

WRITTEN EVIDENCE FROM CAPABILITY SCOTLAND

Consideration of the Scottish Social Housing Charter

Capability Scotland would like to request that the Capital Investment and Infrastructure Committee consider the concerns highlighted in this letter in advance of your consideration of the Scottish Social Housing Charter later this month. Capability is in favour of the Charter and is particularly pleased by the recent addition of an equalities outcome. However we have several concerns which we would ask the Committee to consider relating to:

1. The removal of an outcome (included in previous drafts of the Charter) stating that, 'Tenants can get the adaptations and equipment they need to help them stay in their home, where this is appropriate'
2. Failure to include an outcome on the role of social landlords in facilitating independent living for older and disabled people.

1. Removal of the Outcome on Adaptations and Equipment

Including an outcome on the provision of adaptations and equipment in the Charter would have had the potential to make a real difference to thousands of disabled people across Scotland. Removal of the outcome is unacceptable given that the Scottish House Condition Surveys (SCHS) suggests that 137,000 homes in Scotland require adaptations.

Disabled people across Scotland have told us that they are waiting months or even years for simple adaptations or pieces of equipment, including handrails, shower chairs and electrical sockets at the right height. One person we spoke to waited over two years to have a simple hoist fitted. Thousands of disabled people cannot function in their own homes as a result of this failure, with many unable to play with their children, go to the shops or use their toilet without assistance.

The Scottish Government has acknowledged that improved housing support and investment in equipment and adaptations would reduce the risk of avoidable hospital admissions and delayed discharge. In '*Age, Home and Community: A Strategy for Housing Scotland's Older People: 2012 – 2021*' published in December 2011, the Government reaffirmed its commitment to developing a system of adaptation and equipment provision which is fit for purpose. Registered social landlords have a major part to play in achieving this goal and we believe that the Scottish Government is missing a golden opportunity by failing to clarify their role in the Scottish Social Housing Charter.

While local authorities have a statutory obligation to provide certain equipment and adaptations, the situation in relation to housing associations is less clear. There is a great deal of variation from one social landlord to the next, with some landlords denying they have legal responsibility for certain adaptations. Until there is more 'tenure neutral' access to aids and adaptations, it is essential that designation of responsibility is made much clearer. The current situation is extremely confusing to tenants and can result in vulnerable individuals missing out on essential adaptations.

2. Need for an Outcome Relating to Independent Living

We also believe it is essential that the Charter includes an outcome on the wider role registered social landlords have to play in supporting people to live independently. The Scottish Government made a commitment to independent living in the Shared Vision "based on the core principles of choice, control, freedom and dignity, that disabled people across Scotland will have equality of opportunity at home and work, in education and in the social and civic life of the community."¹

Inclusion of an independent living outcome could help to ensure that Scotland's social landlords understand and plan for future challenges posed by an ageing population and an increased proportion of disabled people. The kind of action that the Scottish Housing Regulator might use to measure the progress of landlords towards achieving the outcome might include:

- The development of clear plans on how the landlord will deal with the challenges posed by an ageing and consequentially more disabled population

¹ <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Publications/2010/03/29164308/1>

- The introduction of incentives schemes to encourage people to move from accessible or adapted homes which they no longer need
- A clear policy on consistent provision of handy person, small repair and other preventative support services