

**London/SE HIA Network Meeting - Nov 2020**

**HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS  
AND  
HOME ADAPTATIONS  
Finding ways to say yes  
Funding and delivery**

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# Background

- 2018 Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Review - England
- Following on from the review – further work in 2020/21 to look at housing associations in England:
  - Part 1 Policy report and summary
  - Part 2 Design guide (*discussed at last meeting. Happy to receive more examples of good practice – template available*)

Supported by Habinteg, Anchor Hanover, and Foundations.

# Aims and objectives

- Look in-depth at how adaptations are funded and delivered in the HA sector
- Find ways to make the process work better for tenants and staff
- Encourage long term, strategic investment rather than one-off solutions for individual tenants.

# Tenant profile

- **54%** of housing association residents have a long-term illness or disability
- **18%** of new lettings are to tenants with disability-related housing needs
- **43%** of tenants are 55 and over and the average age is 52

Disabled and older tenants are not a niche group but a substantial population.

# Housing suitability

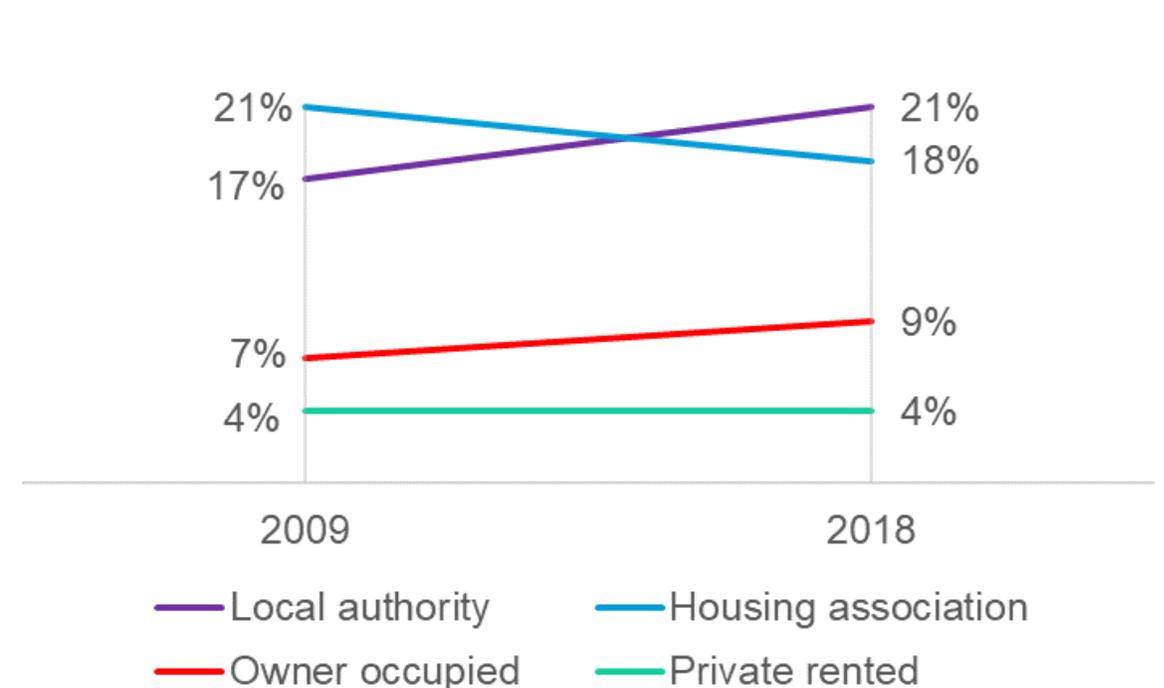
- **21%** of disabled people in the sector say their accommodation is unsuitable
- **56%** of those in the sector needing adaptations do not have them
- **15%** of the HA stock is specialist housing, but it is unevenly spread. Either held by small providers with less than 1,000 units (43% of supported housing) or by a small number of large providers.

The existing stock needs meet disabled residents needs better.

