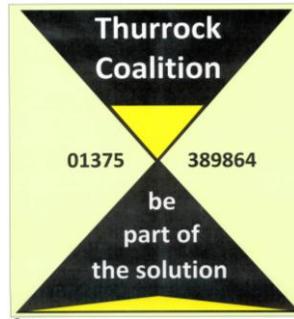


## Thurrock Coalition



Housing Hurdles - 5/07/12

### **Event Report and Recommendations**

#### **Introduction**

Thurrock Coalition offers advice and support for disabled and older residents of Thurrock and their carers. We are a wide network of individuals and groups aiming to inform people about their rights and entitlements and to improve the quality and choice of services that might assist them.

*The Housing Hurdles Event was held in order engage key organisations in the Third Sector including as well as Citizens of Thurrock, and Council Officers to explore and discuss issues around housing specifically affecting disabled people in Thurrock. The issues covered included: accessibility, assessments, experiences, delays, homelessness, equipment, adaptations and priority within the allocation system.*

*The event provided a valuable opportunity to explore the strengths of the Housing service in Thurrock and included discussions around what has worked/is working well presently and what has not worked so well and how to improve this moving forward based upon the lived experience of Thurrock Citizens. Further engagement events in the form of Issue Specific Focus Groups are planned in Co-production between Thurrock Coalition and Thurrock Council's Housing Directorate*

**Thurrock Coalition**  
**Housing Hurdles Event**  
**Recommendations**

- a) This report will serve as the starting point for further engagement.
- b) Thurrock Coalition will work closely with Thurrock Council's Housing Directorate to discuss, design and develop principles of good practice (to be identified through time limited task and finish groups) to support and strengthen the partnership between local government and the people of Thurrock.
- c) The Housing Directorate will then draw up an Action Plan in consultation with Thurrock Coalition and its networks.
- d) As a method of capturing the views of Adult Social Care staff around housing and its impact upon their roles, the possibility of developing online surveys/questionnaires through, for example, online "surveymonkey" will be researched and put into place if deemed appropriate and possible.
- e) All the future and subsequent co-productive work will aim to shine a light on the issues that affect people of Thurrock
- f) Thurrock Council's Housing Directorate wants to work to increase its understanding and engagement with disabled people to find out how disabled people and their families' access services with a view to achieving service improvement and then to:

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|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Use the results from the above planned engagement to make decisions about services and future investment</li><li>• Set up a reference group of residents to "access proof" specific services</li><li>• Bring together potential partners &amp; using Thurrock Council own resources</li><li>• Develop and design standards now and include the Thurrock Coalition in this work.</li></ul> |
|---|

- Commit to all new homes as lifetime homes
- Build for specific individuals and families
- Look at stages in people's lives not just differing ability / age, recognise transition as important
- Consider the contributions people want to make
- Recognise it's about more than services; it's about making it possible for people to live the lives they want to lead.
- Carry out a round table discussion with a view to commissioning task groups.

**Issues raised for the Thurrock Council Officers, including the Director of Housing to take away from the day and take action:**

- Invite Thurrock Coalition to become involved in the observation and delivery of training to Thurrock Council Housing personnel
- To update the Housing Adaptations policy to reduce waiting times
- To resolve Joel's housing adaptations situation

**Suggested Outcomes from the Housing Hurdles Event**

- 1) Individuals have choice and control of the housing services they receive which meets individual specific needs.
- 2) Individuals are listened to and understood throughout the housing assessment, allocation and adaptations process.
- 3) Individuals have access to specific advice, information, and advocacy and support when using housing services.
- 4) Individuals have experienced an accessible, equitable, transparent and person-centred housing service.
- 5) Individual's personal information is communicated effectively

and shared appropriately.

- 6) All housing professionals have received appropriate disability awareness training which is embedded across the service.

**A summary of the feedback from the Breakout Groups on the day appears below:**

**Breakout Groups in brief:**

John Paddick, Director of Thurrock Coalition succinctly noted the main points raised by individuals throughout the day. These were as follows:

- **Better signposting to Advocacy Services where requested or required**
- **Thurrock Borough Council to have increased empathy and sensitivity around disability awareness and timely and effective delivery and provision of information**
- **Treat people as individuals – my unique needs – they are unique to me and comprise 100% of my needs**
- **Make it easy for me to do business with you**
- **Make sure I understand the solution**
- **Further training/re-training of accredited private landlords**
- **Involvement of disabled people in awareness training**
- **Look at the relationship between health and social care, specifically around discharge, follow up assessments**
- **Opportunities for peer support – sharing real life experiences**
- **Further support at point of delivery**
- **Get the waiting time for adaptations down to 20 weeks within 6 months of July 2012**
- **Listening**
- **Communication**
- **Respect**
- **Awareness of Vulnerable Adults**
- **Disability Awareness training**

- **Registering referrals – thought done – wait – chase – lost – not logged – so have to start again.**

## **National observations and recommendations (from the Equality and Human Rights Commission – EHRC – formerly the Disability Rights Commission – DRC) - 2007<sup>1</sup>**

The observations contained in a 2007 EHRC/DRC paper deal with disability and housing issues and the interplay between the two issues. The recommendations for reform and associated needs and goals broadly reflect the Thurrock-specific picture and lived experiences of the speakers and citizens of Thurrock who attended the Housing Hurdles event and who participated in the Thurrock Diversity Network (TDN) Housing Accessibility Survey in May/June 2012.

### **Meeting the future housing challenge (Disability Rights Commission)**

In June 2007 the Disability Rights Commissions (DRC) launched its recommendations to meet the future housing challenge in England and Wales.

The housing sector in England and Wales faces many challenges, including meeting the demand for affordable housing, tackling homelessness, geographical disparities in supply and the need for a diversity of tenures.

