

RAMP

The Register of Adapted Homes Project

AIMS, POSSIBILITIES AND OUTCOMES OF THE REGISTER OF ADAPTED HOMES PROJECT – RAMP

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I EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Register of Adapted hoMes Project was created in the financial year 1999/2000 with the aim of overcoming a gap in information on owner occupied adapted properties. The Project was piloted in Edinburgh and the Lothians with the intention of eventually rolling out the successful aspects of the Project nationally across Scotland. The original aim was to appoint a Property Register Manager and a Property Register Assistant who would implement RAMP's (as the Project became known) aims for its three-year lifespan. A Property Register Officer was appointed in May 2000. The Project has seen a change of Property Register Officer in June 2002 and a change in its host organisation, moving from the Disabled Persons Housing Service to Ownership Options in Scotland in January 2003.

RAMP was devised in a climate of increased concern over the state of Scotland's housing. Therefore, the work of the Project must be considered alongside various developments in housing policy. Particular attention is given in this Evaluation Report to:

- The Joint Future Group;
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2001;
- Housing Improvement Task Force

A fundamental requirement was that a detailed Project Evaluation be submitted on the completion of RAMP, detailing the core aims and achievements of the Project and identifying the possibility and credibility of rolling out nationally across Scotland. This document comprises the RAMP Evaluation Report and will examine:

- RAMP in theory: aims, possibilities and how they could be achieved;
- RAMP in practice: putting possibilities into practice, successes and failures;
- The future of RAMP, which examines how to build on the successes of the Project and what to do with those aspects that failed.

The aims and objectives of the Project can be summarised as follows:

- Amending the Disabled Persons Housing Service Housing Options Register to incorporate data on owner occupied adapted properties;
- Working with private sector housing professionals;
- Providing a brokerage service;
- Producing a Project Evaluation;
- Rolling the Project out nationally.

It was envisaged that the putting into practice of these aims and objectives would bring into fruition the following possibilities:

- To enable all key players in Community Care and Housing access to a detailed map of all available and planned community care housing resources across all sectors;
- To enable disabled people to be more effectively housed and supported;
- To ensure best value was obtained from existing resources.

This Evaluation Report examines the practical steps taken to achieve Project aims and whether the aforementioned possibilities were achieved.

The general conclusions of the Evaluation Report are that aspects of the Project pertaining to the amendment of the Housing Options Register and the managing of a brokerage service failed to achieve the three fundamental possibilities of the Project:

- Key players in Community Care and Housing did not access a detailed map of all available and planned community care housing resources across all sectors;
- Disabled people were not more effectively housed and supported;
- Best value was not obtained from existing resources.

As this Evaluation Report demonstrates the failure of the Housing Options Register to provide a detailed map of owner occupied adapted properties, it will be necessary to examine post-RAMP whether the database should continue to exist and who will manage and benefit from it. As it is clear that key players in Community Care and Housing did not access information on all available and planned community care resources it will be necessary to determine what will provide this information. However, in the first instance it will be important to establish whether Community Care and Housing Departments actually want to access this data from an external source. Throughout the life of RAMP, several attempts were made to discover whether Local Authorities required copies of Analysis Reports that analysed the data on the Housing Options Register. The overriding response was that the Local Authorities did not require this information.

It will be observed, however, that RAMP has achieved much success. This has been realised in work with private sector housing professionals such as the ESPC and the Property Sales Group and Property Managers in Edinburgh. The fundamental submission of the Evaluation Report is that this is the one aspect of RAMP that should be rolled out nationally across Scotland. RAMP was only ever intended to be a short term Project, the ultimate aim being that goals achieved would be mainstreamed, with Local Authorities and private sector organisations implementing the work of the Project themselves. This Evaluation Report argues that if housing professionals such as Property Managers and Estate Agents themselves provided more information for and assistance to disabled people who are looking to purchase a property, the main goals of RAMP will be achieved in that disabled people will be more effectively housed and there would be no need for the provision of extra resources from Government.

RAMP has been useful in highlighting the many difficulties faced by disabled people in purchasing owner occupied adapted properties. It is hoped that the legacy of RAMP will be that Housing Professionals across Scotland will use their increased awareness of these difficulties to eventually pull down the barriers which prevent disabled people from owning a home that is suited to their needs and which affords them the same fundamental rights as their non-disabled counterparts to enjoy their own home.

