

Housing Adaptations

Monmouthshire County Council

July 2026



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Audit snapshot

What we looked at

- 1 Around 15 years ago, Monmouthshire County Council (the Council), like many other Welsh councils, transferred its housing stock to housing associations for them to manage. This means the process of delivering an adaptation to a home is different for people living in housing association properties compared to home-owners and people living in private rented homes.
- 2 We looked at how the Council provides housing adaptations for children, young people and adults living in their own homes and in private rented homes. We reviewed the Council's approach, delivery and monitoring arrangements.

Why this is important

- 3 Housing adaptations are changes to a home that make it easier for people to get around or do everyday tasks. They can help prevent falls or reduce or mitigate the need for formal care and unnecessary admissions to care settings. Examples of housing adaptations might include:
 - installing ramps or grab rails;
 - adding a stairlift or wheelchair lift;
 - fitting a level access shower or shower seat; and
 - widening doorways for wheelchair access.
- 4 The Council assesses people's needs to decide if they are eligible for support. If they are, the Council has a legal duty to arrange or provide services, such as home adaptations or equipment to help vulnerable people stay at home.

- 5 Audit Wales previously reported on Housing Adaptations in 2018. We found an overly complicated system which reinforced, rather than addressed, inequality in provision of adaptations.

What we have found

- 6 The Council delivers an effective preventative housing adaptations service with strong operational arrangements. However, improvements are needed to strengthen corporate oversight and improve the strategic use of data to address workforce risks and support longer-term planning.

What we recommend

- 7 We have made two recommendations. The Council should strengthen corporate oversight of the housing adaptations service by improving reporting to members on the service's performance, value and impact. It should also develop a workforce plan to better understand resilience risks and support the timely delivery of adaptations.

Key facts and figures

The average number of days to complete a Disabled Facilities Grant in Monmouthshire:

- 2023-24: 195 days
- 2024-25: 329 days
- 2025-26: 178 days

The number of Monmouthshire Adaptation Grants completed by the Council was:

- 60 in 2023-24
- 37 in 2024-25
- 55 in 2025-26

The number of Disabled Facilities Grants completed by the Council was:

- 7 in 2023-24
- 4 in 2024-25
- 2 in 2025-26

The combined number of DFGs and MAGs completed by the Council was:

- 67 in 2023-24
- 41 in 2024-25
- 57 in 2025-26

The average cost of delivering a DFG and MAG in Monmouthshire was:

- 2023-24: £ 13,268.52
- 2024-25: £ 7,366.73
- 2025-26: £ 6,069.16

The core budget for housing adaptations has remained at approximately £900,000 for several years.

Responses to the Council's housing adaptations customer satisfaction surveys issued between 2025 and 2026 show that:

- 100% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the support provided by Council officers;
- 88% of respondents were either satisfied or very satisfied with the length of time it took to provide the adaptation;
- 73% of respondents strongly agreed that their quality of life has improved;
- 69% of respondents strongly agreed that they feel more confident and/or independent.

Our findings

What is working well

Integrated approach to housing adaptations

- 8 The Council has strong arrangements for delivering housing adaptations, supported by the move of the housing adaptations team from Housing into Social Services. This has strengthened links with wider preventative services. Staff and leaders see adaptations as a preventative service that helps people stay independent, live with dignity and return home safely from hospital or care.
- 9 The service makes good use of its Trusted Assessors model.¹ Under this model, Care & Repair assesses and installs minor adaptations costing up to £1,000. These include grab rails, small ramps and handrails. Using Care & Repair in this way reduces pressure on occupational therapists and surveyors and supports timely installation of low-risk adaptations.
- 10 In practice, social care teams work closely together to deliver housing adaptations. Staff are co-located with health teams and, in some areas, based on health sites. This includes Community Occupational Therapists, the Community Resource Team and hospital-based Occupational Therapy staff. All Occupational Therapists can refer service users for minor and major adaptations. These arrangements help people get the right support at the right time.

¹ A Trusted Assessor is someone acting on behalf of and with the permission of multiple organisations to carry out an assessment of health and/or social care needs in a variety of health or social care settings.