Over the last three decades of the 20th century, the number of households in England and Wales increased by 30%, while the level of new house building fell by 50%. The number of households is

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<sup>1</sup> Disability and Housing Issues – Cambridge Sub-region’s Strategic Housing Market Assessment. Section F. Chapter 35. Available at:  
[http://www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk/documents/shma/ch\\_35\\_disability\\_and\\_housing\\_issues.pdf](http://www.cambridgeshirehorizons.co.uk/documents/shma/ch_35_disability_and_housing_issues.pdf)

projected to continue growing in England by 209,000 a year to 2026, of which 72% will be single person households.

This growth is linked to our ageing society. In his report on the costs of social care for the King's Fund, Sir Derek Wanless identified that in the next 20 years, the proportion of the population aged 85 and over in England is set to increase by two-thirds, compared with a 10% growth in the overall population.<sup>2</sup> This will significantly increase demand for accessible housing.

In a 2006 Ipsos/Mori poll commissioned by the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) 90% of the public said that they anticipated, in the event of needing support, that they would receive social care services to enable them to stay in their own home rather than be placed in (increasingly costly) residential care.<sup>3</sup> Yet in England there are already 300,000 people living in unsuitable housing who require accessible or adapted accommodation.

Systems of allocation within social housing are failing to ensure that accessible or adapted properties go to the people who need them most. Many local authorities have no mechanism for profiling the accessibility of housing stock or matching supply with demand. The choices available to people requiring accessible or adapted housing are therefore severely restricted. With demand already far outstripping supply, and growing steeply, action is required now to avert a new housing crisis.

Improving the supply of accessible housing, matched with support where needed, would save NHS resources. Research by the spinal injuries charity Aspire shows that it can cost around £1,000 a day to support a patient in a hospital spinal injury unit. In a single 18-month period, one spinal unit spent over £1.3 million because patients were facing delayed discharge – in 47% of cases, because of a lack of suitable housing for them to move into.

With more accessible housing and an improved system of adapting existing stock, the NHS could make substantial savings. Similarly, improved housing design can prevent falls – and hospitalisation – for people with mobility and visual impairments.

Disabled people are twice as likely to be social housing tenants, less likely to own their own homes and more likely to live in 'non-decent' homes. Poor housing impacts on adults' and children's health and well-being.

Between 1997 and 2004, the number of households accepted as being in priority need by local authorities due to 'physical disabilities' increased by 24% and due to mental health problems by 65%.

The DRC paper proposes policy solutions aimed at meeting the housing challenge in England and Wales.

### **An alternative future?**

The DRC believes that reform to the way we plan, design, maintain and allocate housing is achievable. The goal is more equal distribution of housing opportunities for disabled people.

The key objectives of an effective reform agenda are to:

- Ensure that the housing requirements, aspirations and experiences of disabled people are reflected in national, regional and local policy.
- Increase the supply and efficient use of accessible housing.
- Improve housing standards, conditions and life chances.
- Maximise housing choice for disabled people across all tenures.
- Reduce the incidence of homelessness.

Recommendations for action [should then be] set out in more detail, including actions for housing authorities nationally, regionally and locally, the Government, housing inspectorates, regulatory and good practice bodies.

There is also evidence from the Joseph Rowntree Foundation (JRF) that relates directly to the housing needs of people with physical impairments.<sup>2</sup> Although the research was carried out in 1995, the issues highlighted around housing aspirations and needs of disabled

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<sup>2</sup> Report available from: <http://www.jrf.org.uk/sites/files/jrf/h136.pdf>

people are still relevant and worthy of note in 2012. The main findings were as follows:

- a) The lack of choice over housing options for people with a physical disability was due primarily to a lack of information on their housing needs.
- b) Many people with a physical disability were reluctant to register their housing need with a local authority. This reluctance was due to a variety of reasons, one being the stigma attached to the notion of registration in any form.
- c) Information held by the various agencies on the needs of people with a physical disability was incomplete and incompatible and therefore ineffective as a planning tool.
- d) Many people with a physical disability wanted to remain or become owner-occupier but low income, lack of financial advice and limited information on what was available limited their options.
- e) Inflexible allocation systems tended to exclude occasional wheelchair-users; two thirds of the respondents in the survey were occasional wheelchair users.
- f) Lack of information on people wanting property meant that adapted property was difficult to let or was inappropriately let.
- g) Publicly funded adaptations were often removed prior to sale as their existence was felt to prejudice a sale.
- h) The willingness of all the relevant agencies to participate in the project indicated the level of support a multi-agency approach to meeting the housing needs of people with a physical disability had.

## **Thurrock Coalition – Housing Hurdles - Format of the day**

Thurrock Coalition invited residents and service providers, council officers and members. We set the main hall up in a “café style” with group tables of 5-6 for the various delegates.

There were several keynote speakers, including citizens of Thurrock and the new Director of Housing at Thurrock Council, Barbara Brownlee. There was a chance to get involved with some solution-focused discussions and café-style, solution-focused group work between presentations throughout the day.

There were several keynote speakers, followed by a chance for attendees to get involved with some solution-focused discussions and group work.

The day was the result of 12 weeks of planning and was co-ordinated by Ian Evans at Thurrock Coalition. We wanted to use the day as a platform for the voices of the residents of Thurrock to discuss their lived experiences of Housing Services in the borough and to provide a starting point and springboard for service improvement.

### **What was said**

The day started with a welcome and introduction by John Paddick as a Director of Thurrock Coalition. John outlined the agenda and purpose of the day and introduced Barbara Brownlee, Director of Housing at Thurrock Council. Barbara's 25-year career in housing spans both the public and private sector and has covered every aspect of the funding, regeneration, and management of housing in London. Starting in Local Authorities she finally left Hackney after a successful 10 years working in regeneration including large scale voluntary transfers (LSVT), major estate regeneration and the first cross-sectorial private finance initiative (PFI) bid to include housing on the Woodberry Down estate.

Barbara introduced the work of the Housing Directorate and covered the current service remit (as of July 2012) which includes provision of services for existing council residents, making necessary plans for a

new supply for future generations, delivering choices for all in Thurrock across all tenures.