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A *RAMP IN THEORY*

A1 BACKGROUND TO RAMP

A1.1 An idea conceived

RAMP was conceived four years ago during discussions between the Disabled Persons Housing Service and the Scottish Office Social Work Services Group.

The original bid requested funds to employ a Property Register Manager and a Property Register Assistant for three years. A Property Register Officer was appointed in May 2000. It became known as the Register of Adapted hoMes Project, more commonly referred to as RAMP.

A1.2 RAMP in the context of Housing Policy

RAMP emerged in a climate of change in Scottish Housing Policy and therefore must be considered in this context.

A1.2.a Joint Future Group

In November 2000 the Scottish Executive's Joint Future Group¹ sought to find ways to improve joint working in order to deliver modern and effective 'person-centred' services. The Group saw a need for agencies to be better informed of the level of adapted properties in their area and recommended that "*all local authorities should create, with their partners, (Scottish Homes, Registered Social Landlords and the private sector) registers of adapted properties, by mid-2002*".

A1.2.b Housing (Scotland) Act 2001²

This Act offered significant potential for improving housing provision and related services, within local authorities, for disabled people.

- i. Section 79(2)(ca) required local authorities to map what the current housing market in their area offers people with 'special needs' (*sic*);
- ii. This Section also required a similar profile to be compiled by local authorities of the housing needs of people with 'special needs' (*sic*).

¹ For a list of relevant bodies and organisations see Appendix 9.

² For a list of relevant legislation see Appendix 1.

A1.2.c Housing Improvement Task Force

The Housing Improvement Task Force³ was created in December 2000 with a remit to examine housing in Scotland. It established an Index of Housing Quality to be used to highlight particular elements of housing needs, across all tenures, and set targets for these to be reduced over the years by guiding the resources made available to local government in relation to their Housing Strategies. The aim was that properties in Scotland would be:

- i. Free from serious disrepair;
- ii. Energy efficient;
- iii. Safe for occupants;
- iv. Where appropriate be adapted to meet any 'special needs' (*sic*) of the occupant.

In January 2001 the Social Justice Minister (responsible for the Housing Improvement Task Force) stated that the Housing Improvement Task Force was "considering whether a disability audit, which would provide a potential buyer with specific information on the suitability of the property for disabled persons' needs, should be required as part of a survey or seller's pack".

In response to the Report of the Disability Rights Task Force in January 2001⁴, the Scottish Executive recommended that Councils and estate agents should keep up-to-date records of all known dwellings that are potentially suitable for disabled people, in order to compile cross-sector Housing Options Registers to match needs.

³ For the contact details of the Housing Improvement Task Force see Appendix 9.

⁴ *Ante*.

A2 AIMS OF RAMP

A2.1 Amending the Disabled Persons Housing Service Housing Options Register to incorporate data on owner occupied adapted properties

It was envisaged that the extensive Disabled Persons Housing Service Housing Options Register would be expanded to include:

- i. All contemporary data on adapted private sector housing stock;
- ii. All historical data on adapted private sector housing stock.

A2.2 Working with private sector housing professionals

The aim was to engage with organisations involved in the buying and selling of properties to ensure the mainstreaming of equalities. The prevailing attitude was that adaptations to properties were a negative aspect of trying to sell properties. Property professions considered that a property would have a better chance of selling a property if its adaptations were removed. This was negative for a number of reasons:

- i. Adaptations that may have been beneficial to a disabled person have been lost;
- ii. Housing Improvement Grant was paid to install adaptations that were then removed. Thousands of pounds are lost.

A further issue to resolve was the fact that disabled people were not being informed of adapted properties when they were on the market. Standard Property Schedules made no reference to adaptations or to suitability for disabled people. The ESPC database and website did not include details of adaptations and did not identify properties as being adapted. As a result, many disabled people often had to spend a great deal of time visiting properties that were unsuitable for them. Conversely, many disabled people were put off from considering purchasing their own home because of the difficulties faced in finding somewhere suitable.

Therefore, RAMP aimed to afford disabled people the same opportunities of finding a suitable home as their non-disabled counterparts.

A2.3 Providing a brokerage service

The aim here was to offer a brokerage service whereby the owners of adapted properties would contact the Property Register Officer when they wished to sell their property so that the Property Register Officer could match the property to a disabled client.

A2.4 Producing a Project Evaluation

Once RAMP had drawn to a conclusion, it would be necessary to write up a comprehensive Evaluation of the Project that would then form the basis for replication throughout Scotland.

