are essential in ensuring adaptations are ‘fit for purpose’

- 6.40 There was agreement that working back from the desired outcome for individuals when assessing their need is a sound principle. Working in this way could lead to less wastage in public spending. An example was shared whereby an individual requested to move to a newly built, fully adapted house before the adaptations were completed to their current home. This option had been on the cards since before the adaptations had been approved.

- 6.41 A key issue related to this is that the guidance issued to housing associations by WG emphasises that adaptations should be ‘necessary and appropriate’ as well as ‘reasonable and practicable’ (mirroring the criteria local authorities must apply in deciding on DFGs). However, the two are not always seen to go together. In particular, if the most practical solution is to move home, this can be difficult for the service user to accept.

*“Often what is necessary and appropriate, doesn’t always fit into reasonable and practicable... the only things that can be done for the family*

*is that they should move and that is a crunchy conversation to have and it involves different departments within our organisations, but it is the correct thing to do because we know that we will never be able to make that property as it should be for the purposes of the family.”*

- 6.42 Stakeholders often find that tenants refuse to move which leads to a series of adaptations being made, each more complex and expensive than the last. Even so, the property may still not be suitable for the tenant long term (i.e. if it is on a steep hill and they are living there alone). Having these conversations adds time on to the adaptations process for these individuals but it is felt that having the conversation is the “right thing to do”.

*“It’s a grab rail today... stairlift the day after... a level access shower and then you’re looking at ground floor facilities that you can’t get into the property anyway...it’s having that discussion at the start but they won’t be convinced, they don’t want to move. We’ve managed to move I think three or four people in the last four/five years.”*

- 6.43 The group suggested that two things could be done to address some issues with mapping supply and demand in the sector. The first is to utilise the population needs assessments carried out by local authorities every five years, as they are mandated to do within the Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014. This would provide a fuller picture of how providing adaptations is sitting alongside the provision of other care or is even preventing it. The other is to improve consistency across specialist housing registers, echoing the view of the other stakeholder group. A recent good practice guide produced by Tai Pawb<sup>26</sup> was said to be a good starting point as well as a recent piece of research on accessible properties in Gwent which utilised ICF funding.

*“If you did both those things...making links with the population need assessment but also looking at adapted housing registers...then actually, you’re quite a long way towards answering that balance of supply and demand issue.”*

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<sup>26</sup> [Tai Pawb, 2018. Housing and disabled people: a toolkit for local authorities](#)

KPIs should not be too prescriptive

- 6.44 Stringent KPIs are not considered particularly helpful and are something the stakeholders feel they have tried to guide WG away from to an extent.

*“If indicators become the set stone by which everything is governed, then all they do is simply influence behaviour so some people will tend to operate to the limits. So, we’ve resisted that throughout, but I think it is fair to say there is an inadequacy of data out there.”*

- 6.45 Participants felt that there is more scope for aligning different parts of the system such as social care and health by looking at the indicators others are working towards.

The WG Service Standards are supported, but could be ‘tweaked’

- 6.46 There is support for the WG Service Standards breaking expected timeframes down by adaptation size, and breaking down the timeframes for medium and large adaptations by the time it should take to see an OT and the time it should take to complete thereafter. It is therefore considered vital to measure the time it takes for an OT assessment to take place, as this varies greatly across Wales.
- 6.47 Standard Five of the WG Service Standards<sup>27</sup>, and in particular the part that mentions service charges, is said by participants to be open to interpretation and potentially problematic. There is a balance to be struck between covering maintenance costs for specialised installations without having some tenants “foot the bill” for standard items and the potential conflicts with the equalities act this could bring. One stakeholder shared a specific example:

*“In a mainstream, general needs house, you wouldn’t charge extra for a toilet because mainstream toilets don’t need maintenance, or you know, they would have a repair or replacement if they broke because that is a core component of a house. But in the same sense, we could be open to challenge under the Equalities Act where there is a Closomat toilet which does attract service maintenance repair costs but by charging for the*

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<sup>27</sup> “Any equipment installed will be compliant with relevant health and safety requirements, technical specifications and be appropriate for the purpose which they were intended. Service user should also be informed and made aware of; warranty information, service charges and maintenance requirements where it is appropriate to do so.”

*servicing, maintenance and repair you then walk a fine line with equalities in terms of are you penalising someone because of their disability?"*

- 6.48 Participants felt that WG do not have a clear view on what the service charge regime should be. There are a variety of ways of dealing with service charges which causes a difficulty. It is felt that if guidance is to be issued, there should be consultation which would involve housing association as it is a complex issue. It was stressed that what is being asked for is a conversation with Welsh Government – RSLs do not necessarily have a unified view on service charges.

*"I'd think we'd want to speak collectively on this but we'd have to determine what our view was before we put it to Welsh Government."*

*"It [the current service charge regime] feels fragile, it doesn't feel robust, it doesn't feel particularly consistent from the conversations I have with other RSLs because I've asked lots of RSLs...it all gets very very complicated and I would really welcome a discussion about that."*

## 7. Findings: In-depth Interviews with Service Users

### Introduction

- 7.1 Eighteen interviews were undertaken with service users to understand their lived experiences of having a housing adaptation. The sample included a mix of homeowners, private renters and council / RSL tenants spread across Wales: they varied in age and mobility status and had received a mix of small, medium, and large adaptations. A mix of funded and non-funded recipients was also included in the research.
- 7.2 The interviews lasted around 30 minutes, and sought to gather people's views around the following:
- Making the application for an adaptation;
  - Any grants they received to have the adaptation installed;
  - The support (if any) they had through the process - and any problems they experienced in accessing that support;
  - Having the adaptation installed;
  - Whether the adaptation has helped; and
  - How, if at all, the process of having an adaptation could have been improved?

### Main Findings

There was little awareness and knowledge about the type of support and funding available – or of the applications process

- 7.3 Some service users with a long-term disability talked of being in the 'system' for many years, having had many adaptations to their homes and even moving home to meet their needs in some cases. These participants tended to have a fairly good knowledge of the type of support available, as well as the availability of funding.
- 7.4 However, many service users required adaptations following a change of circumstance such as the death of a partner meaning they were less able to cope in their home environment, a serious accident or an operation. These

individuals did not tend to have good knowledge of the support available for adapting their home, or awareness of where to look for the information.

- 7.5 In fact, many of these individuals talked of needing adaptations at very stressful times in their lives at which they were glad to hand over responsibility for research and applications to their housing officer, social worker or a family member. In hindsight, some felt that they should have done more research at the time, but said other stresses had stood in their way.

*“I found it so easy. I felt that a lot of it was done for us and we were going through a trauma at the time with my mum and I’d just lost my dad and it was just the last thing I needed, and it was all took out of my hands. I was so grateful”*

- 7.6 This also appears to be the case with knowledge of funding received. Service users typically know whether they have received funding for an adaptation, but are rarely aware of the funding stream awarding the money. A small number of respondents were aware of ‘PAG’ (Physical Adaptations Grant) but had no real knowledge of what it was or the value of their grant.

*“I don’t to be honest [know where the funding came from]. They said after a while yes you can get a grant. It just came from the council as far as I’m aware”*

- 7.7 Although the pattern varied, particularly for private renters and owner occupiers, service users generally welcomed having a ‘single point of contact’ when dealing with the application process. Amongst participants this tended to be a social worker, a Care & Repair case worker or their RSL/council housing officer.

*“They said, yes, they would do it, ‘don’t worry about it now’. There wasn’t a lot of fuss made”*

- 7.8 As a result, service users did not tend to have an in-depth knowledge of the application process. They assumed they were assessed in some way by their case worker, housing officer or social worker but did not fully understand whether they were means tested or what else was included in the process. As a result, most respondents saw it as a relatively painless process.

*“Absolutely exceptionally easy and everybody was very helpful and they explained it in detail. It was very easy, surprisingly so, that was simply because they explained everything as they went along”*

7.9 Although service users said they were referred for assessment by/from a variety of sources (for example self-referral, Social Services, Care & Repair, Registered Social Landlords, council housing officers and hospital staff), one constant is how quickly they felt an Occupational Therapist (OT) had visited to assess their needs.

7.10 OTs are generally considered to be very helpful and professional, with some evidence from participants that their work to assess the needs of whole families is particularly beneficial.

‘Small’ adaptations are most common among older people – but younger people tend to have larger ones

7.11 Most commonly, older people involved in this research had received a selection of ‘smaller’ adaptations, including various types of rails and small ramps. ‘Medium’ adaptations were also common, particularly modifications to bathrooms and stairlifts. Slightly less common were larger adaptations including major changes to bathrooms and kitchens. These were typically seen when an individual’s mobility had decreased significantly, and they were having to adapt to using a wheelchair. These individuals tended to be younger and to have suffered an accident or complications following surgery. The data supports these views; 83% of adaptations provided to the 65 to 74 age group were in the ‘Small’ category, rising to 90% of adaptations provided to the 75 and over age group. Most of the remaining adaptations were in the ‘Medium’ category; 16% in the 65 to 74 age group and 9% in the 75 and over age group.

7.12 As expected, those participants receiving the most minor adaptations reported the work being done within the quickest timeframe, sometimes within days of approval. Most commonly though, the timeframe for completion is a few weeks. Those with more major adaptations reported the work taking place over a few months. Feedback was mostly positive in terms of the length of time the work takes, with some being surprised at how quickly things were turned around to a high standard, even during the Covid-19 pandemic.

*“It was quick. Can’t give you an exact time but you’re talking about weeks not months. It got sent in and approved in a far quicker time than I anticipated”*

*“It was done swiftly; it was done very, very well. Better than I thought. There was no mess left behind; it was clean, and it looked nice as well. Very impressed”*

- 7.13 A minority of participants with more complex cases that included several adaptations reported a longer timescale for completion, up to a year. Generally, this longer timeframe was not seen as a problem, but one participant felt that communication from their housing officer / case worker on progress could have been better during this time.

*“I felt as a tenant I wasn’t notified a lot ... I had little knowledge of what was going on. I remember having a phone call on the Friday saying we’re coming Monday and that was how it happened”*

- 7.14 In this case, the service user had joined their residents’ panel and had provided feedback on how the application process could be improved, with a specific focus on communication. The housing association in question has updated its practices as a result.