Some interesting facts and figures covered in Barbara's speech

- In terms of the current customer base: 48% are known to the Housing Directorate and it will be this years' work to increase this number.
- There is also work being conducted around redesigning services that meet need and adopting a more local approach and providing s more personal offer (an offer shaped in partnership with individuals).
- The aim is that the personal offer will include the provision to offer management of gardens, specific repairs, Money Help & Advice, work around employability including help to find jobs / apprenticeships and finally, the provision of tailored access arrangements.
- This "Local Approach" will be achieved via moving away from counters, providing visits, and web based services, appointments & surgeries.
- The public spending on Housing Benefit for 2010/2011 was £22 billion
- Cap on benefits for out of work households – proposal is £500 per week
- Will be paid monthly (not fortnightly as some benefits currently are)

The full transcript of Barbara Brownlee's keynote speech appears in the appendices of this report.

**Point to note:**

**Thurrock Coalition's impact paper on the Welfare Reform agenda as it relates to Thurrock is available on our website (as are all of our reports):**

<http://www.thurrockcoalition.co.uk/projectsandreports.html>

Barbara was then given a postcard of Thurrock to note down during the day the top 3 actions that she will take away and implement as a result of the event. Thurrock Coalition would then keep the postcard and post it to Barbara in 6 months' time as a way of monitoring the impact and results following the event.



The next speaker was Ian Evans, Programme Co-Ordinator of Thurrock Coalition and Secretary of Thurrock Diversity Network, a registered Co-operative.

Ian explained that TDN had recently conducted a Peer to Peer survey of its members and received 78 responses from the 22 question survey.

Peer to peer research reaches people that formal methods do not reach:

- The interviewers are involved in the design and content of the questionnaire.
- Becoming a researcher gives individuals confidence and skills they can immediately use, with the support that they need.
- It helps people to identify social circles in which they are already included.
- It is carried out face-to-face where people are comfortable.
- Being interviewed by a friend or acquaintance enables people to feel more relaxed and co-operative.
- It is more likely that a true picture of their concerns can be obtained.
- Feedback to the interviewer and interviewee is an important part of the process.

Thurrock Diversity Network ran the peer to peer survey in order to find out about peoples experiences when looking for accessible accommodation in Thurrock. Our aim was that by sharing experiences and advice we can influence the improvement of housing services in the future.

The answers helped TDN to identify issues to address with the Break out groups during the Housing Hurdles event.

Some key issues identified by the TDN survey were that:

- ▶ People have experienced problems accessing rooms fully and freely
- ▶ People have experienced issues around a lack of storage space for equipment
- ▶ Consideration of the need for a spare room to cater for a P.A. should be seen as vital – Welfare Reforms are likely to adversely affect this
- ▶ People have concerns about costs of adaptations and delays in assessments and completion of work
- ▶ More needs to be done to raise awareness of the availability and eligibility of the Disabled Facilities Grant.
- ▶ There is a misunderstanding that private homeowners cannot apply for the Disabled Facilities Grant.
- ▶ People overwhelmingly said that property developers do not do enough to consult during the planning phase of developments
- ▶ Early consultation is vital
- ▶ Lifetime Homes Standard should be adopted throughout Thurrock
- ▶ There are not enough suitable alternatives to houses or ground floor flats, for example bungalows.
- ▶ The efforts and work around the promotion of Direct Payments and Personalisation could be replicated to good effect in the Thurrock Housing Directorate.
- ▶ Training and information on disability awareness and access should be provided to Local Authority Housing Officers
- ▶ All landlords require training on their legal rights and corresponding responsibilities towards disabled people and reasonable adjustments.

The full results appear in the Appendices of this report. Shona Gormley, Housing Occupational Therapist and Gavin Beard, Manager of the Occupational Therapy Team from Thurrock Borough Council gave a presentation on the work of their respective teams.

They discussed the work and diversity of the housing adaptations team, which consists of a various individuals from different professional backgrounds, including: Surveyors, Environmental Health officers, Housing Occupational Therapists, Customer Liaison Officers, Contractors, and Private Partners who all have a close working relationship with key social care officers. There is also a Disability Facilities Grant (DFG) Panel and all staff are scrutinised via close performance monitoring.

Shona then provided some information on the individual process of assessment “pathway” for obtaining a housing adaptation in Thurrock, the most striking of which is the number of working days (77) (15.4 weeks) from Assessment and referral to the Housing Adaptations Team.

### Major Works

Event	Average Working Days
Social Care Assessment and referral to Housing Adaptation Service	77

Shona and Gavin then shared some facts and figures on the number and type of priorities awarded in 2011-12:

Type	Total received
Applications received	347
Gold Medical Priority 1	5
Silver Medical Priority 2	83
Refused Cases	259
Cases requesting medical priority for mobility reasons	195

Number of applicants re-housed to a suitable property, using the Accessible Housing Register	<b>69</b>
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Point to note

**For more information on contacting Thurrock Council for an assessment of need from Adult Social Care:**

For clients aged 18+: 01375 652868

For clients under 18: 01375 413304

**For more information on contacting Thurrock Council regarding housing adaptations and medical priority:**

Customer Liaison Officer on 01375 652482

Email: [customer.liason.officer@thurrock.gov.uk](mailto:customer.liason.officer@thurrock.gov.uk)

Fax: 01375 652946

Visit: [www.thurrock.gov.uk/housing](http://www.thurrock.gov.uk/housing)

Shona and Gavin were then each given a postcard of Thurrock to note down during the day the top 3 actions that they will take away and implement as a result of the event. Thurrock Coalition would then keep the postcard and post it to Shona and Gavin in 6 months' time as a way of monitoring the impact and results following the event.

There was then an opportunity for people to discuss Housing related Assessments – For Adaptations/For Priority

Point to note: For ease of reference, the collated feedback from all 3 Breakout Groups appears in the Appendices of this report

**Peoples' lived experiences of housing in Thurrock**

Ged Brady, Mental Health Advocate at Thurrock Mind provided 4 examples of his advocacy caseload relating to Housing experiences and the varying outcomes (both positive and negative) for each of

those individuals. All the people in the examples have provided consent for their situation to be shared for the benefit of highlighting issues and improving services for people in the future.