Application and assessment process

- 11 The Council uses means testing for larger adaptations through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) process. Cases that are not means tested are processed through the Monmouthshire Adaptations Grant (MAG) programme. This offers a streamlined process for smaller adaptations. The Council supports people with their applications and keeps in regular contact with applicants to explain requirements, monitor progress and ensure they understand the process.
- 12 The Council has a clear approach to assessing applications. The occupational therapy service assesses people's needs and decides which adaptations are eligible. It then refers cases to the sustainable living team. Occupational therapists and the Council's surveyor then assess whether the home is suitable for the recommended adaptation.
- 13 The Council does not hold any council housing stock, but it provides clear information and an accessible application process for private landlords. Its DFG Conditions document explains eligibility for financial support and landlords can apply using a straightforward form, with contact details for further advice.
- 14 These arrangements help make the service easier to access. They also support timely applications and help people move through the process with a clearer understanding of its stages.

Operational performance and monitoring

- 15 The adaptations team collects data on service user profiles and referrals. Timescales, costs and progress of work are also recorded, including customer satisfaction results. Dashboards are used to track and manage this work. Occupational therapists record people's needs and circumstances through their referral and assessment processes. This includes urgency status and other factors to help manage and prioritise cases.

- 16 The housing adaptations service uses a Works in Progress record and an internal Excel dashboard to oversee delivery. It reviews performance at quarterly meetings, supported by monthly reports from Care & Repair. Regular case reviews and tracking help managers spot and respond to delays. However, reporting on outcomes and impact is less consistent and is not widely shared.
- 17 Operational performance has improved significantly since 2024-25, reflecting steps taken to build capacity, track cases better, and increase the pool of contractors. The 'Average time taken to complete Disabled Facilities Grants' has a target of 180 days. Performance against this measure for the last three years is as follows:
- 195 days in 2023–24
 - 329 days in 2024-25
 - 178 days in 2025-26
- 18 Occupational therapists and the housing adaptations team meet regularly to discuss adaptations and share learning. This learning helps identify good practice and informs prioritisation and future delivery. The Council also participates in the South Wales Renewals and Adaptations Group, which supports shared learning with other councils. Together, these arrangements give managers a clear view of performance, support timely action where delays emerge, and help the service improve over time.

Quality

- 19 The Council has arrangements in place to assure the quality of housing adaptations. At the start of each adaptation, it sets out clear specifications in the job schedule. This gives contractors clear instructions about the work they must complete. The Council surveyor carries out sign-off visits and, for works that need formal approval, such as extensions or garage conversions, Building Control staff sign off the required specifications. These arrangements help make sure adaptations are completed safely and to the required standard.

- 20 The Council manages contractors through its Code of Conduct. This sets out expectations around behaviour, quality and consideration for residents. The Code of Conduct requires contractors to consider any occupant vulnerabilities and make reasonable adjustments to their working methods. This can help reduce mess and disruption and demonstrates consideration of residents' needs.
- 21 The Council routinely seeks feedback from service users on contractor performance, including quality of work, tidiness, and timekeeping. This helps support a strong culture of quality and accountability. Contractors who receive poor client feedback may not be used for future work. This helps maintain standards and encourages contractors to deliver a good service.

Service user experience

- 22 The Council uses a customer satisfaction survey when it completes DFG works. The survey includes a range of questions to help understand the service user's overall experience. This person-centred approach provides valuable feedback on how the service made clients feel.
- 23 We looked at responses to customer satisfaction surveys issued between 2025 and 2026. They indicate that service users feel supported, listened to and are treated with dignity and respect. Most respondents also indicated that their adaptation has had a positive impact on their lives. This included improved quality of life, feeling safer at home and feeling more confident or independent. However, the Council does not routinely analyse this information or include it in performance reports or corporate updates. This is a missed opportunity to demonstrate the impact of the service.

What needs to improve

Corporate profile and strategic decision making

- 24 The housing adaptations service has a low corporate profile. The Council does not refer to it clearly in key documents such as the Community and Corporate Plan 2022-28 or Annual Self-Assessment 2024-25. This makes it difficult for the Council to show how the service contributes to its strategic aims.
- 25 Performance reporting focuses more on delivery times than outcomes. The Housing and Communities Service Plan 2025-28 includes one measure: the average time taken to complete Disabled Facilities Grants. The service records outcomes for users, such as whether an adaptation helped someone leave hospital or removed the need for a care package. However, although this information is used to manage day-to-day operations, it is not reported at a corporate level.
- 26 A clearer view of the service's wider impact could help demonstrate value for money, including related cost savings and cost avoidance, and better inform strategic decision-making.

Workforce planning and future demand

- 27 The service does not use its data systematically to plan for future demand. It uses operational data to understand current pressures and has also drawn on this information in reports on funding requirements, such as the March 2025 report to Business Cabinet on the Disabled Adaptations Programme. However, this is not part of a systematic approach to planning for future population needs, likely adaptation types, service outcomes or the service's preventative impact.