A2.5 Rolling the Project out nationally

RAMP was to be piloted in Edinburgh and the Lothians. Depending on successes and failures, the aim was to roll the Project out nationally across Scotland.

A3 POSSIBILITIES OF RAMP

A3.1 Amending the Disabled Persons Housing Service Housing Options Register to incorporate data on owner occupied adapted properties

When this idea was initially conceived, it was envisaged that expanding the Housing Options Register could fulfil the following possibilities:

- i. To enable all key players in Community Care and Housing access to a detailed map of all available and planned community care housing resources across all sectors;
- ii. To enable disabled people to be more effectively housed and supported;
- iii. To ensure best value was obtained from existing resources.

A3.2 Working with private sector housing professionals

This would allow disabled people a greater opportunity to access information on adapted properties for sale. It would also minimise the occurrence of adaptations being removed from properties in order to achieve a sale.

A3.3 Providing a brokerage service

This would enable disabled people wishing to purchase an adapted property to be matched with a property on the database that was to be sold. This would also minimise the need for adaptations to be removed from properties in order to achieve a sale.

A3.4 Producing a Project Evaluation

This would form the basis of any decision to extend the work of RAMP beyond Edinburgh and the Lothians. It would also enable an assessment of the Project.

A3.5 Rolling the Project out nationally

The possibility would be that RAMP could be rolled out nationally to enable disabled people greater access to adapted properties and greater funding for works of adaptation to be carried out.

A4 HOW TO ACHIEVE POSSIBILITIES

A4.1 Amending the Disabled Persons Housing Service Housing Options Register to incorporate data on owner occupied adapted properties

The aim was to amend the Housing Options Register to incorporate tables detailing:

- i. The address of adapted properties;
- ii. The level of Housing Improvement Grant paid;
- iii. The overall cost of adaptation works;
- iv. The types of adaptations that were added;
- v. Whether any adaptations were removed;
- vi. The market status of properties.

The aim was to create queries within the database that would analyse the data on adapted properties and produce Analysis Reports that could be used at local and national level for strategic planning purposes.

A4.2 Working with private sector housing professionals

The aim here was to persuade organisations such as the ESPC, Property Sales Group, the National Association of Estate Agents and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors to adopt the mainstreaming of equalities and have regard to barriers faced by disabled people who wish to purchase their own home.

It was also envisaged that house-selling organisations would contact the Property Register Officer when an adapted property came on their books so that the Property Register Officer could then check to see whether any clients had expressed a preference for that type of property in that area.

A4.3 Providing a brokerage service

Here, the plan was that disabled people on the database would contact the Property Register Officer when they wished to sell their property and the Property Register Officer would then check the DPHS records to check if any clients were seeking to purchase a property of the type, with the adaptations, and in the location of the property that is to be sold. All people on the database were to be contacted to notify them about the brokerage service and asking them to participate.

A4.4 Producing a Project Evaluation

The Evaluation Report would examine the strengths and weaknesses of RAMP and then to determine those parts of the Project to carry forward to a national level.

A4.5 Rolling the Project out nationally

The database would become a national register of adapted properties and work with private agencies would be extended to cover all Property Managers and estate agents in Scotland. RAMP procedures and provisions would become part of national policy.

B RAMP IN PRACTICE

B1 PUTTING POSSIBILITIES INTO PRACTICE

B1.1 Amending the Disabled Persons Housing Service Housing Options Register to incorporate data on owner occupied adapted properties

The Property Register Officer met with Heads of Housing from the four Lothian Local Authorities⁵ to negotiate the transfer of records on owner occupied adapted properties that had received Housing Improvement Grants in order that they may be adapted.

The Local Authorities stored historical data on properties that had received Housing Improvement Grant funding in order that they may be adapted. Negotiations were undertaken to obtain this historical data. There were also discussions on how to achieve a structured referral of data on contemporary and future adaptations. Discussions were held concerning data protection and whether or not consent letters should be sent to owners of adapted properties before the data was to be shared with the Property Register Officer. The majority of the Local Authorities opted for this prior to sharing data.

The Housing Options Register was modified to include data on owner occupied adapted and privately rented properties. "User friendly" forms were created so that anybody could input the data obtained in the absence of the Property Register Officer.

Analysis Reports⁶ were created to present the data in a meaningful format. This was achieved by creating queries that manipulated the data in the database tables. The queries were then linked to forms created within the database which presented statistical information in a clear and easy to understand format.

