

REPORT TO: COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE ON 7 JUNE 2012

**SUBJECT: PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING SCHEME OF ASSISTANCE
CUSTOMER FEEDBACK 2011/12**

BY: CORPORATE DIRECTOR (ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES)

1. REASON FOR REPORT

- 1.1 This report presents the results of feedback from clients receiving services under the Council's Private Sector Scheme of Assistance (SofA) during 2011/12. The services are delivered by the Private Sector Home Improvement Team.
- 1.2 This report is submitted to Committee in terms of the Council's Administrative Scheme relating to the Private Sector Housing.

2. RECOMMENDATION

2.1 It is recommended that the Communities Committee:-

- (i) consider the results of customer feedback received on the SofA during 2011/12;**
- (ii) notes that details of the further development of the performance management framework for the Scheme of Assistance will be presented to a future meeting of the Committee; and**
- (iii) agrees that a further report on customer satisfaction is presented to the Committee in June 2013.**

3. BACKGROUND

- 3.1 On 5 March 2010, the Housing Sub Committee agreed changes to the Customer Feedback Policy (paragraph 4 of the Minute refers). The policy requires the Housing and Property service obtain regular feedback from customers in key service areas, including private sector housing, and to use this feedback to improve performance.
- 3.2 On 1 April 2009, as required by Section 72 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, the Council introduced a Scheme of Assistance for private home owners. The SofA sets out how the Council will provide advice and information to assist private home owners to maintain and repair their property. The SofA is based on the principle that the primary responsibility for maintaining private sector properties lies with the owner and that this responsibility should be met with less reliance on grant subsidy to assist with the cost of house repairs and improvements.
- 3.3 In recent years, the Council has gradually reduced the Private Sector grant budget for discretionary non-mandatory grants to home owners for improvements and repairs. Since 2010/11, the availability of grants has been restricted to statutory mandatory grants to elderly and vulnerable owner-occupiers – mainly clients of the Care and Repair service – to enable them to carry out disabled adaptations to their homes. A reduced repairs grant budget has also been restricted to this client group.

- 3.4 On 1 March 2011, the Communities Committee agreed new service delivery arrangements for Care and Repair services in Moray (paragraph 17 of the Minute refers). These arrangements involved the transfer of Care and Repair services from an external provider to the Council's Private Sector Home Improvement Team. The service was partially transferred from 1 April 2011 with full transfer taking place on 1 April 2012. The Home Improvement Team now provides services to Care & Repair clients under an enhanced Scheme of Assistance.

4. **SURVEY RESULTS**

- 4.1 On 1 September 2011, the Home Improvement Team introduced a new customer feedback survey form. Prior to this, private sector housing services related mainly to processes surrounding grant applications and approvals. However, with the changes resulting from SofA and the recent restriction of grants to disabled and vulnerable owners, the new survey form aims to better reflect the level and range of services currently available to home owners. The new form gathers information on the wider range of services and information provided under SofA, such as support and advice on how to carry out works, assistance with finding suitable contractors and help with finding sources of finance for the works. The new form also includes questions specifically related to Care & Repair services.
- 4.2 Between 1 April 2011 and 31 August 2011, the Home Improvement Team gathered customer feedback using the old survey form. This feedback was generally positive on the clarity of information provided on grants, the manner and helpfulness of the Home Improvement Team and the speed and efficiency with which grant applications were processed.
- 4.3 Between 1 September 2011 and 31 March 2012, the Home Improvement Team issued 36 of the new survey forms to customers. 24 forms were returned, giving a response rate of 66%. The forms are issued to clients when cases are closed, usually on completion of works and the final payment of grant. With the reduction in the availability of grants to non-priority clients, almost all requests for assistance under SofA are for disabled adaptations and repairs to the homes of Care and Repair clients. The feedback obtained using the new survey form will therefore reflect the views of this client group. The survey results are summarised in **APPENDIX I**.
- 4.4 The results of the feedback collected between 1 September 2011 and 31 March 2012 show high levels of customer satisfaction with the services provided under SofA. 100% of respondents indicated that they were very satisfied with the overall assistance provided to them. 96% of respondents indicated that they would use the service again and 92% indicated that they were very satisfied with the work done through the Scheme of Assistance.
- 4.5 When asked in the survey if they would have managed to carry out work to their home without the support provided by the SofA, 79% of respondents indicated no. Almost 30% of respondents indicated that they would not have

been able to continue living at home if the work had not been carried out – 20% replied that they didn't know and only 50% said they would. The responses to these questions underline the value of the Care and Repair services provided under SofA in helping older and vulnerable people to continue living in the comfort of their own homes. In providing this support, the service is contributing to one of the key actions of the Scottish Government's Older People's Strategy which is to provide adaptations to the homes of older people to enable them to live in the community for as long as possible.

- 4.6 The positive customer feedback provided during 2011/12 indicates that older and disabled people are continuing to receive a high quality service following the transfer of Care and Repair services to the Council's Home Improvement Team.
- 4.7 During 2012/13, the team will continue to develop the performance management framework for SofA, particularly for Care and Repair clients. It is anticipated that this framework will be closely linked to the new performance management system for Care and Repair services being introduced by Care and Repair Scotland during 2012/13. It is expected that the performance framework will also need to respond to new arrangements for the delivery of adaptations services currently being developed under the Older People's Strategy. The performance framework for non-Care & Repair clients of the SofA will also be developed during 2012/13. Progress on the development of the performance framework for SofA will be reported to a future meeting of the Committee.

5. SUMMARY OF IMPLICATIONS

(a) Single Outcome Agreement/ Service Improvement Plan

The improvement of housing quality and maintaining individuals with disabilities within their communities are key elements of the Single Outcome Agreement, the Moray Community Plan, the Local Housing Strategy and the Housing Service Improvement Plan.

(b) Policy and Legal

The provision of a Scheme of Assistance and the provision of grant assistance for disabled adaptations is a requirement of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006.

(c) Financial implications

There are no financial implications arising from this report

(d) Risk Implications

There are no risk implications arising from this report.

(e) Staffing Implications

There are no risk implications arising from this report.

(f) Property

There are no property implications arising from this report.

(g) Equalities

The provision of grant aid supports the Council in fulfilling its statutory duty to provide grant assistance for disabled adaptations. The Scheme of Assistance has been the subject of an Equalities Impact Assessment.

(h) Consultations

The proposals contained in this report have been subject to consultation with the Head of Housing and Property, the Head of Community Care and the Home Improvement Services Manager.

6. CONCLUSION

6.1 This report provides details of the results of feedback gathered during 2011/12 from clients of the Council's Private Sector Housing Scheme of Assistance.

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Background Papers: Held by HHPS and Housing Strategy and Development Manager
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