**In Brief:**

In cases where Thurrock Mind Advocacy made representations to Thurrock housing department with supporting medical and social evidence from the community mental health team, decisions were re-considered, clients were awarded priorities and placed in more suitable housing with relevant and appropriate support.

The concern is that without necessary advice, information, support and appropriate support from services like Thurrock Mind, people would be increasingly vulnerable and living in unsuitable housing or even facing homelessness.

The cases and the respective outcomes are reproduced in the Appendices of this report.

There was then an opportunity for people to discuss peoples' Attitudes in terms of Private Tenures vs. Social Tenures

**Point to note:** For ease of reference, the collated feedback from all 3 Breakout Groups appears in the Appendices of this report

The second breakout group was followed by a lunch break.

The first speaker of the afternoon was Christine Ludlow, an Advocate for BATIAS. Batias is a local Charity that provides advocacy support for adults with learning difference in South Essex.



Housing is one of the main areas of work for BATIAS. The most common housing issues illustrated by practice examples are:

- How to apply for housing and understanding the process
- Registering as homeless
- Using the bidding system
- Medical questionnaires
- Lack of housing choice
- How to apply for and get an occupational therapy assessment for an adaptation to the home
- Anti-social behaviour and neighbour issues, noise and harassment
- Victims of crime such as burglary and criminal damage to property
- Inflexibility of housing policy and procedures
- Repairs
- Rent and council tax problems
- Various tenancy issues
- Instances of delays – leading to crises and applications to Social Care to bridge the funding gap until solutions are found

There was then an opportunity for people to discuss peoples' lived experiences of housing services and provision in Thurrock

Point to note: For ease of reference, the collated feedback from all 3 Breakout Groups appears in the Appendices of this report

The next speaker was Anne White, Co-Chair of the Thurrock Learning Disability Partnership Board.



Anne wanted to share her experiences of the hurdles she encountered over a period of several years. Anne has been a Council Tenant for 32 years and has had many housing hurdles in that time.

- Anne was burgled in September 2008
- The police had to break down the door in order to get into the property.



**Anne's old front door, after the burglary in 2008**

- Despite visits from Council Officers, new locks were not fitted for a month.
- Anne was supported by Christine Ludlow from BATIAS to find a suitable insurance company for the property.
- Anne said she thought that Thurrock Council would be a good idea, so approached them. However, she was told that because she had been burgled twice the Council Insurers would not insure the property and that has left Anne feeling more vulnerable and isolated.
- Eventually Thurrock Council fitted the new door, but the whole process took a total of three years and one day (Tuesday 27 September 2011).



**Anne, outside her new front door – September 2011**

Anne then shared her experiences of a housing adaptations assessment for a new wet room. Despite requests for a face-to-face assessment, Anne still had to have a telephone assessment.

Anne stressed the importance of having a face-to-face assessment in her home environment:

- For assessments over the telephone one cannot tell how the person taking the notes sees or understands you or your situation.
- My view is that it would have been best to have a plain document in front of me.
- Secondly to have had Christine Ludlow (BATIAS's Advocate) to be hearing my reply to the person on the end of the phone.
- The right language must be used to get one concerns across.
- After seeing the written assessment things had been missed off.
- I spoke to Mr. Beard, Occupational Therapy Team Manager and I felt he was able to understand my concerns.
- Four months later an Occupational Therapist came to look at the difficulties that I was having. I had Christine Ludlow (BATIAS) with me.
- A total of 14 weeks after this visit, the wet-room was completed

Anne has now been advised by Thurrock Council that her kitchen needs replacing and the housing department are now waiting for Anne to clear the kitchen, ready for work to begin.

The final presentation of the day was given by Joel Eastaugh, Chair of Thurrock Centre for Independent Living (TCIL) and a resident of Thurrock.



Joel spoke about his experiences of trying to get his kitchen and bathroom adapted through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) system.

Joel explained that in 2004 he was assessed by Thurrock Council for Housing Adaptations for a Kitchen, downstairs bedroom and downstairs wet-room (ready for him to return home from hospital following a road traffic accident in 2002). Joel was discharged from hospital in 2007, but building work for the bedroom and wet room did not commence until October 2009. There was then further delay relating cost implications of re-siting the boiler and use of original plans/drawings. The wet room and bedroom were not completed until later 2010. It was then that the kitchen was ripped out, ready for the new kitchen to be fitted, but no further work has taken place. In March 2010 Joel was told that Thurrock Borough Council had run out of money for the work and it had to be deferred for another year. In April 2011 Joel was told work could commence, however, it is now July 2012 and Joel is still waiting for his kitchen to be completed so that is suitable for use.

Joel is experiencing on-going difficulties in using the kitchen safely, securely and effectively in its current state:

- The oven is too high and doesn't work
- The hob is the wrong height
- There is an unsafe gap between cooker, sink and worktops – causing accidents and injuries – e.g. burns
- Carers also struggling to use kitchen effectively and safely
- Difficulty in maintaining good nutrition

## **Conclusion**

As the User-Led Organisation for Thurrock, Thurrock Coalition is keen to provide input in a comprehensive and strategic manner and to ensure that the actions from the day are directly informed by the views and concerns of residents of Thurrock. The Housing Hurdles event has served as a springboard for further development and closer working relationships between the people who live in Thurrock, Thurrock Coalition and Thurrock Council Housing Directorate.