- 28 The core housing adaptations budget has remained at around £900,000 for several years, and it is unclear whether this is the right level of funding for future demand. The Council manages short-term pressures through in-year funding requests, capital slippage and late-confirmed external funding. These arrangements make it harder to plan delivery effectively, align workforce capacity with demand and manage the service over the medium to long term.
- 29 The housing adaptations service relies on a limited team of skilled professionals, with only one housing surveyor. Surveying capacity is limited and can create a bottleneck in service delivery. The surveyor also supports other housing service demands so their time is divided. This creates a clear resilience risk. The Council recognises this and plans to recruit an additional part-time surveyor.
- 30 The Council does not have a formal workforce plan for the housing adaptations service. Without one, it cannot clearly assess current and future staffing capacity, identify the skills it needs, or put effective succession arrangements in place. This limits its ability to manage pressure points and plan for future changes in demand.

Understanding partner performance

- 31 The Council is not responsible for delivering housing adaptations for people living in housing association homes – this is the role of the local housing associations. The Council does not monitor how quickly housing associations complete the work or if they inspect completed adaptations. As a result, it does not have a full picture of the timeliness and quality of adaptations across the county.

Recommendations

Taken together, these recommendations are intended to ensure that a high-impact preventative service, delivered effectively at an operational level, is also strategically overseen, sustainably resourced and clearly reflected in corporate decision-making.

Improve corporate oversight of housing adaptations

- R1 The Council should increase corporate oversight and awareness of the housing adaptations service including close working with Social Care to assess outcomes and impact. This includes expanding performance reports and member reporting arrangements to evidence how work achieves value for money and contributes to the Community and Corporate Plan (**paragraphs 25 and 26**).

Develop a workforce plan to support future demand

- R2 The Council should develop a workforce plan for the housing adaptations service to understand and address resilience risks that could affect the timely delivery of adaptations. The plan should include:
- 2.1 a clear understanding and analysis of future demand and service capacity over the medium to long term (**paragraphs 27 and 30**); and
 - 2.2 a clear understanding and analysis of the resource requirements needed to meet future demand over the medium to long term (**paragraphs 28 and 29**).

Appendices

1 About our work

Scope of the audit

The audit considered whether the Council's arrangements for housing adaptations support service users to remain at home. This included reviewing the Council's approach, delivery and monitoring arrangements.

The audit did not include interviews with other stakeholders who are involved in the delivery of housing adaptations such as local health boards, contractors, Extra Care and housing associations. Neither did we contact service users to obtain their feedback on the service they received.

Questions

The audit used the following high-level questions:

- Does the Council have an informed and clear approach to housing adaptations which supports people to remain at home?
- Is the Council delivering its approach to housing adaptations to support people to remain at home?
- Does the Council have arrangements to monitor the progress and impact of housing adaptations to support people to remain at home?

Criteria

We considered Audit Wales's 2018 report on Housing Adaptations to develop the audit criteria. We also had discussions with councils to understand housing adaptations further.

Methods

We reviewed documents relating to housing adaptations process. We interviewed key officers and elected members, and we held a focus group with managers and team leaders involved in the housing adaptations process.

2 Key terms in this report

What we mean by a Monmouthshire Adaptations Grant (MAG)

- 1 A Monmouthshire Adaptations Grant pays for small to medium adaptations that do not require building or planning regulations approval. This includes adaptations such as stairlifts, ramps and level access showers. This grant is not means-tested, so is not dependent on an applicant's financial situation.

What we mean by Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

- 2 A Disabled Facilities Grant helps pay for major and important changes to a home so residents can live there more safely. The maximum grant available towards adaptations is £36,000, but the amount received depends on the financial circumstances of the applicant.
- 3 Councils in Wales are legally obliged to provide this grant and it applies to homeowners, tenants, and landlords.

What we mean by value for money

- 4 Value for money means spending money in a way that gets the best possible results for the cost. Value for money is commonly associated with the 'three Es' of economy, efficiency and effectiveness. We have summarised these as:
 - Economy: buying what is needed at the lowest sensible cost to help achieve intended outcomes.
 - Efficiency: using resources well to help achieve intended outcomes.
 - Effectiveness: achieving the intended outcomes for the short and longer term.

- 5 Councils have a legal duty to check whether they are using money and resources economically, efficiently, and effectively.
- 6 Councils must also think about both short-term and long-term needs when making decisions. Sometimes the best value for money is not the cheapest immediate option, but the one that prevents bigger problems and costs later.

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