As many of the historical Local Authority records related to adaptations that had been carried out as far back as 1995, it was necessary to devise a mechanism for updating this information. Therefore, an "Update Questionnaire"⁷ was created within the database. This was created in report form with fields linked to the tables and queries of the Housing Options Register.

It was considered useful to obtain a person centred description of properties. In order to have a complete picture of the state of housing in Edinburgh and the Lothians a summary of the properties in relation to their suitability for different disabilities as well as the adaptations contained therein was sought. Therefore, an "About My Home" Questionnaire"⁸ was created, to be sent to owners at the same time as the "Update Questionnaire".

⁵ See Acknowledgements Section.

⁶ See Appendix 3 for printouts of all Analysis Reports

⁷ See Appendix 4 for Update Questionnaire.

⁸ See Appendix 5 for About My Home Questionnaire.

B1.2 Working with private sector housing professionals

The Property Register Officer entered into negotiations with the Heads of Policy and Operations at the ESPC, the Property Sales Group and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors⁹ to explore the possibilities for ensuring that disabled people have greater access to information on owner occupied adapted properties.

Initially the line of negotiation involved appealing to these organisations to assist disabled people who were experiencing difficulty in accessing data on adapted properties for sale. It soon became apparent that this was not the best line to take. Businesses in the private sector cannot undertake policy for altruistic purposes. Their primary concern is the ability to make money and to maintain a good reputation. Therefore negotiations recommenced from a new perspective:

- i. Disabled people are an untapped market;
- ii. Preventing discrimination and achieving equality of opportunity in housing is at the forefront of policy and therefore an early commitment to equality will reduce government intervention in the private sector;
- iii. The occurrence of adapted properties being put up for sale on the open market was so rare that excessive workloads and costs achieve the Project aims would not arise.

B1.3 Providing a brokerage service

Leaflets were distributed to various disability groups and articles were submitted to various newspapers detailing the objectives of RAMP and inviting people to participate¹⁰.

B1.4 Producing a Project Evaluation

This document comprises the RAMP Project Evaluation.

B1.5 Rolling the Project out nationally

There were no steps made to roll RAMP out nationally. The occurrence of this will depend on whether any of the Project's achievements are worthy of extending to a national scale.

⁹ See Acknowledgements Section for private sector participants in RAMP. For addresses of relevant bodies and organisations see Appendix 4.

¹⁰ See Appendix 8 for examples.

B2 SUCCESSES AND FAILURES

B2.1 Amending the Disabled Persons Housing Service Housing Options Register to incorporate data on owner occupied adapted properties

B2.1.a Successes

The Housing Options Register¹¹ was developed and expanded to incorporate the following data:

- i. Names, addresses and telephone numbers of the owners of adapted properties;
- ii. Market value of adapted properties;
- iii. Types of properties;
- iv. Adaptations to properties;
- v. Housing Improvement Grant paid;
- vi. Total cost of adaptations works;
- vii. The level properties were on;
- viii. The number of steps to enter properties;
- ix. Whether there was a staircase;
- x. Downstairs rooms;
- xi. Whether there was a downstairs bathroom;
- xii. Whether there was a downstairs bedroom;
- xiii. Any other downstairs rooms;
- xiv. A person-centred description of properties;
- xv. Whether any adaptations were added;

¹¹ See Appendix 2 for examples of tables, queries, forms and reports from the Housing Options Register.
Aims, possibilities and outcomes of the Register of Adapted hoMes Project - RAMP

- xvi.** Whether any adaptations were removed;
- xvii.** Whether properties were sold;
- xviii.** Whether an Update Questionnaire was sent or returned;
- xix.** Whether an About My Home Questionnaire was sent or returned.
- xx.** Analysis Reports were created to access this data. These included:
- xxi.** Adapted properties by postcode;
- xxii.** Adapted properties by community;
- xxiii.** Adapted properties by ward;
- xxiv.** Adapted properties by adaptations types;
- xxv.** Adapted properties by house type;
- xxvi.** Person centred descriptions by community;
- xxvii.** Person centred descriptions by ward;
- xxviii.** Person centred descriptions by house type;
- xxix.** House type, person centred descriptions and adaptations;
- xxx.** Questionnaires sent but not returned by community;
- xxxi.** Questionnaires sent but not returned by ward;
- xxxii.** Questionnaires sent and returned by community;
- xxxiii.** Questionnaires sent and returned by ward;
- xxxiv.** Adaptations added since data initially inputted;
- xxxv.** Adaptations removed since data initially inputted;
- xxxvi.** Properties with downstairs bathrooms and bedrooms by ward.