## Housing Hurdles – Appendices

### Barbara Brownlee, Director of Housing, Thurrock Council Keynote Speech delivered at Thurrock Coalition – “Housing Hurdles” event - 5<sup>th</sup> July 2012

*For me, I've spent a long time in housing and it's hard to compress it down to a few things, but I've tried to.*

*There's something about services in Thurrock that we need to improve, across the board and across all of housing, so the services we deliver to people who are existing council tenants. There's also something around building new supply. It's a long time since Thurrock had a major, affordable house building programme. To be honest, I think a long time since Thurrock had a major house building programme, affordable or not and that is my challenge. That isn't that easy, everybody knows we're in hard times economically and hard times frighten house builders. Our job is to get an affordable programme of housing back on track. I'm charging the council with number of 200 a year and those are the numbers we're going to meet, so we are going to start building more affordable homes.*

*The other big area, the third area is something around choice for everyone. I get a feeling that sometimes you get to a place and there are services and they're ok, and you can make those services marvelous with quite a lot of work by everybody, and a place could be delivering absolutely excellent service but really the thing it should be doing is delivering tailored services. However good you get, if you're still delivering the sort of service where we think everybody's the same and we deliver the same type of advice or the same type of options to everyone then it's just actually not good enough. So there's something about choice and tailoring services that I really want to look at over the next year.*

*So those are my three big areas of work, I think I may have described them over on that table slightly differently but it's always interesting how we see about it.*

*So, taking service delivery first, let's start in the place where I started*

*in my first week in Thurrock. I thought "Okay, what do we know about our current customers, who lives in our stock?" And we don't know anything about more than half of them, that's where we are. That's really disappointing and it's not good and we need to put that right. We have information on less than fifty per cent of the people who live in houses at the moment. That means we don't know if they are working or not. We don't know if they have accessibility problems or not. We don't know if they can speak to us in English, or not English preferably. We don't know if they are old or young. We don't know anything about them. That is a dreadful place to start planning your service delivery from. You need to know your customers. So we've set in train immediately a big piece of work to try and get that forty eight per cent up to nearer one hundred per cent. This year we are going to do a range of things which are about getting to know our residents. So, we're knocking on doors, making phone calls, we're using other peoples information because in that wonderful bureaucratic way, a lot of our colleagues in other services know some of our customers better than we do. So we're trying to do a lot of joined up stuff in the back office with Adult Social Services and Children's Services about what they know so that our knowledge of housing customers is better. So that's the first thing for me because you can't start designing your services until you know who you're delivering them to.*

*Those are the things that we are going to re-design services. We are going start using a local approach, we are going to start thinking about Thurrock as one place and offering one service across the whole of Thurrock We are going to look at delivering more personalised services extending the offer that we make to people in our houses. There's lots of ways to do that, we do a little bit at the minute. We offer people who can't manage their gardens who qualify, a bit of gardening help. We need to look much more carefully at offering people different types of repair services. There's a lot of people who need different priority repairs because of how they are something is a priority to them that may not be to somebody else. We don't that well at the moment at all. We need to look at doing more around employment, training and job opportunities for our residents. I put that in, those are some of the things I've talked about, a local approach, moving away from counters and one place for everybody, it isn't brilliant and doesn't work for everybody. We want to look at*

*more home visits, more services on the web, and appointments with you more often to talk about specific things and more local surgeries. There's some of the ideas just to start with around personal offers. As I said, the current thing is around managing gardens and a few extra repairs. We need to look at those in much more detail.*

*Hugely, we need to start looking at something around money help and advice. In a way and I see there's already been some papers circulated for this meeting and the reason we really need to prioritise things around financial inclusion, help and advice, debt counselling apprenticeships, training is, and this, I don't know if people has seen this before, this is about housing, this is just an overview of the horror really of what's going on with welfare reform at the minute and I'm sure a lot of you know in a lot more detail than me but in terms of the effect, it effects everyone, it affects housing as much as anywhere else and there are some facts and figures about the financial situation that we are in that this government is dealing with this year and that's how it's seen. There are £200 billion spent on Welfare and pension payments and those are the figures that the government is attacking and is going to cut. We're all aware that they are attacking it in many ways and there's a huge amount of work going on in Thurrock at the minute in housing and colleagues that we know in Adult social Care and Children's Services are working together to try and get a handle on this to work out who exactly is going to be affected, how they are going to be affected and what sort of help we can offer, because if you take the general figures, and these are just some of the worries that we have as a council about what's going to happen, in between October 2013 and October 2017 the benefit regime for everyone is going to change enormously and their benefits are going to be reduced and within that there are huge issues for individuals, there are huge for people trying to pay their rent we are worried even about the systems being in places to support the changes, for example the I.T. systems because of what the government is demanding and how fast they demand some of those changes are made.*

*So that for me is just the framework of why we have to start making an extended offer in housing which is about financial inclusion, it's about giving you help with money, with paying rent, with how to deal with money and welfare benefits and we are going to start offering those services that we haven't offered before.*

*In Thurrock, as a very rough and ready calculation that our Director of Finance is using, he does admit that it is very “back of a cigarette packet” but the changes will, in general, take something like £40 million out of Thurrock. Now that’s just out of everybody’s pocket in those benefit cuts and that is a huge drop in income for people in Thurrock, so that’s something we have to deal with.*

*A couple of more minutes really, there’s something, just moving on from that, in a bit of a more positive way really, it’s the way we want to go forward in housing is through events like this. We have to start discussing with people here, with resident’s, with citizens, with a range of partners, what people want from us, to not assume that we know, and not assume that we can deliver it perfectly without asking and listening.*

*So we want to move forward to service improvement through a lot of listening and engagement with groups like this and on days like this and at events like this. That is what I am determined we will do over the next twelve months.*

*We need to get a picture of peoples aspirations, what people’s needs are, what they want. We need to get a really good picture of what we deliver well, because there are some things we deliver really well, but to be incredibly honest about where we don’t and where we are absolutely failing to deliver well, accept that, hear it and work with service users to put it right and change it. There’s no other way to do it. There’s no point us being defensive, there’s no point us pretending, I’m sure a lot of people in this room are here because they have had awful experiences. If you’ve had fantastic experiences of the council and/or housing, you’re probably at home now, very happy. I know that and that’s what we just need to hear, understand, work out why things have happened as they are happening and change them. We need to look at who is accessing housing and how and that’s a lot about today.*