The quality of adaptations was considered high

- 7.15 There was high praise for the quality of adaptations as well as for those undertaking them. Service users were generally happy with the work done and often reported that their contractors had gone over and above to ensure the work suited their needs.

*“It was done with compassion, with professionalism, everything that I could want really. Very efficient, very non-invasive. Very nice chap. He was wonderful ... approachable as well ... He measured me and I walked with him to say this was the right height. I was in on all of the consultations of the planning of the work before ... and while it was being installed. Every step of the way. Two heads together. A coordinated effort between the engineer and the recipient. And the end result proves it. It’s just really, really great”*

7.16 However, there was some evidence from participating service users of a lack of consultation in the event of large adaptations, particularly kitchens. A small number of service users reported that after the OT had visited and discussed their needs, they were then not permitted further input into the design of their installations.

*“When I look at the physical aspect of it, I can’t use it ... I just wish someone had come and spoken to me and I could have spoken about my processes and how things would help me and not help me”*

7.17 As a result, some service users reported that their kitchen does not meet their needs and, in one case, is less useful than the non-accessible kitchen they had previously. As such, they cannot cook a meal for their family regularly as they had hoped.

*“There were a few hiccups with the work surfaces, oven and layout ... a few issues that possibly weren’t counted in ... To get [an] oven issue resolved ... we had the OT and the people from Care & Repair and the housing association to either cover it, or request more funding, which they did eventually and it went fine ... all this work has been done and it still didn’t benefit me because I can’t use the cooker”*

7.18 Most service users reported that checks had been done to assess the quality of their adaptation following completion. These seem to be relative to the size of the job, with a quick follow-up appointment for those in receipt of small adaptations and a more thorough appointment for larger adaptations.

7.19 Some of these were done over the telephone, with the service user sending a picture of the finalised work during Covid-19 restrictions. Participants were understanding of the reasons for this.

Most adaptations have had a positive impact on quality of life

7.20 Service users and their carers reported that even small adaptations can have a positive impact on their quality of life. There was much feedback from participating service users suggesting that adaptations have led to increased or regained independence that has been lost due to an accident or due to a general deterioration in health and mobility. Several participants reported being able to

do things at home independently that they would have needed help from a carer to do previously thanks to their adaptation.

*“My mum’s been kept safe; she’s happy ... It’s peace of mind for me, obviously. She’s been able to keep her independence and stay in the house...”*

- 7.21 There was a general feeling amongst participants that having an adaptation makes living at home easier, with some saying it has allowed them to stay in their own home either without formal care or without having to move to another facility.

*“I now feel safe entering my house. I have no negatives. My family are very impressed. This makes everybody much happier that I am safe at the moment”*

- 7.22 Another positive reported by many is a feeling of being less restricted in their home due to the adaptation/s. Participants who have had rails, ramps and steps placed outside now feel they can use their outside space more fully.

- 7.23 Others have increased confidence when moving around the home and feel they are less likely to have an accident when doing so.

*“Oh God yes, we couldn’t have managed without it. It’s helped us immensely; it’s been a blessing. I couldn’t get up the stairs without that bannister”*

- 7.24 There is also some evidence from the interviews that adaptations have a positive impact on whole families, not just the individual who was assessed for support. This is particularly true of elderly couples where one partner now finds themselves better equipped to help and support the other within the home.

*“I can get around the house, I can sit in my wheelchair which means I’m not restricted any more. With the doors widened its so much easier. It means I’ve got independence; my husband had to be there and carry me around and keep carrying me and picking me up. It’s a huge difference for all of us; it means that at Christmas, I can prepare my own veg and do jobs round the house”*

Work was generally efficient, of a good standard and the approach was 'person centred'

- 7.25 Among those receiving small scale adaptations, there was praise for the speed at which the work is completed, its quality and the professionalism of the service. Indeed, they said that the work was generally completed efficiently and to a high standard, and that a 'person centred approach' to the process was taken.

*"I don't see how they could improve on it. They even asked my wife what colour floor covering she wanted – little things like that meant a lot. They didn't just come and say, 'That's what you're having and that's it'"*

- 7.26 In particular, there was a great deal of praise for Care & Repair teams across Wales from participants. Service users felt they were consistently professional and thorough in their approach, and that they could contact their case worker freely with any issues.

- 7.27 The minority of participants who felt there is room to improve suggested that communication is key. Examples include ensuring a full assessment and follow-up is always undertaken, not generalising a disability and discussing how the person is impacted by their condition fully, and ensuring enough warning is given for when major work on a home is due to begin.

*"Sometimes they generalised disability. So, my husband is in a wheelchair and they said, 'Well, that means your upper body strength is going to be rubbish, so this isn't going to be convenient to you'. But he knows what he's capable of and sometimes people aren't willing to listen because all disabilities are different, with different strengths and weaknesses ... I think listening to the individual [is important]. At the end of the day, they know what they need to help themselves better than anyone else does"*

- 7.28 It does not appear that Covid-19 has had a significant impact on those already in receipt of adaptations or whose applications had already been approved from the perspectives of service users. Work continued to be carried out in many cases and although slight delays were reported, service users were generally understanding. Several also reported that their point of contact had been in touch regularly to check they were still satisfied, and that any in-progress adaptations remained in a good state of repair during the pandemic.

*“During this lockdown, they’ve been phoning me umpteen times to see if I’m alright and if I need anything. They asked if we had things in situ so that if either of you got Covid ... They’ve been really concerned. I think it’s unbelievable how good they’ve been”*

7.29 A very small number of service users said that, at the time of their interview, they required additional support or for changes to be made to current adaptations, usually those larger in scale. There was a perception, from participants, that nothing would be done at present due to Covid-19 and subsequently uncertainty about when the situation would improve.

## 8. Conclusions

### Key Research Questions

8.1 The following conclusions are framed around WG's key research questions, which were as follows:

- How are the individual funding streams for housing adaptations allocated and spent across Wales according to: local authority area; age groups; physical disability; and size (small, medium and large as defined in the Welsh Government Service Standards)?
- Does the allocation and spend on housing adaptations funding streams reflect the needs of the population?
- What are the barriers in accessing and receiving aids and adaptations?
- What are the strengths of the process for accessing and receiving aids and adaptations?
- What support do service users receive to help them access adaptations?
- What are the key characteristics of good service in relation to aids and adaptations?
- What could be appropriate indicators for an allocation process for housing adaptation funding streams, and how could these relate to the proposed Welsh Government Service Standards?

### Key Conclusions

*Research Question 1 - How are the individual funding streams for housing adaptations allocated and spent across Wales according to: local authority area; age groups; physical disability; and size (small, medium and large as defined in the Welsh Government Service Standards)?*

8.2 An important caveat noted at one of the stakeholder workshops is that where spending on allocation differs greatly across local authorities, this should be placed in context as there are external factors that could explain the disparity. One proffered example was that UHW in Cardiff has a lack of available

bedspace, which might mean that patients are discharged sooner than they would be elsewhere, leading to higher spending on adaptations to make their homes immediately ready – whereas elsewhere, more intensive funding on care could be lessening the need for adaptations. Therefore, comparisons of spend purely on adaptations across Wales must always be cautious and contextualised.

- 8.3 Based on age standardised figures, the cost allocated within local authority areas per 1,000 people varies by age; some prioritise funding for older people, some prioritise younger people. This is significant because age standardisation accounts for the different population age structures between local authority areas. Powys, and Monmouthshire and Torfaen allocate a greater proportion of funds to people aged 75 and over than do Ceredigion, Pembrokeshire, and Rhondda Cynon Taf. In contrast, the Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire area allocate a greater proportion to people aged 19 to 55 than any other local authority area.
- 8.4 While different age groups may be prioritised, the age standardised actual costs demonstrate that significant funds may still be directed at the lower priority age groups; Rhondda Cynon Taf distributes over £6,000 per 1,000 people aged 75 and over compared to around £1,250 in Powys. Considering the younger age groups Rhondda Cynon Taf distributes over £3,000 per 1,000 people aged 19 to 55 compared to around £2,800 in Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire.
- 8.5 The costs for funding streams range from £25,112 for Traditional RSL funding to £18.8 million for DFG funding, which is over 50% larger than all the other funding streams taken together.
- 8.6 The purpose of the funding streams should be taken into account when setting standards; the median costs for PAG and DFGs were a little over £3,500. For all other funding streams, the median fell into an £81 range between £90 and £171. This reflects the complexity as well as simply the size of adaptation.
- 8.7 The medium category may offer the greatest opportunity for efficiency gains. The largest amount of money is spent on medium adaptations through three main sources; DFG, PAG and LA Funding (Other). In total, medium adaptations attracted £18.91 million of funding compared to £6.62 million for large

adaptations and £4.82 for small adaptations. Twenty-nine percent of PAG costs and 27% of DFG costs are for large adaptations.

- 8.8 Small adaptations offer less scope for efficiency gains by the obvious fact of the volume to cost ratio. Small category funding provides for 85% of all adaptations, medium funding for 13% of all adaptations and large funding for 1% of all adaptations. Considering the individual funding streams, over 70% of all adaptations under all funding streams except PAG and DFG were in the small category with no more than 9% in any funding stream being larger adaptations.
- 8.9 Median costs for small, medium and large adaptations vary between funding streams. Median costs for large adaptations funded via ENABLE and LSVT Funding are £6,000 compared to £10,000 to £12,000 for PAG and LA Funding (Other) and £13,943 for DFG. It is difficult to ascertain whether these different median costs are related to the complexity of the work involved or other factors.
- 8.10 Providers are dependent on two or three funding streams each. At least some of these funding streams will be business critical to the individual providers.
- 8.11 The different funding streams cater to different age groups. While overall, 66% of adaptations are carried out for people aged 75 and over, with a further 17% to people aged 65 to 74, the picture differs for individual funding streams. For example, the 19 to 54 age group accounts for 32% of adaptations funded by PAG.
- 8.12 By size of adaptation, the funding is directed meaningfully to people differing needs by age. Medium and large adaptations account for 38% of adaptations for children and young people up to age 18 and 31% for the 19 to 55 age group. In contrast, 83% of adaptations for the 65 to 74 age group and 90% for the 75 and over are small adaptations.
- 8.13 Considering the age and funding stream relationship from the point of view of age groups shows that the majority of younger age groups (0 to 18 and 19 to 54) have adaptations carried out with funding from DFG and LA Funding (Other). The 65 and over age groups have most adaptations carried out under ENABLE, LA Funding (Other) and RRAP.
- 8.14 The time for delivery of adaptations is usually measured in days, demonstrating a level of efficiency. Two funding streams have high median times for delivering

the adaptation after the need is identified; PAG (119 days) and DFG (99 days) compared to 13 days for all adaptations. These times could be due to the complexity of many adaptations carried out under the two funding streams as discussed elsewhere in this report.

