

Subject:	Pilot of Level Access Shower Installations: Update		
Date of Meeting:	4 March 2015		
Report of:	Executive Director of Environment, Development & Housing		
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Ward(s) affected:	All		

FOR GENERAL RELEASE

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT AND POLICY CONTEXT

- 1.1 In March 2014 a report to review the Brighton & Hove (Property) Standard came to Housing Committee. The report included an approved recommendation to run a 12 month pilot enabling one bed ground floor flats that become empty and require a bathroom replacement, to be considered for the installation of a level access shower instead of a bath.
- 1.2 As requested by Housing Committee, this report provides an update following the pilot.

2. RECOMMENDATION:

- 2.1 To note the positive impact this pilot has had, in terms of increasing the number of accessible council owned properties for people in housing need in Brighton & Hove.
- 2.2 To continue to proactively deliver the installation of level access showers by identifying suitable one bedroom ground floor properties when they become empty.

3. CONTEXT/ BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 3.1 This pilot was introduced as part of the review of the Brighton & Hove (Property) Standard, with the aim of increasing the number of properties within the council owned housing stock that are suitable for people with mobility difficulties.
- 3.2 On 10 September 2014 a recommendation was approved by Housing Committee to introduce an Adaptations Policy for council owned and managed properties. It is appropriate to consider including this area of work within that policy.

4. RESULTS OF PILOT

4.1 The table below provides information for all nine properties identified as suitable for the installation of level access showers to date. Three of these properties have been successfully re-let to tenants with accessibility requirements, four have become empty recently and empty property works are underway and one is advertised in Homemove for re-letting (at time of writing this report 16 Feb 2015).

Ward	Total calendar days empty	Number of Homemove bids	Time on waiting list of person re-housed	General repair cost to re-let(excl. shower)	Cost of adaptations to property
Moulsecomb & Bevendean	45 days	65 bids	Band C May 2010	£986	£3540
Moulsecomb & Bevendean	21 days	97 bids	Band B August 2012	£1600	£3623
Queens Park	10 days	198 bids	Band A May 2014	£1411	£3322
North Portslade	Empty	Empty homes work underway			
East Brighton	Empty	Currently advertised in Homemove			
Hangleton & Knoll	Empty	Empty homes work underway			
Goldsmid	Empty	Empty homes work underway			
Hollingdean & Stanmer	Empty	Empty homes work underway			

4.2 It was anticipated that up to 15 properties a year would become available and be suitable for this work. There were a total of 81 one bedroom ground floor flats that were re-let during the period of this pilot. Of these, eight properties were actually suitable for the installation of a level access shower and categorisation as a Mobility 3 rated property. There are a number of factors that affect the mobility rating of a property including the property itself, the location of the property and local amenities and transport links. In order to adequately support tenants with a disability, level access showers were only installed in properties that would be suitable for a disabled tenant.

4.3 It was anticipated there would be no increase in the general repair costs to empty properties, and acknowledged that installing a level access shower would be more expensive than simply replacing a bath or carrying out repair work. However in many cases new tenants move into properties without adaptations and subsequently contact the council through Access Point and request adaptations such as level access showers. Details of the cost of installing level access showers in each of the eight properties is included in the table at 4.1.

- 4.4 Two of the properties that were re-let during the pilot were let to people that have been on the waiting list for a considerable time (two years and five years). The three properties that have been successfully re-let were empty for an average of 25 days, compared to similar properties citywide that were empty for an average of 21 days indicating there is a demand for properties with level access showers and that the pilot has successfully provided accommodation for individuals that were not previously in suitable accommodation.
- 4.5 The residents of both these properties have not made a subsequent request to Housing Adaptations for assessment for further adaptations indicating that the level access shower met their mobility requirements.
- 4.6 All eight of the properties identified have been advertised with a Mobility 3 category. This means that people with a mobility need will be prioritised for shortlisting.

5. COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT & CONSULTATION

- 5.1 This report was presented to tenant representatives at the Area Panel meetings held during January and February 2015 and was well received. There were a number of queries and comments from members of Area Panels and reassurance was provided on the following:
- 5.2 East Area Panel
- Question: The ground floor flats in Craven Vale can only be accessed by numerous steps, would level access showers be placed here?
 - Response: Only properties that meet the Mobility 3 criteria for Homemove would be considered for the installation.
 - Comment: "It seems a good idea to me"
 - Comment: Confirmation that it is not a wet room but a level access shower being installed and what the difference is.
 - Question: How many properties will benefit from the scheme?
 - Response: Across the city there will be 15 to 17 properties that will benefit.
- 5.3 North Area Panel
- Question: Will this include installation of wet rooms?
 - Response: Wet rooms will not be installed as part of this scheme, due to the scale and cost of work impacting budget and length of time the property remains empty.
 - Comment: "Level access showers in sheltered accommodation have supported residents to live independently."
- 5.4 West Area Panel
- Question: What will happen when the properties become void?

- Response: When the property becomes empty again, it will be re-advertised in Homemove as a Mobility 3 property – the shower will be retained.
- Question: Will the issue be discussed with Tenant Disability Network (TDN) because they have done some work with Housing Adaptations around proactively identifying areas of the city that lend themselves to being accessible properties?
- Response: Janine to pass details to a colleague working on a policy in this area.

5.5 Central Area Panel

- Question: Does the work mean the property is empty for longer?
- Response: The installation work does meet the targets for repair time and therefore is not expected to negatively impact on the total time the property is empty.

6. CONCLUSION

- 6.1 Installing level access showers in empty properties has not negatively impacted on the time the property remained empty or the time it took to complete the work. Although the pilot has involved a small number of properties they have all been completed within reasonable times and some have been let quicker than properties without these adaptations.
- 6.2 Financial control will occur via budget setting and established Targeted Budget Management processes to ensure that the empty property repairs budgets and bathroom installations budgets are not adversely impacted.
- 6.3 Adopting this as a policy will continue to enable our residents to live independently whilst offering increased value for money for the Housing Revenue Account and providing a good customer experience.

7. FINANCIAL & OTHER IMPLICATIONS:

7.1 Financial Implications:

- 7.1.1 It is estimated that eight level access showers will be installed as a result of this project during 2014/15. These costs will be met from the HRA Capital Programme for 2014/15. This scheme should achieve good value for money as the costs of the adaptations is likely to have occurred anyway and possibly in a property that would not be 'Mob 3' compliant.
- 7.1.2 For 2015/16, it is estimated there will be 15 level access showers fitted at an estimated cost of £0.053 million. This will be funded from within the HRA Capital Programme 2015-18 and is in addition to the £1.150 million adaptations budget held within the HRA. Adding this scheme into the adaptations policy for tenants, will help to ensure the adaptations budget for the HRA is managed effectively.

Finance Officer Consulted: Name Monica Brooks Date: 18/2/2015

7.2 Legal Implications:

7.2.1 There are no significant legal implications arising from recommendation 2.2.

Lawyer Consulted: Name Liz Woodley Date: 16/02/2015

7.3 Crime & Disorder Implications

7.3.1 None identified at this stage.

7.4 Sustainability Implications

7.4.1 Mears Group deliver adaptations work across the city to council owned properties (via Housing Adaptations & Occupational Therapy) and installing level access showers into empty properties will ensure the consistency of a quality product.

7.4.2 Carrying out this work when the property is empty means the installation process is efficient and delivers increased customer service as there is no disruption for the resident.

7.5 Risk & Opportunity Management

7.5.1 None identified at this time.

7.6 Public Health Implications

7.6.1 Supports residents living independently at home in accommodation that is suitable for their individual needs.

7.7 Corporate/ Citywide Implications

7.7.1 Addresses a specific housing need by increasing the supply of accessible homes within the city.