*So we’ve got to use the results of all of that to make some big changes and one of the things that I wanted to put on the table to think about today is whether or not we should put together a group from today, to work with us in housing over the coming year to do a bit more and further work on services, on the type of housing we*

*should be developing, how we should be dealing with our customers, how we should be offering our service. So, that's one of the things I wouldn't mind adding to the round the table discussion. Is there something we should take from this group and keep going, rather than making this a one off? I think that would be a really valuable if we could arrange that.*

*Just as, for the last two minutes, a few words about the supply of new homes. This is just where we were getting to on my table, talking about how we are going to do this. We do have the ability now, a brand new ability given to us by this government, the ability to borrow in housing, which we've never ever had before, and we are going to use a bit of that, with a bit of our own resource, with a bit of housing associations resource and a bit of cross-building private and affordable housing and put those things together to fund a new programme. So there will be a bit of council resource in there, a bit of private sector resource and some housing association resource. So it won't be straightforward council money building, it will be different models and it will be mixed tenure, you'll get private for sale, next to affordable and that's the way of the future because it's the way of making it stack up financially. But that is what we are determined to do. We are putting together now, absolutely just started, it was just started last week so you are right in on this, standards for design of how we will build. One of the things I would like to come back to this group with is to add to that, to shape that design standard with us.*

*We committed to making all new builds to Lifetime Standard, that's a basic. We're not going to build anything that isn't, ever again. But actually we want to do better than that, that is a basic and we should be building that. We want to talk to you about what above that we should be doing. We can build for individuals and families that we know are in Thurrock and we know have very specific issues, it's being done elsewhere and we should be doing it here and not a lot of that has happened. So that's a few things around the area of building new homes that I want to take further.*

*Just absolutely finish with really, I suppose I'm just going to tell you something that is more of a reflection of me and how I think about doing this job really which for me it's about recognising that people change throughout their life, everyone does right, absolutely*

*everyone does. Throughout their life people can become vulnerable for lots of reasons, but are not vulnerable again a month later. People are perfectly able to deal with a whole load of horrible bureaucracy for six months and then suddenly they're not for a particularly reason, those things happen to us all, absolutely to all of us and those periods where we change or are in transition or become vulnerable are really important periods and it's when the council needs to be able to support people.*

*Equally on the other side of that, there are huge contributions that every single person in Thurrock can make. And people have the ability to make a different contribution in almost as many ways as there are different people in Thurrock, and one of the things is that we're not listening to people and we're not letting them make the contribution that they are able to make.*

*In a way, the Council is over here and saying: "This is how it is!" and people are over there and banging on the door saying: "It's not really working for me!" If we break that barrier down, not only will we offer something better for people who are living here but we will get more from the people who are living here. So on both sides I think that there will be a huge gain if we get this right. It's recognition really that it's something more than just the council delivering better services, it's about making it possible for people in Thurrock to live how they want to live. That is a culture and a movement that I think is my biggest challenge to get right in housing and that's what I have come here to do.*

**Barbara Brownlee, Director of Housing, Thurrock Council**  
**5<sup>th</sup> July 2012**

## **Feedback from the Breakout groups and “Actions Postcards”**

### **Breakout Groups – Part 1**

Each of the Breakout groups were facilitated by various “Table Leads” at which all attendees (including citizens, council officers and members) were asked to think about and discuss their individual experiences of assessments, attitudes and lived experiences of accessing housing services in the borough. A verbatim record of the feedback is listed below.

#### **Facilitators were all given the following guidance**

##### Part 1 – Assessments

1. Have you ever asked for a housing-related assessment?
2. What are your experiences of asking for housing adaptations?
3. What barriers did you experience? (If any)
4. What would have improved the experience or made it easier?

### **Breakout Groups Feedback - Assessments**

- *50% of table have asked for housing related assessment*
- *Experiences -“rubbish”- not listened to – individual better place to know what they need*
- *“Repairs” (Morrisons) -10 wks. for simple repairs, unnecessary? Repairs, repeated visits, not turning up*
- *Admin don’t know services available*
- *Terminology – not understood communication*
- *General info – “deleted” e.g. housing repairs, repeated request, rather than dealt with priorities e.g. light bulb esp. visually impaired*
- *Lack of understanding of need*
- *Delays in improvements programme – e.g. doors, double glazing, kitchen, bath rooms*

- *Leaseholder issues in TBC owned blocks*
- *Haven't asked because of delay*
- *Won't get anything, offered me £1000 to move to sheltered accommodation – support packages to move not just financial help, Don't have a disability, Don't think I'd get priority, long term unemployed, facing homelessness*
- *Disabled Facilities Grant shower – 1yr waiting*
- *Asked to be housed*
- *Family disabled (father), adaptations in place-parents, so suitably housed, not a priority to Thurrock Bough Council*
- *Barriers – Timeline, process-rules and regs, attitudes-upsetting-emotive, need to be a nuisance to get things done, private landlords, minor adaptations only, mother paid for them herself, not aware of Disabled Faculties Grant, eligibility*
- *Early on – better/more public consultation, make it better, safety net for all, financial support, awareness-helplines. More focus on basic adaptations, more social housing, more understanding of needs-shorter waiting lists*
- *Enquiries from people get lost*
- *Little awareness of Disabled Faculties Grant*
- *Huge time lapse between first contact and action*
- *Could Dept. of Works and Pensions assessment be used to facilitate action (to speed up council action)*
- *A named person or dept. for all referrals*
- *Phone option i.e. Press "3" for disability/carer support*
- *Communication and feedback to "customer" is essential e.g. To advise the applicant where he/she is in the system*
- *Difficulty in accessing direct payments system (especially for dementia applicants)*
- *What information is available and where (more on original tenancy agreement)*
- *High % of medical refusals is a problem*
- *If people are turned down e.g. mental health where do they go?*
- *More than one assessment – can it be held/done by one team (C.S.T) Customer service advisors – well trained?*
- *Could advocacy be attached to a housing office?*
- *Staff have not got enough time*
- *Adaptation appointments "hit and miss" much quicker if you*