- 8.15 The main predicted outcome of adaptations is preventing falls in line with the amount of funding which is directed at older people. Between 44% and 60% of adaptations carried out under ENABLE, LA Funding (Other), RRAP, Traditional RSL Funding and LSVT Funding are predicted to prevent falls.
- 8.16 The second main predicted outcome is increased independence in daily living; 94% of DFG, 66% of PAG and 55% of LSVT Funding. This outcome is relevant across the age groups.

*Research Question 2 - Does the allocation and spend on housing adaptations funding streams reflect the needs of the population?*

- 8.17 Stakeholders were of the view (corroborated by the literature) that the allocation and spend of funding on housing adaptations is not only determined by need, but also by geography and, especially, tenure. This is the often quoted “*postcode lottery*” whereby people with similar needs are receiving different standards of service because of where they live and who is funding the adaptation.
- 8.18 Tenure was thought to be the primary driver of inequality, with a perception among stakeholders that RSL tenants benefit from not only being generally more aware of adaptations as an option, but also from being able to access the “*less bureaucratic*” PAG system that allows them easier access to funding and shorter waiting times than those in owner occupation, local authority accommodation and the private rented sector – as well as those within LSVTs.
- 8.19 The perception that tenure drives inequality in funding adaptations is supported by the data: the average cost of an adaptation in social housing is £2,369; considerably more than the average cost in the private sector (£818).
- 8.20 At first sight, the evidence from the data appears to contradict the perception that RSL tenants enjoy short waiting times; the median time from the need for an adaptation being identified until the adaptation is ready for use is 119 days for PAG, as utilised by RSLs compared to 99 days for DFGs. Around two thirds of RSL adaptations (65%) are provided using PAG and one third are provided using

other funding sources (35%). After PAG, the second two main sources of funding for RSLs are RSL funding (17%) and ENABLE (12%). These two sources of funding have median times until the adaptation is ready for use of 13 days (ENABLE) and 18 days (RSL funding). The full picture is more complex again; for example, many more adaptations are funded by ENABLE in the private sector than in RSL properties while many fewer are funding in other social landlords than in RSL properties. Bringing this evidence together, RSL tenants could benefit from a more efficient service (as measured by the time before the adaptation is useable) depending on which source the work is funded from.

- 8.21 The data does not provide evidence of the level of bureaucracy.
- 8.22 The issue of means testing was raised in relation to potential ways of overcoming tenure-based inequity, and there were differing views on the potential impact of abolishing the test for housing adaptations. Some stakeholders were in favour of doing so to improve access and remove 'red tape', whereas others were concerned about opening a 'floodgate' of applications (two viewpoints also noted in the literature reviewed). Although stakeholders felt that this is something for WG to decide on, generally speaking they felt that allowing small and some medium adaptations to take place without means testing would be fairly low risk, providing OT Assessments are robust enough to ensure that only those in real need receive them.
- 8.23 What stakeholders did agree on, however, is that the £36,000 DFG threshold is too low in many cases (meaning some necessary adaptations are not implemented due to unaffordability for the service user) and that another marker of disparity in the system is that some local authorities will 'top-up' the spending cap and others will not, depending on their internal policies. In order to improve access and address inequity, one consideration for WG (as suggested at one of the stakeholder workshops) is the provision of a central 'pot' of discretionary funding whereby applications could be made for funding over and above the £36,000 in appropriate circumstances.
- 8.24 Moving on from tenure to geography, a particular issue appears to be the way in which different sized adaptations are defined across Wales, meaning that two people receiving the same adaptation but in different areas can be subject to

different processes. It was, though, recognised that the 'small', 'medium' and 'large' definitions in the Welsh Government Service Standards may be particularly helpful in ensuring service users receive a uniform service regardless of their location in future.

*Research Question 3: What are the barriers in accessing and receiving aids and adaptations?*

- 8.25 The main strategic barriers to accessing and receiving aids and adaptations are discussed above under 'Research Question 2', but there are also some more practical ones.
- 8.26 In considering the pre-application period, findings from the literature review and primary research suggest that the quality of information and advice offered to service users and potential service users about adaptations, funding and how to navigate the system is relatively poor, which can serve as a barrier to access.
- 8.27 This is less of an issue for those who do proceed 'into the system' however, as they are then typically assisted through the process – either by a housing officer, social worker or a family member – and it is thus less important that they are aware of, say, what 'pot' their adaptation was funded through.
- 8.28 Nonetheless, this should not be taken to imply that information provision is unimportant, for many people will require adaptations following a sudden change of circumstance such as the death of a partner, a serious accident or an operation and so need to know what is available to them and how to access it. For these people, and indeed those aforementioned housing officers, social workers and family members working on behalf of someone in need, it would be desirable to consider a consistent, single point of entry to the system – to improve not only actual access and equity (regardless of tenure and geography), but also perceptions of it.
- 8.29 One further barrier that should be noted is the inconsistent availability and accuracy of accessible housing registers across Wales, the improvement of which is key in ensuring properties are allocated according to need and as quickly as possible. A recent Tai Pawb good practice guide was said to be a good starting point, as well as a recent piece of research on accessible

properties in Gwent: wider knowledge and dissemination of these documents would be beneficial.

*Research Question 4: What are the strengths of the process for accessing and receiving aids and adaptations?*

- 8.30 The 'fast-track' PAG system appears to be well regarded by those who use it for its speed, responsiveness and its person-centred approach. Moreover, the RRAP is said by participants and in the literature to deliver minor adaptations and small repairs quickly and effectively, allowing people to return home from hospital and care much more quickly than they otherwise might. The data analysis shows RRAP to have a median waiting time of 7 days from the need being identified to the adaptation being ready for use. Overall, adaptations are delivered without excessive delay; 6 out of 8 funding streams have a median time of less than three weeks from identification of the need until the adaptation is ready for use. The two exceptions to this are PAG and DFG, which involve more of the 'Large' category works.
- 8.31 There also appear to be some pockets of process-related good practice, most notably in the integration of teams and the use of properly recruited, trained and supervised trusted assessors for minor adaptations – which has resulted in quicker, more aligned and streamlined processes. Improvements have also been seen through: procuring via lists of trusted contractors or framework agreements; having well-developed adapted property registers; and using private OTs as opposed to those employed by local authorities. Indeed, RSL tenants spoke about their experiences of being assessed by a private OT, which they felt had resulted in a quicker process.
- 8.32 The dissemination of good practice activity is important in terms of increasing knowledge and ensuring - where possible and appropriate - that it is adopted more widely across Wales.

*Research Question 5: What support do service users receive to help them access adaptations?*

- 8.33 The service users who took part in the research were generally positive about the support they had received through the application and assessment process from their housing/social worker and the OT that visited them at home. Care &

Repair was also valued highly by those who had used it. Moreover, the contractors undertaking the work were praised for having gone “*over and above*” in ensuring the adaptation work suited the service users’ needs.

- 8.34 Indeed, in the stakeholder workshop it was stressed that while the current system for accessing funding for adaptations is indeed complex and somewhat unequitable, the inequity is mainly in how the system is accessed. This is a concern for those delivering and overseeing the process rather than the end service user, who will typically provide very positive feedback about both process and outcomes (though caution must be exercised in relation to the feedback gathered from service users, as outlined in paragraph 8.40 below).
- 8.35 Where support and communication appears to be lacking in some cases, is in fully engaging service users in the design and implementation of adaptations (especially ‘large’ ones) – which can result in installations that are not fit for purpose and do not achieve the desired outcomes. Given the small number of interviews on which these findings are based though, it may be prudent to consider more research/analysis in this area to determine whether this is a systemic issue or not.

*Research Question 6: What are the key characteristics of good service in relation to aids and adaptations?*

- 8.36 In light of the variations outlined earlier in this chapter, it could be said that the key characteristic of a good service is that it is consistent across areas and tenures, and as a result is one that ensures all service users receive similar levels of service.
- 8.37 A good service is also one that involves those in receipt of it at every step: from an initial conversation to establish need, desired outcomes and the feasibility of various options - to full involvement in the design and implementation of the adaptation itself. Good communication throughout is also essential, as illustrated by the fact that those in receipt of large, complex adaptations tend to be very understanding of the length of time taken to install them providing they are adequately communicated with throughout.
- 8.38 A service provided by means of an integrated and collaborative multi-disciplinary approach to assessing, designing and installing adaptations can have many

benefits, particularly when ‘teams’ include the housing, health and social care sectors working together to establish need and desired outcomes.

- 8.39 Constant monitoring and evaluation of provision to establish what it is being done well and where improvements can be made appears to be key. The literature and stakeholder views point to data collection and reporting being historically poor but improving – and further improvements will be required in future to understand variances in provision and ensure that all-important consistency.
- 8.40 Encouragingly, most service users reported that checks had been done to assess the quality of their adaptation following completion and this had continued during the Covid-19 pandemic. However it is, and will be, important not to overly rely on customer satisfaction surveys, as both the literature and stakeholders are clear that the results they generate can be misleading: because adaptations typically result in positive outcomes, recipients will tend forgive any negative aspects of the process, which then have to be inferred through KPI data. Essentially, performance indicators and survey data must be considered ‘in the round’ to gather the full picture around housing adaptation provision in Wales.
- 8.41 On a related note, there is concern among stakeholders that the publicly available data is too ‘hard’ currently and could reasonably be supplemented with ‘softer’ outcome-based measures seeing as this is what really matters to service users. This would necessitate more and better collection of data around impacts and benefits (improved wellbeing and quality of life, reductions in accidents or falls and greater independence for example) in addition to the mechanics of delivering adaptations<sup>28</sup>. Indeed, several stakeholder workshop participants said they had been involved in the process of developing a consistent questionnaire that is distributed to service users across Wales post-adaptation – and while they were satisfied with the type of data the questionnaire produces, they would support work to adapt it to enable the collection of some qualitative data on outcomes.