B2.1.b Failures

While the creation of this Housing Options Register was successful, there was mixed success in obtaining the data to incorporate into the Housing Options Register. As there was a reliance on assistance from Local Authorities, the success of this aspect of the Project was reliant on differing agendas and priorities among the Local Authorities. This was demonstrated by the varying amount of data obtained:

i. *City of Edinburgh Council*

Historic Housing Improvement Grant approved and completed adaptation data, dating back to 1995/96, was shared with the DPHS and entered onto the Housing Options Register.

ii. *East Lothian Council*

The issue of client consent was central to East Lothian Council. They wanted to ensure that disabled people were willing to have their details shared. Data protection principles were paramount. The Council initially opted for the delivery of DPHS leaflets to clients for the period 1996 to 2001¹². The leaflet requested the clients consent to data to be incorporated onto the database. This leafleting campaign only achieved an increased awareness of RAMP and had little success in helping to build the Register. A second stage of negotiations resulted in an approach requesting client consent by letter.

iii. *Midlothian Council*

Midlothian Council initially agreed to share information including adaptation type, date and address subject to any objections received from clients about sharing this data. The Council selected which houses to refer on the basis that the property was considered 'suitable for a disabled person' for future use. Midlothian Council indicated that this was to be reviewed at a later date. This resulted in an incomplete Register for Midlothian, which had an affect on accuracy of comparative statistical analyses. Historical data was transferred on adapted properties during 1994-1996. The Council then adopted the policy of sending out consent letters. There was sporadic data sent for the period 1996-2002. However, with renewed negotiations, details of newly adapted properties were shared.

¹² See Appendix 8: Leaflets and Information Packs.

iv. West Lothian Council

Historical data for the period 1996/7 to 2000/1 were transferred on to the Housing Options Register. With regard to data from 2001 onwards, West Lothian Council then decided to send out consent letters to owners of property prior to data being shared.

The slowness of Local Authorities to make a decision and the many changes of opinions on how to proceed hindered the progress of RAMP. Furthermore, the varying degrees of data shared limited the effectiveness of the Housing Options Register in that any Analysis Reports that were generated from the data did not provide an accurate and complete picture. To remedy this, there needed to be a formalised agreement that the Local Authorities undertook to refer all adaptations data. To this effect, a Protocol for the Future referral of adaptations was drawn up and sent to each Local Authority in July 2002. However, not one of the Protocols was signed. Letters following up on this received an equally disappointing response.

A further failure of this aspect of the Project was the content of the data sent. For example, Midlothian Council did not send information regarding the amount of Housing Improvement Grant paid and the cost of newly adapted properties. Much of the data sent was quite basic and includes the address of the property and the adaptation(s) contained therein.

Therefore, an accurate map of owner-occupied adapted properties was not realised. This was exacerbated by the fact that there were many adapted properties that did not receive Housing Improvement Grants and therefore not contained in Council records. Although there was much publicising of RAMP, there was absolutely no way that all of the owners of adapted properties had heard of RAMP. Furthermore, not all people wanted to share details of their home.

The Housing Options Register did not provide an accurate map of adapted properties, as data was not one hundred percent up to date. The process of sending out Update Questionnaires was an extremely arduous process (there were one thousand and ninety six records) and there was no guarantee that people would take the time to complete and return these questionnaires. The About My Home Questionnaires did not give an accurate description of properties as heavy reliance was placed on the subjective opinion of owners of property.

Although this aspect of the Project has been unsuccessful, the task of creating a database of owner occupied adapted properties has not been in vain. It was a useful exercise in demonstrating the difficulties faced in accurately recording statistical data on adapted properties. It would be necessary to examine whether there can be any benefits achieved in overcoming the problems faced in developing and maintaining a database of owner occupied adapted properties.

It must be noted that key players in Community Care and Housing, it must be pointed out that these key players did not appear to want this information. Several attempts were made to provide Local Authorities with Analysis Reports of the data held on the Housing Options Register. The general response was that this information was not required.