*have money/private*

- *People with learning difficulties should get double length appointments*
- *Community Learning difficulties nurses no longer providing support in homes*
- *Sharing and knowing information is key*
- *Data protection – get round this? If same organisation why a problem? Urban myth, treating people as individuals*
- *Mental Health*
- *How medical – qualified? To make decision with stroke, neurology*
- *No choice of house location*
- *Waiting*
- *Communication*
- *What are priorities? Necessities can impact on other aspects of health*
- *Don't listen*
- *We're all individuals*
- *Don't follow up after work done*
- *Pleased that council are being pro-active with certain disused housing stock being adapted and allocated to disabled and future mental health clients (disability partnership board)*
- *Now medical does not take into account a GP's recommendations*
- *Must have appeals process – equality*
- *Financial assessments do not take into account all expenditure that relates to persons disability – need a broader definition of allowable expense*
- *Take far too long – self – assessments and telephone assessments create issues and social care have had to modify their system due to inequalities*
- *Disabled adaptations should be as standard be carried out with health and safety at the heart and ramps*
- *Disabled Facilities Grants – assessments and criteria must be broad to ensure equality across all impairments (physical has historically taken preference over learning disability) mental health)*
- *What are the limits for Disabled Facilities Grants and surveyors*

*can assess feasibility of adaptation before granting funds*

*How to improve experience?*

- *Improve officer awareness/training, communication skills, regarding accessibility needs*
- *Better monitoring of contractors (Morrisons and sub-contractors)*
- *Contractor ID – “password” (not used for visually impaired)*
- *Final checks/inspections – no pay until checked*
- *Make service personal*
- *Speedier response e.g. Need for new door (burglary) = 3 yrs. 1 day*
- *Respect*
- *Treat as would like to be treated*
- *Personal – dealt with as individual need*
- *Training (on communication needs, individual needs)*
- *More support for tenants in private rented accommodation*

**Breakout Groups – Part 2**

**Facilitators were all given the following guidance**

**Part 2 – Attitudes - Private Tenures vs. Social Tenures**

1. What are your experiences of the attitudes of private landlords/social housing landlords/housing officers?
2. What barriers did you experience? (If any)
3. What would have improved the experience or made it easier?

## **Breakout Groups Feedback - Attitudes – private tenures vs. social tenures**

- *Need list of accredited landlords – what does it cover... can “vulnerable” / disabled people train them / interview*
- *What does this cover?*
- *Why should people go to MIND rather than the council*
- *What is the consequence for private landlords who don't allow adaptations?*
- *Private landlords forum*
- *Can we influence?*
- *Registered provider forum*
- *More community hubs and less “offices” - maybe a separate housing office*
- *Giving real advice... letting agency, legal advice, mortgage advice, general advocacy, debt counselling*
- *Vulnerable people should be allowed to pay direct to landlord easily*
- *There should not be separate paths for housing services – equality*
- *Council has institutional procedures that assume private tenures / residents have means which is not always the case*
- *Council properties are maintained for the disabled and older residents ( at least in part !! ) but this is a big issue for private residents whose means diminish over time and have no access to same council schemes*
- *Obscurity of poverty in old age means some do not have means other than their home to pay for maintenance – why be a private tenant as you are no better off*
- *What happened to “Helping Hands” handyman services*
- *“Of course it is”*
- *Finances affect support available*
- *Thurrock Bough Council estates less well looked after*  
*Do private landlords have the same “duty of care”?*
- *Thurrock Borough Council property – “put back as was”*
- *Lack of interest from landlords / officer*
- *Disrespect by council officers*
- *“I didn't say that” !! (Officers)*

- *Tenants are a “nuisance”, “pain”, “patronising” by officers*
- *Officers pay “lip service”*
- *“Bullying” by officers “dictatorship”*
- *Lack of housing help w/ mortgage*
- *Too much help if In social housing*
- *Council tenant*
- *Disruptive neighbours – tried to complain*
- *Don’t feel listened to*
- *Live w/ parents – no problems*
- *Social housing landlord*
- *“Shady”*
- *Knowledge, training – job*
- *In basic housing issues*
- *I know – awareness*
- *“Shout loudest – gets answered”*
- *Lack of mapping*
- *Need a clear pathway – step by step – so people know where they are*
- *Communication – within Council is lacking left h vs. right h*
- *Homeless – trying to phone shelter – ring out – over and over*
- *Growth industry*
- *Better*
- *Disability training – everyone*
- *Frontline training*
- *Shouldn’t judge – appearances / ideal outcome*
- *In person / read back*
- *Accurate info recording*
- *Clear policy and procedure*
- *Rec of Q and A – accurate interpretation*
- *Respect*
- *Dignity*
- *Thurrock Borough Council – move authority over private landlords*
- *Legal obs*
- *Beware – insensitive landlords (just out for the money)*
- *Problems of electrical safety etc. (which landlord will not deal with)*
- *Direct Payments – short, need to continually re – apply – v.*

*difficult to manage with all the constrictions*

- *Unitary “borough” lack of “emotional” sensitivity from council workers. Lack of facilities for disabled can force people to go outside the borough e.g. For work placement, but no transport assistance given*
- *Affordability – private*
- *Repairs – wait too long*
- *Social housing – more secure*
- *But can be long wait for repairs*
- *People will sometimes do these themselves*
- *Communication – unable process can be complicated*
- *Too many officers involved*
- *Poor people skills – communication again!*
- *Waiting for an answer – too long #*
- *Poor customer service*
- *Training – communication and skills*
- *Listen to people*

### **Breakout Groups – Part 3**

**Facilitators were all given the following guidance**

#### **Part 3 – Peoples’ lived experience of housing**

1. What are your experiences of living in either private or social housing? These can be positive or negative.
2. What barriers did you experience? (If any)
3. What would have improved the experience or made it easier?