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<sup>28</sup> It should be noted that WG does currently report this as part of its annual high-level analysis.

*Research Question 7: What could be appropriate indicators for an allocation process for housing adaptation funding streams, and how could these relate to the proposed Welsh Government Service Standards?*

- 8.42 The literature and the stakeholders both report a need for a wider range of publicly reported KPIs to cover not only DFGs, but also PAG and RRAP. This, it was said, will ensure a far more complete picture of the whole adaptations system. Encouragingly, improvements are beginning to be seen via the Welsh Government ENABLE review (introduced in January 2017), with local authorities and housing associations expected to record the same core set of information in respect of adaptations delivered via the DFG and PAG.
- 8.43 In terms of specific suggestions, there was support in one of the stakeholder workshops for the WG Service Standards breaking expected timeframes down by adaptation size, and then breaking down the timeframes for medium and large adaptations by the time it should take to see an OT and completion time thereafter. Indeed, some considered it vital to measure the time it takes for an OT assessment to take place, as this varies greatly across Wales – although others cautioned against taking such timescales at face value, as some areas suffer from more acute OT shortages than others.
- 8.44 Similarly, in terms of measuring timescales more widely, the need to consider the context of individual adaptations was stressed. Looking specifically at DFGs, means testing in itself adds time to the process - and this is compounded in the case of larger and more complex, DFG-funded adaptations by the fact they are often awarded to younger people with multiple needs, complicated family structures and a reticence to share personal information as a result. All of this can extend the time it takes to apply for funding and complete an adaptation, which must be considered when comparing timescales across different funding streams. The cost and time figures from the funding stream data analysis supports this approach.
- 8.45 In order to ensure maximum effectiveness, it was said by participants that any new indicators that are introduced in future must be aligned to the WG Service Standards to ensure consistency across Wales – particularly in terms of

matching the three key adaptation levels that match different funding thresholds: small, medium and large.

- 8.46 On a related note, the Service Standards themselves were largely praised in having introduced a level of consistency to the system, and stakeholders were of the view that the time has now come to undertake an official review of their effectiveness and whether they have “*achieved what they set out to achieve*”.
- 8.47 Finally, it should be noted that while performance indicators are generally considered important for public bodies to manage performance and identify areas of good practice and improvement, there is also a view amongst stakeholders that they can act as a constraining factor on positive outcomes insofar as organisations will operate to meet them rather than to achieve the best outcomes for service users. For this reason, it would be prudent to keep their use to a reasonable minimum while (where appropriate) accommodating the suggestions made above.

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**10. Zhou, W. (2018). *Housing adaptations for ageing in the UK: policy, legislation and practice*. Edinburgh: Herriot Watt University Annex B: Report of Findings from Stakeholder Interviews**

**Introduction**

- 10.1 Six interviews were undertaken with key stakeholders to gather their perspectives on the current picture in relation to allocating housing adaptations across Wales. The findings from these interviews were primarily intended to inform the design of the later stages of the research, but are included below for context.

**Main Findings**

The current system for allocating funding was described as complex and inequitable

- 10.2 Interviewees described the current system for allocating funding for housing adaptations in Wales as “*dysfunctional*”, “*bureaucratic*” and “*a postcode lottery*” insofar as there are a number of different streams that can be accessed, primarily differentiated by tenure.

*“The system is so different for different tenures, and so many different grants. It’s not transparent”*

The main inequalities are by tenure, though there are also geographical differences

- 10.3 The stakeholders agreed that different providers operate in different ways, leading to inequity by geography. Some examples of how this manifests itself can be seen below.

*“Each council deals with things differently ... so there isn’t any equity. Each council makes decisions based on their budgets, so it’s a complete postcode lottery. We sit along [an authority that’s] considered far less affluent than we are, although we have a far older population, but we get a lot less money. So, if you live [there] the chances are higher than here because we can’t afford to deliver it. In my mind it’s not a fair system...”*

*“It’s hard to get a consistent approach to Physical Adaptations Grants because some Care & Repair local agents are subsidiaries of RSLs and others are independent charities. So, they don’t have the one-to-one relationship with the housing associations”*

- 10.4 Particular reference, though, was made to inequity by tenure, with several interviewees suggesting that RSL tenants have far easier access to funding through Physical Adaptations Grants (PAGs) than those in local authority, owner-occupied and especially private rented accommodation.

*“The system is not equitable ... people in housing associations tend to get adaptation grants much quicker whereas home occupiers or council housing wait longer”*

*“No-one really knows what happens with private rented sector tenants; there’s a dearth of data on the subject ... I think the number of applications is dismally small ... and in many cases landlords will say no because they’re left with a level access shower or a stairlift and say ‘actually, it’s better if you move’...”*

- 10.5 Moreover, differences between RSLs were noted by interviewees: larger associations were thought to enable much speedier access to funding than smaller ones.

*“Larger RSLs do it better. They are very proactive in this area and others are much less so. It can take much longer for those living in some other RSLs; it can take months and go through all sorts of levels of approvals. A considerable length of time and multi layers of sign-off before the adaptation can go ahead...”*

- 10.6 One participant noted that Large-scale Voluntary Stock Transfer (LSVT) organisations are ineligible for PAG funding *“even though their demographic isn’t really any different to housing associations; poorer people living in ex-council housing”*. This, they felt, is *“crazy”* and should be addressed.

Tenure-based inequality is said to be compounded by means testing (or the ‘Test of Resources’) – but there were mixed views about its abolition

- 10.7 The process of means testing was generally considered by stakeholders to be time-consuming, inefficient, intrusive, bureaucratic, arbitrary and again somewhat *“inequitable”* in that it looks only at assets and income, and not living costs.

*“I think the means testing process is a bit of a mini industry in term of the cost ... What you find is that the majority of people who apply for grants are those who can't afford to get the work done quicker ... so the whole process is costly and slow and doesn't result in any savings. It's just a layer of cost and bureaucracy”*

- 10.8 There was thus support in principle for WG's aspiration to open access to all and remove means testing, though one local authority representative felt additional funding will need to be increased to cover the anticipated extra demand.

*“Many householders don't want to ask for assistance so real demand for adaptation is hidden at the moment. Removing means testing will reveal the true demand and it will be high”*

- 10.9 Some others disagreed with the latter point though, suggesting that additional demand as a result of removing means testing may not be as high as expected, or even very high at all – mainly as housing adaptations are not desired by those who do not really need them.

*“There's a cynical supposition out there that when people cotton on that they can get something for nothing, everyone will want it. But it doesn't work like that because having your home adapted is quite a big thing. People don't want to lose their baths; they don't want a stairlift in their house if they don't need it...why would you?!”*

- 10.10 Moreover, it was said that any potential issues around people trying to get what they don't need can be mitigated against through proper needs-based approaches and conversations with individuals around needs, wants and expectations.

*“I believe if we are proactive in the right way around what matters, what they need, using a needs-based assessment, then these things go away. People are not queueing up for a commode in the middle of the room or a stairlift...”*

- 10.11 Indeed, this move away from a financially-driven assessment of eligibility towards early needs-based assessments of need was considered essential by several interviewees to maximise outcomes and efficiency.

*“It’s not just about providing money, it’s about getting to the right outcomes. Money is one way to facilitate this, advice is another. Some need to access financial support but not all. Giving money for adaptations that don’t meet need is a waste of money”*

- 10.12 The importance of involving those in receipt of adaptations in the process was also stressed in relation to properly identifying requirements. This, it was said, will ensure individual need is the driver, and so should result in maximum benefit.

*“I think you can do more to include service users in decision-making and planning. There’s no involvement at the moment. It’s not open to scrutiny in terms of having met the need locally or not”*

System redesign was thought to be urgently needed – but there were mixed views on a single funding stream

- 10.13 The housing adaptations funding system was generally thought by interviewees to require significant redesign to address the issues raised above, and to reduce the bureaucracy involved in accessing small adaptations particularly.

*“There are just too many access points. It needs to be streamlined for users”*

*“The process can be very bureaucratic for the size of the funding and adaptation being applied for, so the whole process is unwieldy relative to the funding ...”*

- 10.14 A couple of interviewees supported the development of a single funding stream for adaptations, whereby all Welsh Government funding is placed into one local development ‘pot’ for access by RSLs, local authorities and Care & Repair agencies. This, it was felt, would be more speedy, transparent and equitable.

*“One idea would be to set up an adaptation framework for funding allocated locally. This would speed things up without the need to have to apply to WG each time; there would be a pot of cash that can be devolved into local*

*areas. This would reduce blocks in and reduce the time to process applications”*

- 10.15 There was some concern, though, that RSLs and Care & Repair agencies might lose out under this model, even if it would be more equitable generally.

*“It might be more difficult for those RSLs and Care & Repair who have quick access to PAGs (like they do now), but I do think this would make the system more equitable”*

*“Care & Repair don’t just provide RRAPs so this programme funding shouldn’t disappear into other adaptation pots at a regional level”*

- 10.16 Moreover, there was a sense that while pooling budgets for small adaptations would be relatively straightforward, it “is less easy to do this for medium and larger adaptations because of the legislation around DFG limits and flexibility on how they can be applied. There are legally different strands of funding and it would mean organisations giving up control and ownership of some budget streams for PAGs and DFGs”.

- 10.17 It was suggested that for small adaptations, RRAP eligibility and funding could be extended fairly easily and without legislative change.