B2.2 **Working with private sector housing professionals**

B2.2.a **Successes**

Initially organisations such as the ESPC, the Property Sales Group and the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors were unreceptive to negotiations to achieve the aims of the Project. However, over time, there were some positive steps made:

i. ***The ESPC***

The ESPC were initially very reluctant to include data on adapted properties on their database and website. Their primary concern was of misrepresentation and the provisions of the Property Misdescriptions Act 1991. However, the ESPC were eventually persuaded that the issue of misrepresentation would not arise. This was because they would only need to include a field that stated whether or not a property was adapted. This would enable disabled people to search for this field and then decide for themselves whether or not to visit the property to assess its suitability. The issue of misrepresentation would not arise, as the ESPC would not be giving an opinion on the suitability of a property.

The result of these negotiations was extremely positive. At present the ESPC is overhauling its database and as part of this restructuring a field will be included to allow a search for whether or not a property has adaptations. Once the ESPC database is redeveloped the website will be redeveloped. This will include the ability to search for adapted properties.

ii. ***The Property Managers and the Property Sales Group***

Property Managers were also concerned about misrepresentation. A further stumbling block was overcoming the attitude of why bother to include details of adapted properties on Property Schedules. Property Managers were very busy and adding the extra workload of examining the adaptations of a property and taking the trouble to list them in Property Schedules adds to this workload, while at the same time offering them no real benefit. Attempts to persuade them that a whole untapped sector of the market would be opened up were countered by the deep rooted belief that disabled people couldn't possibly want to buy or afford their own home because they wouldn't be able to get a mortgage.

A breakthrough was achieved through a joint presentation to the Property Sales Group from the Property Register Officer and the Director of Ownership Options in Scotland. The members of the group were persuaded that due to the fact that there were so few adapted properties coming on to the market, there would not be a great deal of work involved in including adaptations details on those adapted properties for sale. There was some benefit to the Property Managers in that disabled people would want to buy these properties so there would be fewer instances of properties being slow to sell due to their containing adaptations and the need to have these adaptations removed to increase the potential for a re-sale. The result of the presentation to the Property Sales Group was an agreement to list adaptations in Property Schedules. They also agreed to pass this data to the Property Register Officer so the details of the property could be added to the Housing Options Register.

A major stumbling block to this breakthrough was the fact that Property Managers did not know types of adaptations. Therefore, they could not list adaptations that were in a property. The Property Register Officer and the Director of Ownership Options in Scotland informed the Property Managers that they would provide them with a list of adaptations and their definitions.

ii. ***The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors***

Negotiations with the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors were only successful insofar as they agreed to consider the possibility of disability equality training.

B2.2.b Failures

i. *The ESPC*

The only potential problem with the ESPC was that work relied on persuading Property Managers to identify properties as being adapted in their Property Schedules. If negotiations with Property Managers failed to achieve this then the work with the ESPC would also fail. Therefore ongoing dialogue with both the ESPC and Property Managers will be essential to ensure that this aspect of the Project continues to be a success.

ii. *The Property Managers and the Property Sales Group*

Although there were obstacles to be overcome (particularly in relation to issues of misrepresentation), there were no failures with this aspect of the Project as such. Primary objectives were, in principle, achieved. However, it will be necessary to undertake extensive work to achieve a viable system of ensuring that Property Managers remember to include details of adaptations and that they are aware of the types of adaptations. Such detailed and ongoing negotiations will be essential to ensure that the primary objectives of RAMP will be achieved in practice and not just in theory.

iii. *The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors*

The Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors was extremely reluctant to share property details. They perceived that a conflict of interest would arise in that the Property Register Officer would pass the details of this property on to an interested client, who would then bid against the person who originally requested the survey. However, the Property Register Officer assuring the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors that data on individual properties would not be shared with anyone and would only be used for statistical purposes did go some way to allaying this fear.

No ground was achieved with regard to persuading the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors to provide disability audits as standard practice. They argued that it would be too costly and time consuming to provide this service. They stated that they would do this if required to do so by Statute.

Although this aspect of the Project failed, hopefully negotiations between the Royal Institute of Chartered Surveyors and the Housing Improvement Task Force will eventually result in the development of single seller surveys and disability audits.

B2.3 **Providing a brokerage service**

B2.3.a **Successes**

Through leafleting and publicising RAMP the brokerage service was called upon six times and has resulted in the sale of one property.

B2.3.b **Failures**

Although this aspect of the Project has achieved success insofar as a property was successfully brokered, overall the brokerage service was a failure. Only one property was sold via this method throughout the lifespan of RAMP.