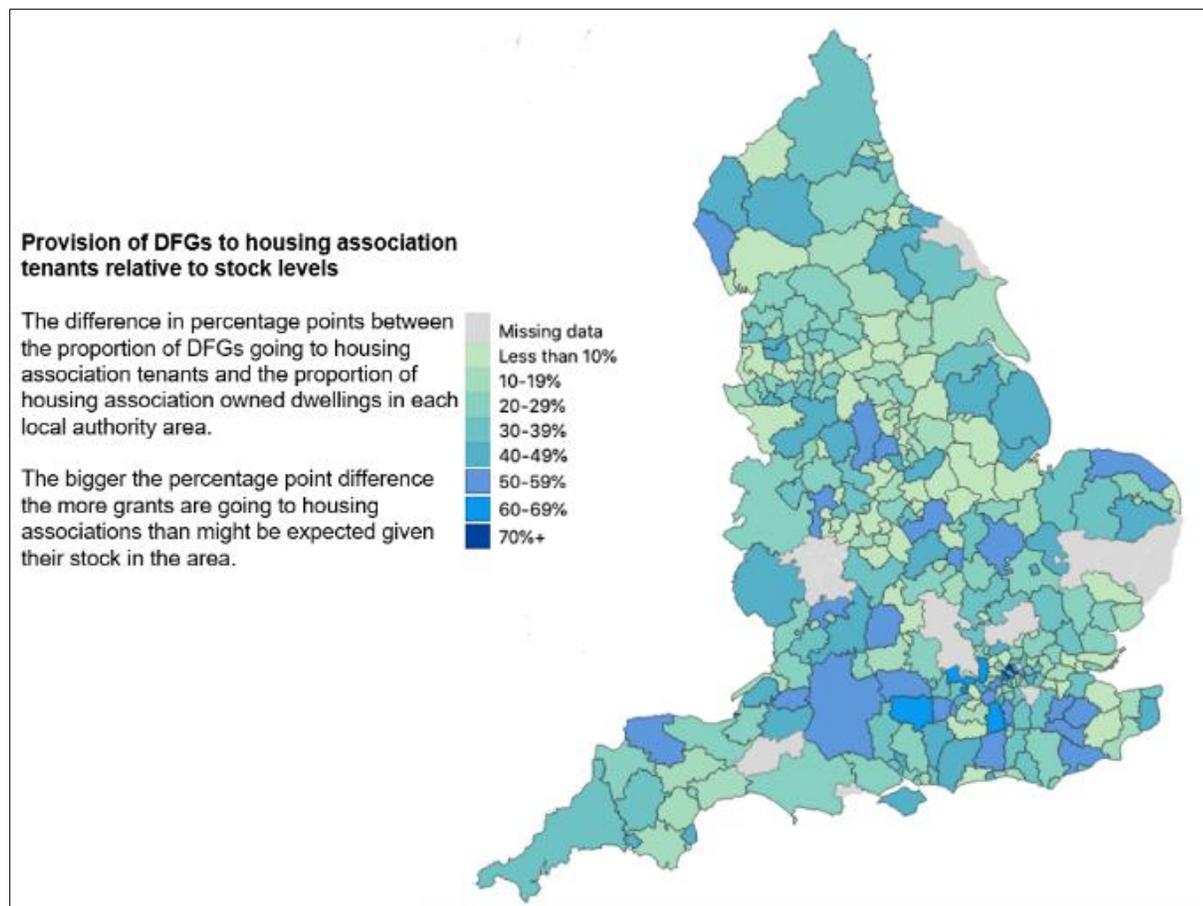
# DFG investment up but adapted homes down

- DFG allocation has doubled since 2015 to £573 million 2021/22
- 36% of DFGs go to HA tenants on average
- HAs use over £200 million of the £573 million DFG allocation
- **Decline in number of adapted homes in HA sector 21% - 18%**

Trends in adapted homes 2009-2018



# Uneven HA use of the DFG



Source: Foundations – from MHCLG annual DELTA data return relating to the DFG 2019/20  
MHCLG Live tables on dwelling stock - Table 100: number of dwellings by tenure and district, England.

## DFG inconsistent

- Allocation formula out of date (2011) - does not fully account for local disability need or demand from HAs.
- Some LAs have surplus funds, others cannot meet demand.
- Some LAs no longer means test.
- Some LAs offer discretionary grants but all different.

# Issues – LA perspective

- Dealing with a lot of HAs
- High level of DFG use by HAs in some areas
- Inconsistent contributions to DFG
- Fewer HAs making contributions
- Some HA referrals inappropriate – adds to waiting lists.
- Communication a major issue – close relationship with some HAs / unclear who to contact in others.
- Concern about adaptations being refused
- Concern about adaptations being removed
- A need for fairness – neighbouring LAs have different arrangements

**Almost two thirds of OTs/DFG staff said that delays in getting landlords consent for work happens ‘a lot’**

# Issues – HA perspective

- Restricted budgets
- Dealing with numerous LAs each with a different approach:
  - Paperwork different
  - Funding contributions vary
  - Payment requirements differ
  - Not all have a full HIA service
  - Some want three quotes even if a DLO
  - Warranties and maintenance varies
- Complex spreadsheets to monitor arrangements.

**They want consistency in the way the DFG operates.**

- High demand for homes – ‘best use of stock’ policies
- Concern about water penetration - high and rising insurance costs
- Some HAs want more control over process.

*“I have a landlord head and a disabled adaptations head”.*

Interview respondent from a regional housing association

# How to achieve consistency

- Need increased HA budgets
- More HA staff / in integrated teams
- Fairer distribution of DFG allocations
- Top slicing of DFG for some HAs
- Landlord applications - same form used in all areas
- Better design to prevent adaptations being refused or removed at change of tenancy.

# Landlord applications

## Tenant

- One point of contact
- No means test
- Earlier intervention in some cases
- Will still need OT assessment for more complex work
- *Need advocacy service and effective complaints procedure.*

## HA landlord

- 'Contract' between landlord and contractor
- Can control design and use standard fittings
- Do their own CRM compliance
- The same paperwork and application process in all areas
- *Some want to do work themselves, but others will still use LA/HIA to manage work.*

## Local authority

- Named HA contact
- Fewer delays chasing paperwork
- Can reclaim equipment
- Nomination rights for 5 years
- Reduce workload to allow focus on PRS/owners who have little support
- *No MT, and some fees may go to HA – impact on finances*

Sample application form provided in the report

# The right time for change?

**Impact of Covid** – more awareness of vulnerable residents. It has changed the relationship with tenants for the better.

**Social Housing Charter** – closer working with tenants

**Regulation of consumer standards** – inspection of landlords with more than 1,000 homes every four years

**New complaints process – Make Things Right**  
<https://socialhousingcomplaints.campaign.gov.uk/>.  
Expert panel set up to help more vulnerable residents access the complaints system.

**Housing Ombusman services** - power to investigate systemic service failure.

**New decent homes standard** – in development. The previous standard did not mention adaptations. Inclusive design needs to be included when major improvement work is carried out.

**Energy efficiency** – key focus over the next decade. Ideal opportunity to identify people who need adaptations or need to plan to move.

**Cladding replacement/fire prevention** – Still a major issue and taking a considerable amount of investment.

**Home technology** – the new thing, often seems sexier than adaptations.