*“You could double the funding for RRAPS and you would need no legislative change ... If you doubled the budget for small adaptations to say £4 million maximum, that would be enough for that programme to be administered through one system to access regardless of tenure. So, from a funding stream perspective it’s a lot easier”*

- 10.18 It should also be noted here that the current funding system for housing adaptations was thought to be somewhat misaligned with the social care models developed as a result of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, particularly in terms of promoting outcomes- and needs-based care and encouraging individuals to take more personal responsibility for their wellbeing.

*“The [Social Services and Well-being] Act has changed the conversation with clients, looking more to how people can resolve issues for themselves. What can they do themselves to improve their environment and have they got the resources? So, it’s slightly at odds with how the grants system is*

*structured. ....So, the grants system needs to catch up with policy around outcomes-based and needs-based social care”*

The Welsh Government Service Standards were supported in principle, but are perhaps not as effective as they might be in practice

10.19 The Welsh Government Service Standards were, in principle, supported by interviewees.

*“Regardless of where the funding comes from, similar size adaptations should be delivered in the same timescales. It’s good to push a consistent service standard for time taken, value for money and quality for similar size adaptations”*

10.20 Some positive impacts were noted. One local authority representative suggested they have been helpful in clarifying where professions, such as occupational therapists, need or do not need to get involved in the adaptations process, which has sped it up.

*“We have seen benefits in terms of improvement in the length of time it takes for assessments to happen because we can be clear where to focus our resources on more complex cases rather than standard adaptations”*

10.21 One interviewee, though, suggested that they are insufficiently ambitious, with the potential to drive standards of performance down as opposed to up.

*“Are the standards ambitious enough? The data shows an average of nine months for larger adaptations whereas the standard sets it at 15 months. They should be about pushing performance up and not levelling down. Some organisations don’t deliver but others do, so it’s good to level up to the best performance and not level down to the average or poorest performance. If it’s doable for a housing association to get an OT assessment in three weeks, then anyone should be able to!”*

10.22 The need for data to evidence the extent to which the Standards are having a positive (or indeed negative) impact on performance was thus stressed by this interviewee.

*“All I can say is that the time adaptations take in terms of level of adaption should improve. I would expect to see a levelling up of performance rather*

*than a consistent levelling down to a minimum standard of performance or time it takes to get adaptations of different sizes completed. I'm not convinced Welsh Government have the level of data yet to measure this"*

- 10.23 There was also some concern in the interviews that *"any form of measure or KPI acts as a constraining influence on outcomes"* and that the Standards are too driven by process at the expense of need. Specifically, it was argued that where standards or KPIs exist, most organisations will operate to meet these (allegedly often 'fudging' their figures in order to do so) as opposed to taking a more outcome-based approach that properly meets the needs of those in receipt of the service.

*"People often set timeframes as a benchmark, but things should always be done as quickly as possible. A timeframe is arbitrary, the timeframe should be relevant to need. So, we should be need driven not target driven"*

*"Standards work best if outcomes are what's required. The Service Standards are much more flexible than they previously were but ... they [can] mitigate against a good level of service"*

- 10.24 An example of this might be the measurement of waiting times, which is apparently sometimes undertaken not from the time of an initial application, but from the time an occupational therapist has made their report –often weeks or even months later.

- 10.25 In order to ensure maximum effectiveness, it was said that there is a need for organisations to align their performance measures and reporting framework to the broad Standards to ensure consistency across Wales – and that reporting on standards should match the three key adaptation levels that match different funding thresholds: small, medium and large.

*"There is a broad framework for service standards but there needs to be some measurements on performance aligned with this... we're not there yet. We need these measures to report on KPIs such as the time it takes to deliver a DFG. We need more feedback from Welsh Government on this to develop it further"*

Better pre-assessments of applications were thought to be required

- 10.26 There was a desire for better pre-assessment of applications, with one interviewee suggesting changing the system so it begins with a diagnostic assessment of an individual's potential needs (from an adult social care perspective) prior to signposting them toward possible funding avenues. This, they felt, would help manage people's expectations and provide more outcome-focused solutions.

*"People go direct to housing and have all these high expectations of what they'll get. It's the cart before the horse approach .... People are sitting on a waiting list for funding who might not need it. I think it's a challenge because people go direct to housing and request adaptations and grants and that can sometime set up an expectation that they need an adaptations, but we haven't had a conversation with them at that point ... and that might not be what they really need"*

Information provision for service users is apparently poor

- 10.27 Stakeholder interviewees agreed that the information available to potential beneficiaries about grant funding and eligibility is poor currently – with no clear pathway or process for people to access information.

*"[We have] found that disabled people aren't aware of the right or what their entitled. People don't know what they're eligible for or not"*

- 10.28 The general feeling was that any information provided should be as simple as possible because *"the public don't need to know the complexities behind the system"*. It was suggested that a streamlined, more consistent national process will assist in the ability to provide more streamlined and consistent communications.

- 10.29 There was some feeling, though, that as most beneficiaries are assisted through the application process, information provision may be somewhat unnecessary – and that it is more important to have open and honest conversations about the implications of having home adaptations.

*What there is a need for is to have proper conversations about the implications of having an adaptation. Because it is a big upheaval ...*

- 10.30 As for the practicalities of making an application, the forms for doing so were considered complicated.

*“The predominant issue is that people don’t always have the ability to fill the forms properly. They’re not always straightforward and easy forms and this can sometimes put people off. It can be a huge process and people find it hard to understand the forms and find the correct information. If you’re 80-odd and your husband did all your finances all your life, it can be very difficult for them”*

Process delays are common due to resource pressures, but some good practice exists

- 10.31 The assessment process was described by some stakeholders as often difficult and time-consuming, due to the various ‘hoops’ to be navigated.

*“It is ... difficult to implement ... you’re often relying on searches, surveys, architects and all these things can take a significant length of time”*

- 10.32 The main ‘pinch point’ that causes delays at the assessment stage is a lack of staff to progress applications. More funding was thought to be required to increase delivery capacity, as was a reduction in the burden on occupational therapists (who, it was said, should be reserved for more complex cases only).

*“It needs funding to embed OTs in housing teams, or pay for more OT time but acknowledge that OTs are not always needed ... for small adaptations for example ... Do you really need an OT to tell you where to put a handrail?”*

- 10.33 Some good practice examples were offered around assessments, notably that integrated teams (where they exist) and trusted assessors have resulted in quicker, more aligned and streamlined processes – as well as reduced waiting times as a result of less demand on occupational therapists, whose time is freed up for more complex cases.

*“Housing services is integrated with our adult services team...so the OTs are co-located. They also have links with OTs at the local health authority, so there is an integrated OT service to assist in adaptation assessments. This speeds things up!”*

*“We’ve introduced a trusted assessor role and are training staff to do the assessment roles. They only need staff to level four to do professional assessments for less complex demands to free up OT resources. This helps free up capacity when dealing with small adaptations”*

- 10.34 Moreover, the use of private occupational therapists (at no more cost) is said to have quickened the adaptations process considerably within one housing association.

*“You can circumvent the local authority process which can take epochs ... by going privately ... using qualified OTs and paying them privately so they can do the assessment swiftly”*

- 10.35 There was some concern, though, that trusted assessors are seen in some quarters as replacements for occupational therapists. In this regard it was strongly suggested that the former should be used only in the event of simple adaptations for people with no underlying conditions, and that anything more complex must be assessed by the latter.

*“I think the arguments for trusted assessors are sometimes used to obviate the need for additional occupational therapists. I’ve got nothing against them but only in the right place at the right time ... if it’s a relatively simple adaptation and you can be sure there are no underlying conditions that a properly trained occupational therapist might identify then it’s ok. However, I would not be confident that a trusted assessor would be the answer in every circumstance as occupational therapists will do a proper needs-based assessment and can apply their additional knowledge, qualifications and experience to identify some of the underlying things. Trusted assessors are not replacements for OTs”*

Adapted property registers are thought to be desirable, but rare

- 10.36 One local authority representative identified a gap whereby although they have a register of needs, they do not have a list of accessible/adapted housing stock list to match these needs with availability. To overcome such issues (which are apparently not unique to this authority), it was said that all local providers should join up their registers to speed up the allocation of existing adapted stock – an approach that has apparently been very successful in one Welsh local authority.

*“[Local authority] has the most investment and a number of housing OTs. They have a refined system for the allocation of housing and also around knowledge of adaptations in the stock. You find that, if an organisation has a good idea of its accessible housing register, then its other systems tend to be well developed ...”*

- 10.37 However, the availability of suitable housing stock in the Valleys was highlighted as problematic in terms of allocation – as was the need to meet ‘void standards’ and urgent tenancy needs, which can, it was said, lead to already adapted housing stock being allocated to those who do not need it.

*“It’s challenging because the nature of the housing stock ... in the Valleys there aren’t many easy access houses, ten steps to the front door...”*

*“Where possible we match tenant to property but sometimes the need for a sustainable tenancy overrides the fact a property has been adapted ...”*

The measurement and accommodation of need is apparently ‘flawed’ currently

- 10.38 A few interviewees were of the view that there should be a focus on measuring predicted need, by developing a dataset based on projected population changes and health trends, extrapolated to align with welfare data.

*“We need to match health and ageing data at a local level to model potential need. There is no use planning based on current performance as the impact of removing means testing might dramatically change this. Looking at what we’re paying to do is not as useful as projecting future demand”*

*“Take health and welfare data together with housing data to make a judgement on how many adaptations we need...”*

*“RSLs are starting to provide data to Welsh Government on adaptations, so hopefully the picture of need and impact can improve... This should start giving a better picture of likely need in future, but needs broader work to tie this into health and DWP data sets”*

- 10.39 This was echoed by another interviewee, who described significant gaps in understanding of need currently. They particularly claimed that as ‘refused’ and ‘discontinued’ applications are not recorded, the current data collection process

is flawed in not reflecting 'hidden need'. It is worth noting that, if this is indeed the case, the latent demand may well have implications for the removal of means testing.