This Project aim was flawed from the outset. The fact is that a person who wishes to sell their property has a number of primary objectives:

- i. To successfully achieve the asking price for their property (in the case of fixed price properties);
- ii. To achieve a price far in excess of the offers over price of their property;
- iii. To sell their property according to their own timescale.

Disabled people also have these priorities. Their need to successfully sell their property may be even greater than their non-disabled counterparts in that they may urgently need to move to a property that is more suitable. As a result they may have to have adaptations removed in order to maximise their chances of finding a buyer. This is because many non-disabled potential buyers are put off from purchasing a property that has been adapted in that they are associated with negative vibes of illness.

The traditional method of selling a property that will achieve the aforementioned seller's objectives is to contact a local Property Manager, estate agent or solicitor who will then market the property. Since most potential purchasers look for suitable properties by browsing selling agents' websites, using the ESPC and visiting local offices, the most appropriate way to sell a property is to market it at these venues.

It is for these reasons that the brokerage service was doomed to fail from the outset. The more appropriate route for enabling disabled people to purchase an adapted property is to continue to work with Property Managers and the ESPC to ensure that information on adapted properties is more readily available and that adaptations to properties become considered as not detrimental to a sale. It is when these attitudes and working practices are changed and developed that disabled people will have greater opportunities to buy and sell adapted properties.

B2.4 Producing a Project Evaluation

This document comprises the Evaluation of RAMP.

B2.5 Rolling the Project out nationally

The Project has not yet been rolled out nationally.

B2.6 An unforeseen success story – RIO Zaanstreek

The Housing Options Register was established at a regional adaptation agency in Zaanstreek, in The Netherlands. There has not yet been any confirmation as to whether the database was successfully utilized in the Netherlands¹³.

¹³ Further information regarding RIO Zaanstreek can be obtained on request.

B2.7 Other achievements of RAMP

As knowledge of RAMP became more widespread, the Property Register Officer was consulted on issues outside the remit of the Project. Such consultations¹⁴ included:

- i. Critique of City of Edinburgh Council's Community Care Housing Needs Assessment
- ii. DPHS Response to Communities Scotland Draft Housing Management Context Statement
- iii. East Lothian Council Community Care Housing Needs Assessment Questionnaire
- iv. Comment on East Lothian Council's Local Housing Strategy Draft Consultation Document
- v. Analysis of the impact on disabled people of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 homelessness provisions
- vi. Disabled Persons Housing Service views of an Index of Housing Quality
- vii. Response to the Scottish Executive Consultation Document on Part 6 Housing (Scotland) Act 2001
- viii. Response to the Local Government Bill: Outline of Proposals

These reports and consultation documents can be viewed in full at Appendix 10.

¹⁴ See Appendix 9 for contact details.

C *THE FUTURE OF RAMP*

**C1 AMENDING THE DISABLED PERSONS HOUSING
SERVICE HOUSING OPTIONS REGISTER TO
INCORPORATE DATA ON OWNER OCCUPIED
ADAPTED PROPERTIES**

It has been clearly demonstrated above that this aspect of RAMP was flawed. It was not, and would never be, realistically possible to create and maintain an accurate and comprehensive database of owner occupied adapted housing stock. As to whether this database will continue, it will be necessary to examine:

- i. Who would actually benefit from having the database?
- ii. Who would manage, maintain and update the database?
- iii. Who would have the time, means and capacity to overcome difficulties and shortcomings of the database?

It is difficult to determine what the database could actually be used for. RAMP has clearly demonstrated that the Housing Options Register is of no use as a strategic, dynamic tool upon which to rely for planning purposes. It is unclear whether any organisation would find the database useful as a reference tool to refer to as an illustrative guide as to adapted properties in the private sector.

If the database were to continue as an illustrative guide rather than a strategic tool it may survive beyond RAMP as there would not be a need to extensively update and maintain it. However, eventually the data would be so out of date that it would not serve any illustrative purpose. In 2010 who would be interested in the number of adapted properties in 2002? Therefore, realistically the Housing Options Register will have an extremely limited lifespan, were it to survive at all post RAMP.