*“No-one records enquiries and applications that are refused because of the means testing ... This hides the overall picture of need out there. There are also a huge number of people who don't even approach or apply because they think they won't be eligible.... We also need to measure those who contact and don't get, and those who contact but don't apply”*

10.40 Another interviewee (a local authority representative) was concerned that current funding formulas do not take sufficient account of differing levels of need in different areas as a result of, say, large elderly populations.

*“[Funding] doesn't take into account our very old population, our dementia rates; we have lots of very elderly people whose families live away. We don't have a demographic of young people ... because they can't afford to live here ...”*

10.41 In such areas where budgets are not keeping pace with demand, it was said that providers must make up the shortfalls – which can impact on whether a person gets the 'ideal' or 'next best' adaptation.

*“It influences practice. People know the money is tight, so often people think about what might be second best rather than what would be the optimum for someone...people are not getting the ideal but are getting a service based on what we can afford. It's not fair that this should be different depending on where you live”*

Data collection on impacts and outcomes has historically been poor, but is improving

10.42 In general terms, interviewees argued that while the impacts of adaptations are life changing and the wider cost-benefits evident, these are more difficult to measure.

10.43 Indeed, there was strong desire for better local, regional and national measurement of both need and impact to establish the true cost-benefits of housing adaptations across Wales.

*“It’s hard to tell how well the system delivers against individual needs and how it meets the potential need more broadly.... [Current] data has little consideration for how the adaptations deliver against people’s needs ... The latest adaptations report from Welsh Government is a first step to make things more transparent and establish data on impacts and delivery ... it talks about the costs and the organisations involved as well as tenant or owner satisfaction, but there isn’t anything on the need in Wales and how they delivered against it”*

*“There needs more long-term measuring of impact on the individual. For example, living independently for longer, reducing need for other social or health care in the long-term ... Given the budgets involved, there should be more scrutiny of the impacts of bigger investments on quality of life, value for money and cost benefit...”*

- 10.44 With respect to the need for data, one interviewee highlighted Welsh Government’s relatively new requirement for adaptation data from housing associations, and the consternation this has caused within some organisations due to the effort involved in collating it. They themselves considered it an important exercise though, especially considering the lack of data availability previously.
- 10.45 In terms of measuring impact, interviewees described how questionnaires are given to tenants to measure their satisfaction with the adaptations process, but said the results from these may not reveal the true picture inasmuch as those whose outcomes are good may be reluctant to report a negative process – and that older people generally have lower expectations and are typically reluctant to criticise service provision.
- 10.46 Taking a personal outcomes-based approach from the outset was considered particularly helpful in measuring impacts in a tangible way by participants.

*“We work on a personal outcome basis, so we measure impact in terms of what supports them to have a better life, we revisit whether the outcome has been achieved after the work is done. We tend to phrase things like ‘I want to be able to get upstairs to read my kids a bedtime story, and one of the actions will be to see if we’ve e met this outcome”*

10.47 Indeed, several interviewees advocated an outcomes-based way of working as essential in ensuring sustainable and measurable long-term impacts.

*“If you’ve got six months to do something, you’re going to take six months. But if you’re outcome-centric, if the reason why you’re doing something is because it’s what matters you’ve got a different approach that makes you look at other more cost-effective and sustainable solutions...”*

10.48 In taking a long-term view, particularly around sustainability, a few stakeholder interviewees stressed the need to consider whether an adaptation is the most suitable course of action, or whether it would be more prudent to have ‘difficult’ conversations with individuals around moving to more suitable accommodation that caters to their likely future needs.

*“Maybe we should be looking for people to consider alternative housing if that’s the best thing for them rather than providing adaptations. They might be needed and a quick fix but is it the best long-term and in the bigger picture? In rural parts of Wales for example, can you adapt a farmhouse, can you get carers there around the clock, and is it better to house that person nearer to the staff and resources?”*

10.49 In this context, more consideration to and funding for lifetime homes was suggested in order to future-proof housing for occupiers, and so reduce the need for costly adaptations.

Collaboration and joint working is essential, but apparently patchy

10.50 Several stakeholder interviewees described how they work closely not only with each other, but also with other organisations delivering adaptations across Wales. However, most acknowledged that more must be done in this area.

10.51 In terms of good practice, one local authority has developed a home improvement agency to work with all partners in the county. This model of service is paid for by using 10% of the grants to cover the costs, and includes drawing up plans, project management and quality assurance.

*“We employ a technical officer to oversee the plans and check the quality of work and liaise with contractors etc. The agency service acts as a go-between clients and contractors and funders, reviews performance and*

*inputs this on a contractor grading system. We use staged payments and periodic reviews to ensure value for money, that it meets the needs of the person and the work is of quality”*

10.52 Moreover, the same local authority has two regional adaptation groups that sit to develop joint-working and share good practice – which in their area includes furthering the use of trusted assessors, procuring from a single framework of contractors and a single point of access for applications.

10.53 Although interviewees noted that progress has been made in collaboration and joint-working, further effort was thought to be needed in aligning the priorities of social care and housing departments within local authorities. One noted example (also highlighted earlier in this chapter) was that the latter tend to wish to go down the adaptations route far sooner than the former, who view this very much as a “last resort”.

*“We work closely with housing but often they don’t come from [the same] perspective. There’s a misalignment of social services policy and the current grants system. The funding system feels at odds with that policy because we have a different solution now... adaptations should always just be a last resort. Adaptations take time and aren’t a quick fix. The equipment to support people has improved and is less costly and less intrusive to try first. Housing colleagues want to go down the adaptation route, but it isn’t always the best thing ... ”*

10.54 One area in which greater collaboration was thought to be needed is around the use of small adaptations grants for speeding up hospital release. While this was considered positive, one participant (from a local authority) urged caution and better collaboration when undertaking assessments to ensure maximum independence and thus effectiveness for recipients.

*“I’d like to work more closely with organisations like Care & Repair to develop a more combined ethos. Welsh Government have given Care & Repair money to go into the hospital, well it’s not that useful to do that without collaborating with us. There is a tendency to see an adaptation as the first line but we don’t, the first line is to get them to be independent; a piece of equipment is the second line of intervention ... .....We want to*

*get people out of hospitals, but the solutions aren't as holistically thought through as they could be"*

- 10.55 A housing association representative suggested that they and their fellow providers could develop opportunities for joint working whereby larger housing associations offer their services to smaller ones to assess, design and install adaptations for residents. It was said that both Welsh Government and Community Housing Cymru (CHC) have a role to play in facilitating links to enable this.

*"More integrated working is needed between social care, health and housing ... There needs to be funding to look at how this is or isn't happening ... do a review of the extent to which these systems are working locally, or not"*

There is a need to share good practice

- 10.56 Finally, interviewees agreed that sharing good practice remains a requirement, proposing that *"we need a compendium of good practice to share across Wales..."*:

## **11. Annex C: Interview Topic Guides**

### **Topic Guide Stakeholder Scoping interviews (Draft)**

#### **Introduction**

- 1. Can you tell me a little about your organisation and role?**
- 2. Can you tell me a little about your organisation's involvement in delivering housing adaptations and allocating funding?**

*[Probe: What sector(s) are you involved with? How long have you been involved?]*

- a) What part of the process do you manage/work in (e.g. processing applications, allocating funds, advice, grants, building/adaptations, overseeing and or delivering building work, all)?
- b) What other organisations, if any, are you working alongside?

*Which Welsh Government grant programme funds the adaptations you provide?*

*Does your organisation fund adaptations from your own resources?*

*Do you know how the amount of funding your organisation receives is calculated?*

*Do you work with: Owner occupiers? Tenants in the private rented sector? Tenants in the social sector?*

#### **General views of the current system for allocating funding**

- 3. Overall, to what extent do you think the current system for allocating funding for adaptations is sufficiently designed to meet the needs of older and disabled people in Wales?**

*[Probe: What words would you use to describe the current system of grants and allocation of funding for adaptations to a home?]*

- a) What are the key strengths and/or weaknesses of the current system?
  - i. How might the weaknesses be addressed?

- 4. How far, in your view, does the current system ensure equitable access to funding for adaptations to a home?**

*[Probe: To what extent is there a consistent system and standards for the allocations of grants?]*

- a) How, if at all, do other factors influence the service?  
*[Probe for: location; size of adaptation needed; organisation/public body involved]*
- b) What improvements, if any, are needed to address the issues you've raised?

**5. Overall, how would you assess the use of the Welsh Government Service Standards?**

- a) do they support organisations to use a consistent approach to provide services for home adaptations?
- b) If it is inconsistent, what is needed to rectify this?  
*[Probe: how should the WG enhance the use of the service standards across all organisations delivering adaptations in Wales? What impacts might this have? Positive/negative?]*

**Access to funds**

**6. What is your view on the funding streams currently available to allocate money for home adaptations?**

- a) To what extent, or not, does the number of different funding streams available in the current structure complicate the system?  
*[Probe: Difficult to implement? Complex to administer? Confusing for beneficiaries? Defining aids and adaptations? Defining customer need or characteristics? Available to people of certain tenures?]*

**Information on different funding streams:**

*Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) paid to local authorities for owner occupiers, private rented tenants/landlords and some social housing tenants*

*ENABLE; paid to local authorities for owner occupiers, private rented tenants/landlords and some social housing tenants*

*Physical Adaptation Grants (PAGs) for tenants of traditional and community-based housing associations*

*Rapid Response Adaptation Programme for owner occupiers and private rented tenants/landlords*

*Adaptations for local-authority and LSVT housing-association tenants funded from maintenance programmes*

*Adaptations for some housing-association tenants funded by their landlord from their maintenance programme to supplement PAGs*

*Integrated Care Fund used to fund housing adaptations in some regions.*

**7. What is your view on the effectiveness of information to potential beneficiaries about grants funding and eligibility?**

a) If poor – what is needed to address this?

*[Probe: better information/advertising of grants and funding to raise awareness of availability; better quality information; better planning and communication across Health, Social Care and Housing strategic bodies?]*

**Applications process**

**8. What are your views on the speed and efficiency of the application process?**

a) What systems do you have in place for approving applications for funding for adaptations?

b) To what extent are these consistent with other organisations providing similar services in Wales?

c) What are the main challenges? How can these be overcome?

**9. What are your views on the speed and efficiency of approving applications for funding for adaptations?**

a) In your view, what are the factors driving this?

b) What systems do you have in place for approving applications for funding?

c) To what extent are these consistent with other organisations providing similar services in Wales?

d) What are the main challenges? How can these be overcome?

*[Probe: Views on continuation of means testing for DFGs? Views on streamlining PAG approval process?]*

## Allocating funds

### 10. What are your views on the speed and efficiency of the allocation processes?

*[Probe: Any delaying factors (e.g. availability of occupation therapists, sufficient funding, timing of funding?)]*

a) If there are delays, what are the impacts of these?

*[Probe: On householders, tenants, on organisations? Are there equal opportunities for people across tenures?]*

b) What might be done to address the issues you've raised?

*[Probe: Views on using trusted assessors in the assessment process? Views on keeping lists of already adapted housing stock-make better use of it? Improving equal opportunities?]*

## Delivering adaptations

### 11. What are your views on how the delivery of adaptations is overseen and evaluated once approved?

*[Probe: How is the quality of the contractor work monitored and performance reviewed e.g. value for money? In your organisation, regional and national level?]*

### 12. What changes or improvements, would you propose to improve the delivery of adaptations where needed?

*[Probe: Views on setting up an approved contractor/supplier list, how would these feed into the national allocation?]*

## Benefits and impacts

### 13. In your view, what impact has funding for home adaptations had on meeting the needs of elderly and disabled people in Wales?

*[Probe: In what areas are the impacts greatest? In what areas has there been least impact?]*

### 14. To what extent, if any, does the system for allocating grant for adaptations lead to cost benefits in other areas?

*[Probe: If it does, in which areas are the benefits being realised? If not, what are the main obstacles to maximising these benefits? Do they have plans or systems in place to measuring cost benefits?]*

**15. What systems are in place to measure and evaluate whether funding is making a difference where it is needed the most?**

- a) What performance indicator data is collected and shared by your organisation?
- b) How, if at all, does this data feed into national datasets to provide an overall Wales picture? Can this be improved, if so, how?

*Performance indicator data is only currently published for Disabled Facilities Grants provided by local authorities, so it is not possible to compare performance across all delivery organisation.*

*The National Performance Indicator for Disabled Facilities Grants shows a reduction in the average length of time taken to complete adaptations, but the methodology is not robust and the Performance Indicator needs updating.*

*The Welsh Government, through the 'Enable' monitoring system, is addressing performance reporting weaknesses, but the new system has some gaps.*

**16. What changes, if any, would you wish to see around how the impact of funding for home adaptations is evaluated and evidenced?**

**Collaborative approaches and good practice**

**17. What opportunities, if any, exist to maximise the benefits of joint working between the organisations involved in funding/facilitating housing adaptations?**

*[Probe: Pooling resources; integrated single teams; co-locations of health, social services and housing teams?]*

**18. What examples of joint working already exist?**

- a) What impacts, if any, does this have on service delivery and performance?
- b) How, if at all, might it be improved?

**19. What, if any, examples of good practice are there that could help WG shape the future of funding allocations for home adaptations in future?**

*[Probe: Within your organisation; pan organisational; at Policy/WG level? Who is taking the lead in driving these improvements/changes?]*

### Summing up

**20. What concluding messages you would like to provide to WG to help guide this research? Anything else we've not discussed that is important to mention?**

## Topic Guide Service User Interviews (Draft)

### Introduction

**1. Can you tell me a little about yourself and why you needed an adaptation?**

*[Probe: age band; location tenure; number of people in the household; disability]*

a) Who, if anyone, told you about the adaptations that might be available to you?

a. If no-one, how did you find out?

b. Did you have any help to explore what adaptations might be available to you?

c. What are your views on the information available to people who are looking into adaptations?

*[Probe: actual and preferred formats (i.e. face-to-face, telephone, print copies etc.)]*

b) What type of adaptation did you receive?

*'Small' adaptations include: grab/hand rails (indoor and outdoor); stair rails; small ramps; accessible taps; key safes; external/staircase lights; extra electrical sockets*

*'Medium' adaptations include: walk-in showers; stairlifts; large ramps*

*'Large' adaptations include: extensions; lifts; structural modifications (e.g. relocation of kitchen/bathroom)*

### Applying for an adaptation

**2. Can you tell me how you went about applying for funding towards the adaptation?**

b) Can you remember who you applied to?

c) Do you know which, if any, funding pot you applied to?

*Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs): paid to local authorities for owner occupiers, private rented tenants/landlords and some social housing tenants*

*ENABLE: paid to local authorities: for owner occupiers, private rented tenants/landlords and some social housing tenants*

*Physical Adaptation Grants (PAGs): for tenants of traditional and community-based housing associations*

*Rapid Response Adaptation Programme: for owner occupiers and private rented tenants/landlords*

*Adaptations for local-authority and LSVT housing-association tenants funded from maintenance programmes*

*Adaptations for some housing-association tenants funded by their landlord from their maintenance programme to supplement PAGs*

*Integrated Care Fund used to fund housing adaptations in some regions*

**Self-funded**

d) Did anyone help you with your application?

**IF YES...**

- i. Who helped you?
- ii. What did they help you with?
- iii. What, if any, benefits did this have?
- iv. How, if at all, could the help you had have been improved?

**IF NO...**

- i. What, if any help, might have you have benefited from? How?

e) How long did it take to get the funding application approved?

f) Overall, how did you find the process of applying for an adaptation?

- i. What were the main positives? [*Probe: simplicity; efficiency; speed*]
- ii. What were the main barriers? [*Probe: complexity; inefficiency; delays*]

- What impact did they have on you?
- How might they have been overcome?

### Being assessed for an adaptation

#### 3. Did you have an assessment to see if you were eligible for funding for an adaptation?

##### IF YES...

a) Who did the assessment?

*[Probe: occupational therapist, trusted assessor]*

b) How long did you have to wait for an assessment?

c) Overall, how did you find the process of having an assessment?

i. What were the main positives? *[Probe: simplicity; efficiency; speed]*

ii. What, if any barriers or difficulties were there at this stage?

iii. How might these have been overcome? *[Probe: complexity; inefficiency; delays]*

d) Following your assessment, how long did it take to find out whether you were successful or not? How do you feel about this?

##### IF NO...

a) Did you receive an explanation as to why? What did you think of this explanation?

### Getting funding for an adaptation

#### 4. As a result of your application/assessment, did you get funding towards your adaptation?

##### IF YES...

a) How did this benefit you?

##### IF NO...

b) What implications did this have?

- c) Did you receive an explanation as to why? What did you think of this explanation?

**5. Did you have to undergo a ‘means test’ for the funding?**

**IF YES...**

- a) What was the outcome of this test?  
*[Probe: whether they were asked to make a contribution and, if so, what was the split?]*
- b) Overall, how did you find the means testing process?
  - i. How, if at all, might it have been improved?

**Having the adaptation installed**

**6. How was the process of having your adaptation installed?**

**7. What, if any, were the main positives?** *[Probe: simplicity; efficiency; speed; quality]*

**8. What, if any, were the main negatives?** *[Probe: complexity; inefficiency; delays; quality]*

- a. What impact did they have on you?
- b. How might they have been overcome?

**Impacts of the adaptation**

**9. Has anyone been to assess the quality of your adaptation?**

- a. If you know, what was the result of that assessment?

**10. Has your adaptation had the impact you hoped it would?**

*[Probe: immediate needs; medium-term needs; long-term needs]*

**IF YES...**

- a. What have been the main benefits for you?
- b. Who, if anyone, has been to assess/measure whether the adaptation meets your needs?
  - i. If you know, what was the result of that assessment?

## **IF NO...**

- a. Why do you say this?
- b. What implications has this had for you?
- c. What, if anything, could have been done differently for a more positive impact?

## **Summing up**

### **11. Overall...**

- a. What (if any) are the main strengths/positives of the process for getting an adaptation?
- b. What (if any) are the main weaknesses/negatives of the process for getting an adaptation?
- c. What (if any) are the main improvements needed?

### **12. To what extent has the Covid-19 crisis had any impact on the process of you having your adaptation?**

## 12. Annex D: Stakeholder Participants

Care & Repair Cymru;	Taff Housing Association
Community Housing Cymru;	Tai Pawb;
Carmarthenshire County Council;	Tai Tarian
Ceredigion County Council;	TPAS Cymru
First Choice Housing Association	Trivallis
Hafod Housing	Valleys to Coast Housing
Linc Cymru	Wales & West Housing Association
McCarthy and Stone	Welsh Government
Melin Homes	Welsh Local Government Association
Rhondda Housing Association	
Royal College of Occupational Therapists	

### 13. Annex E: Variables Used for the Data Analysis

Date of birth	Overall cost of works, including VAT
Housing tenure	Whether a means test was carried out
Source of referral	Applicant financial contribution required – and value if so
Provider/deliverer	Source of funding given
Category of adaptation	Predicted outcomes
Date of first contact	Service users views on whether the adaptation/installation has given them increased independence; reduced their need for care; and improved their well-being; and
Date of initial assessment	Customer satisfaction score.
Date the need for adaptation identified	
Date referral/recommendation received by housing	
Date adaptation/grant applied for and date approved	
Date adaptation/s ready for use	

## 14. Annex F: Defining Local Authority Areas

6.1 The defined local authority areas are shown below.

**Table 1 (Annex F): Defined Local Authority Areas**

<b>Local authority area</b>	<b>Organisations within local authority area</b>
Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly	Local authority - Blaenau Gwent Local authority – Caerphilly Care & Repair - Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly
Bridgend	Local authority data missing Care & Repair – Bridgend Housing association - Valleys to Coast
Cardiff and Vale of Glamorgan	Local authority – Cardiff Local authority - Vale of Glamorgan Care & Repair - Cardiff and the Vale Housing association - Cardiff Community
Carmarthenshire	Local authority – Carmarthenshire Care & Repair - Carmarthenshire Ltd
Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire	Local authority – Ceredigion Local authority – Pembrokeshire Care & Repair - West Wales Housing association - Tai Ceredigion
Conwy and Denbighshire	Local authority – Conwy Local authority – Denbighshire Care & Repair - Conwy and Denbighshire Housing association - Cartrefi Conwy
Flintshire	Local authority – Flintshire Care & Repair - North East Wales (Covers Flintshire and Wrexham and therefore cannot be assigned to Flintshire alone, nor to a Flintshire and Wrexham area as data for Wrexham is missing)
Gwynedd and Isle of Anglesey	Local authority – Gwynedd Local authority - Isle of Anglesey Care & Repair - Canllaw (Eryri) Cyf
Merthyr Tydfil	Local authority data missing