C2 WORKING WITH PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING PROFESSIONALS

The most successful aspect of RAMP was working with private agencies. Therefore, the future is to build on previous successes with Property Managers and the ESPC to ensure that they remain on course for including details of adaptations on Property Schedules and to include fields for adaptations on the ESPC database and website. To ensure this will happen, an ongoing dialogue must be maintained with the relevant policy makers within these organisations. It will also be necessary to ensure that all relevant professionals and organisations are informed of any changes in policy. Furthermore, the avenues of how to ensure that objectives are achieved must be explored. It is one thing to provide Property Managers with a list of adaptations; it is another matter ensuring that they remember to take this information with them when viewing a property. Furthermore, a great list of adaptations and their definitions may not be the most practical aid to Property Manager. Consideration must be given to achieving a practicable and manageable method of providing such information. To this end, ongoing consultation with Property Managers will be essential in achieving a system that will appeal to them and therefore that will achieve the greatest success.

Where great progress was made with regard to achieving the ESPC and Property Managers' willingness to identify adapted properties, this is qualified by the fact that few adapted properties come on to the market. There is an insufficient supply of adapted properties for sale that meets the demand of disabled people to purchase suitably adapted accommodation¹⁵. Furthermore, even if an adapted property came on to the market and was purchased by a disabled person, it would be highly unlikely that the adaptations contained therein would be entirely suitable for, and tailored to, the particular needs of that disabled person. It follows that the issue of identifying properties for sale that are *adaptable* is becoming more and more important. If a property came on to the market could be described as e.g. "suitable for adaptation to meet the needs of a wheelchair user" or "the bathroom can be adapted to accommodate a wet floor shower".

The future of RAMP will involve defining what makes a property adaptable. It will be necessary to explore what are the basic requirements of a property to be capable of being adapted to accommodate the needs of e.g. a wheelchair user. Extensive work will need to be undertaken with specialist surveyors to determine what makes a property accessible. It would be beneficial to have a benchmark to refer to when identifying e.g. whether it would be possible to incorporate a wet floor shower into a bathroom. These basic benchmarking standards could then be referred to by Property Managers when viewing a property so that when a Property Schedule is drawn up, it would be possible to include that the property is suitable for being adapted to meet the needs of a disabled person. To take this a step further, it would be beneficial for the Property Schedule to state that the property is capable of being adapted for a specific type of disability e.g. for a wheelchair user. While this is an exceptional idea in principle, it will be essential to conduct extensive negotiations with the ESPC and Property Managers to translate it into reality. It is envisaged that a major concern of the ESPC and Property Managers will have is the issue of misrepresentation. Defining a property as adaptable will involve a subjective opinion. Therefore, clear standards must be set down as to what makes a property adaptable so that there is no element of doubt that could leave a Property Manager open to litigation.

¹⁵ For corroboration on this point please see the work of the organisation Ownership Options in Scotland.

C3 PROVIDING A BROKERAGE SERVICE

Using the Housing Options Register as a brokerage tool will never be able to compete with the ESPC or Property Managers. The aim of ensuring disabled people have the maximum opportunity of finding a suitable property will be achieved through continued working with these Housing Professionals. Therefore, there is no viable future for the brokerage service. Furthermore, the brokerage service cannot exist without the Housing Options Register. Since it has been submitted above that the Housing Options Register may not have a future, it follows that the brokerage service will also cease.

**C4 ROLLING RAMP OUT NATIONALLY ACROSS
SCOTLAND**

As the shortcomings and lack of success of the Housing Options Register have been clearly illustrated in the pilot of the Project in Edinburgh and the Lothians, it is submitted that these aspects of the Project should not be rolled out nationally. It may be that an interested national body may find the Housing Options Register as a useful historical reference tool. It remains to be seen whether such body exists. The Housing Options Register will never be a strategic and dynamic database that could be relied upon for Community Care or other national planning.

With regard to rolling out the achievements with the ESPC and Property Sales Group nationally the benefits are huge. By ensuring all organisations involved in the selling of properties include details of adaptations in their Property Schedules is the best way of mainstreaming equalities. This will be a difficult task to achieve at a national level due to the different organisations involved throughout Scotland e.g. Property Managers in the East and Estate Agents in the West. Furthermore, what one body considers to be a good idea, another may not be quite so easily persuaded. The only effective method of ensuring that achievements are made at a national level is to create a statutory obligation on housing professionals to include details of adaptations in their Property Schedules or to identify whether a property is adaptable.

The aspect of RAMP that will be most beneficial if rolled out nationally will be to obtain a national standard of what makes a property accessible. This will allow disabled people a greater access to the market. However, this will only be achieved if Property Managers and Estate Agents make this information available to disabled people. This is where statutory regulation will be essential.

D APPENDICES