Monmouthshire and Torfaen	Local authority – Monmouthshire Local authority – Torfaen Care & Repair - Monmouthshire and Torfaen Housing association - Monmouthshire HA
Neath Port Talbot and Swansea	Local authority - Neath Port Talbot Local authority – Swansea Care & Repair - Western Bay
Newport	Local authority – Newport Care & Repair – Newport
Powys	Local authority – Powys Care & Repair – Powys
Rhondda Cynon Taf	Local authority - Rhondda Cynon Taf Care & Repair - Cwmtaf Housing association - Rhondda HA
Wrexham	Local authority data missing

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Source: Welsh Government, Care & Repair and Housing Associations websites

- 6.2 The following housing associations work in several local authorities and it is not possible to assign the works carried out by them to a single defined local authority area. These are labelled as ‘unassigned’.
- 6.3 All adaptations through North East Wales Care & Repair are unassigned in the data. This limits the comparability of Flintshire throughout the analysis as adaptations delivered by Care & Repair agencies in the other local authority areas are counted.

**Table 2 (Annex F): Unassigned Housing Associations**

<b>Housing association</b>	<b>Local authorities where housing associations are active</b>
Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd (Now Adra)	Conwy, Denbighshire, Gwynedd, Wrexham
First Choice (Learning Disabilities only)	Several
Grŵp Cynefin Linc-Cymru	6 North Wales local authorities and North Powys areas Blaenau Gwent, Cardiff, Newport, Torfaen, Caerphilly, Bridgend
Melin Homes	Blaenau Gwent, Monmouthshire, Newport, Powys, Torfaen
Mid-Wales Housing Newydd	Powys and Ceredigion Mid and South Wales
Pembrokeshire Pobl Group	Carmarthenshire, Ceredigion and Pembrokeshire several areas - Caerphilly, Newport and Swansea? no clear list
United Welsh	11 local authorities
Wales and West	15 local authorities

Source: Welsh Government, Housing Associations websites

## 15. Annex G: Summary assessment of how well funding streams meet their aims

The table below lays out a summary of results using four indicators to assess how well each funding stream meets its stated aims. This is intended to be an ‘at a glance’ overview rather than a full assessment. The indicators were selected to cover a range of factors using a small set of indicators to allow a quick and simple comparison: cost; client group served; speed of delivery; and quality (using the measure of increased independence which is a comparatively concrete measure compared to other qualitative performance measures such as satisfaction). More detailed analysis of these and several other factors follows below.

	<b>Median cost per adaptation (£)</b>	<b>Adaptations by age groups</b>	<b>Median number of days between need being identified and adaptation ready for use</b>	<b>Has the adaptation increased your independence</b>
WG (ENABLE)	£146 Low median cost in line with aim to provide small adaptations	Predominantly older people: 87% are 65 and over	13 days  Customer interviews suggest they consider this length of time acceptable, though the interviewees tended to be satisfied customers.	99% strongly agree or tend to agree
WG (PAG)	£3,570 High median cost appropriate as PAG deals with larger adaptations	Spread approximately evenly across age groups. Younger people who need adaptations are more likely to require medium or large adaptations	119 days.  Dependent on the complexity of the work. PAG varies from 1 day to over 3 years. The stakeholder workshops shed light on factors such as complex building work and family situations	96% strongly agree or tend to agree

	<b>Median cost per adaptation (£)</b>	<b>Adaptations by age groups</b>	<b>Median number of days between need being identified and adaptation ready for use</b> which delay work.	<b>Has the adaptation increased your independence</b>
LA Funding (DFG)	£3,780 High median cost appropriate as DFG deals with larger adaptations	While 72% are age 65 that a significant proportion of clients – over a quarter - are under 65. There were 4,135 adaptations by DFG compared to 717 via PAG so DFG delivers a larger number to younger people than PAG	99 days Dependent on the complexity of the work. DFG varies from 1 day to 4 years 9 months. The stakeholder workshops shed light on factors such as complex building work and family situations which delay work.	99% strongly agree or tend to agree
LA Funding (Other)	£135 This is appropriate considering the funding stream focus on older people taken alongside larger adaptations for older people being provided through DFG	Predominantly older people. 77% are age 65 and over	16 days Dependent on the complexity of the work. Varies from 1 day to over 3 years. The stakeholder workshops shed light on factors such as complex building work and family situations which delay work.	97% strongly agree or tend to agree
RRAP	£96 Low median cost in line with aim of rapid response	93% are age 65 and over. This is appropriate given the aim of return home and quick preventative works.	7 days Customer interviews suggest they consider this length of time acceptable.	97% strongly agree or tend to agree

	<b>Median cost per adaptation (£)</b>	<b>Adaptations by age groups</b>	<b>Median number of days between need being identified and adaptation ready for use</b>	<b>Has the adaptation increased your independence</b>
			RRAP does not? There may be necessary processes that delay RRAP to ensure the most appropriate adaptations are delivered.	
ICF	£90  Low median cost in line with aim to prevent admission and enable hospital discharge	93% aged 65 and over. In line with the focus of ICF on older people with the aim to prevent admission and enable hospital discharge	4 days  Customer interviews suggest they consider this length of time acceptable.	100% strongly agree or tend to agree
Traditional RSL Funding	£91	52% under age 65	18 days  Considerably longer than other funding streams with a similar median cost.	67% strongly agree or tend to agree. 33% strongly disagree
LSVT funding	£171	65% age 65 and over.	21 days	93% strongly agree or tend to agree
Other (all 'Other')	£138	84% aged 65 and over	9 days	100% strongly agree or tend to agree
All	£130	83% aged 65 and over	13 days	98% strongly agree or tend to agree

Source: Data and analysis in the body of this report

## 16. Annex H: Breakdown of costs by funding stream and size of adaptation

<b>WG (ENABLE)</b>	<b>Small</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Large</b>	<b>Total</b>
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Cost (£)	1,209,204	1,373,755	85,566	2,668,525
Mean (£)	251	2,781	7,131	-
Median (£)	120	2,285	5,336	-
Mode (£)	98	825	8,828	-
Least expensive (£)	3	53	325	-
Most expensive (£)	6,265	11,220	32,195	-
Number of adaptations	4,816	494	12	5,322
Percent of total cost	45%	51%	3%	100%

<b>WG (PAG)</b>	<b>Small</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Large</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cost (£)	79,899	2,353,991	984,871	3,418,762
Mean (£)	423	5,117	14,483	-
Median (£)	180	4,450	10,923	-
Mode (£)	168	2,281	N/A	-
Least expensive (£)	40	100	4,071	-
Most expensive (£)	9,439	37,260	78,247	-
Number of adaptations	189	460	68	717
Percent of total cost	2%	69%	29%	100%

<b>LA Funding (DFG)</b>	<b>Small</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Large</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cost (£)	731,675	12,424,235	4,837,976	17,993,886
Mean (£)	488	5,627	17,985	-
Median (£)	150	5,283	13,943	-
Mode (£)	96	2,927	36,000	-
Least expensive (£)	3	130	3,329	-
Most expensive (£)	26,263	35,912	109,279	-
Number of adaptations	1,500	2,208	269	3,977
Percent of total cost	4%	69%	27%	100%

<b>LA Funding (Other)</b>	<b>Small</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Large</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cost (£)	1,212,988	2,155,552	586,068	3,954,608
Mean (£)	195	3,905	18,905	-
Median (£)	120	3,498	11,810	-
Mode (£)	96	2,802	N/A	-
Least expensive (£)	3	67	5,186	-
Most expensive (£)	16,739	15,525	64,144	-
Number of adaptations	6,227	552	31	6,810
Percent of total cost	31%	55%	15%	100%

<b>RRAP</b>	<b>Small</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Large</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cost (£)	1,297,228	-	-	1,297,228
Mean (£)	126	-	-	-
Median (£)	96	-	-	-
Mode (£)	90	N/A	N/A	-
Least expensive (£)	1	-	-	-
Most expensive (£)	894	-	-	-
Number of adaptations	10,329	-	-	10,329
Percent of total cost	100%	0%	0%	100%

<b>ICF</b>	<b>Small</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Large</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cost (£)	130,648	-	-	130,648
Mean (£)	132	-	-	-
Median (£)	90	-	-	-
Mode (£)	90	N/A	N/A	-
Least expensive (£)	30	-	-	-
Most expensive (£)	1,167	-	-	-
Number of adaptations	989	-	-	989
Percent of total cost	100%	0%	0%	100%

<b>Traditional RSL Funding</b>	<b>Small</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Large</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cost (£)	22,243	2,869	-	25,112
Mean (£)	117	1,434	-	-
Median (£)	91	1,434	-	-
Mode (£)	101	N/A	N/A	-
Least expensive (£)	18	1,187	-	-
Most expensive (£)	823	1,682	-	-
Number of adaptations	190	2	-	192
Percent of total cost	89%	11%	0%	100%

<b>LSVT funding</b>	<b>Small</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Large</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cost (£)	140,973	601,985	123,694	866,652
Mean (£)	230	2,853	8,246	-
Median (£)	103	2,837	5,073	-
Mode (£)	41	5,500	N/A	-
Least expensive (£)	6	89	1,250	-
Most expensive (£)	13,920	10,579	21,186	-
Number of adaptations	614	211	15	840
Percent of total cost	16%	69%	14%	100%
<b>Percent of total cost all</b>	<b>Small</b>	<b>Medium</b>	<b>Large</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cost (£)	4,824,858	18,912,386	6,618,175	30,355,420
Percent of total cost	16%	62%	22%	100%