## **Breakout Groups Feedback - Peoples' lived experience of housing**

- Council policy of removing tenant's improvements when they vacate property – a complete waste
- Two year wait for shower and when adaptation complete there was no seat – waited another 8 ½ months
- Council did not act in equal way when interpreting the health act and historical policy for disabled facilities grant potentially breached equality laws. Took 3 years for adaptation
- For private tenants who have impairment or are older they need help with gardening and maintenance that is low cost or free
- Poor accessibility to services – re Telephone (automated), need to repeat self – going round in circles – pillar to post. Calls not returned
- Form filling – difficulty getting large print forms / letters, audio email font – too small
- Inflexibility – telephone call
- Letter (small print cards / letter / ID) – lack of knowledge re individual customers
- Repairs not logged
- Improvements
- Make appts in appropriate way / most suitable way for person
- Knowledgeable staff
- Common sense / respect / personal – everyone is an individual
- Good experience of living in Council property (supported) sometimes
- Not enough choice
- Inappropriate allocation
- “Homes for life” – should be “choice of lifestyle”
- Hate crime – attitude is key
- Supporting people in employment
- Individuals – need to be treated as...
- People to be involved in local community and know their networks
- Problem of neighbours
- Communal facilities
- Policies – a clause

- “special circumstances”
- JSA Job Seekers Allowance only £70 per week – not enough support  
Struggling – mortgage £ if LT unemployed
- Social housing
- Forgotten about DL
- Not allowed by Thurrock Borough Council to live independently
- Starting to become an informal carer, this is affecting my independence
- Not got my own space, this is also affecting my work
- Lack of flexibility
- Not enough of the right stock
- Currently in a 3 bed house - Couple want bungalow and their son wants his own flat. Why can't this be married up / solved  
E.g. Seabrook rise E.g. bungalows all over the borough
- Handrails at bath / stairs
- Flexibility of policies would maximize individual independence
- Not enough stock for single young people
- Too much focus on things people can't do – deficit
- Need positive focus
- Penalised for being honest
- Houses need to be built to “whole life” use e.g. doors wide enough for a wheelchair, low threshold, etc.
- Proper budget management needed to suit people's needs as quickly as possible
- Liaison between depts. of paramount importance

**Issues raised at Housing Hurdles which the Thurrock Council Officers, including the Director of Housing will take away from the day and take action:**

1. Improve assessment targets from 4 weeks to 2/3 months

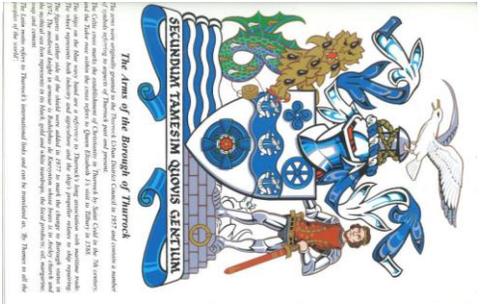
2. Capture service user experience + engage w/ vol / 3rd sector organisations

3. Self Ax for basic equip / adapt to be available?

Gravin Beard  
Thurrock Council People Services, ASC, OT Services  
Civic Offices, New Rd  
Grays, Essex, SMT 6016

Views of Grays: Centre, The Riverside  
Clockwise from top left: Thameside Complex, The High Street, The Parish Church, The Park, A Thurrock Museum Postcard

**THURROCK COUNCIL**



Consult Thurrock Coalition re Adaptation Policy Review

Resolve / complete T.E. situation

Invite service users to next training

Contractor / A.A. Approved Assessor

Shona Gormley  
Housing Occ. Therapist  
PHSAT  
Civic Offices  
New Road  
Grays  
Essex



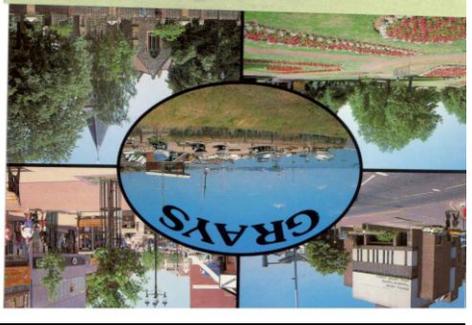
**POSTCARD**

① Reduce time taken from start to finish on major adaptations 30 weeks → ?

② Shape & deliver refreshed disability / diversity awareness training for staff

③ Register Referrals.

Thurrock Museum, Thameside Complex  
Onsett Road, Grays Thurrock, Essex RM17 5DX  
Tel: (01375) 302656 Fax: (01375) 302656



## Thurrock Diversity Network Housing Accessibility Survey – May 2012



Thurrock Diversity Network

Thurrock Diversity Network wants to find out about your experiences when looking for accessible accommodation.

We hope that by sharing experiences and advice we can influence the improvement of services in the future.

Your answers will help us to identify issues to address at a Thurrock Coalition Housing Hurdles event in June 2012.

Please take a few minutes to complete our survey.

**All questions are optional. If you require additional answer sheets, please ask.**

**1. Name**

**2. Age**

<b>Age range</b>	<b>22-89</b>
------------------	--------------

**3. Email address**

**4. Do you live in Thurrock?**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>77</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>1</b>

**5. Do you consider yourself to be a disabled person?**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>46</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>33</b>

**6. Which of the following best describes your disability?**

Physical	<b>38</b>
Sensory	<b>8</b>
Learning Difference	<b>11</b>
Mental Health Issue	<b>9</b>
Other (please specify) (below)	<b>1</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Underactive thyroid, arthritis, artificial hips now wearing</b></li> </ul>	

**7. We may wish to publish your name in a report to help to improve Thurrock Council's Housing Service, would this be ok?**

Yes	<b>30</b>
No	<b>22</b>
Quote me anonymously	<b>21</b>

### 8. Where do you currently live?

At home with parents	<b>6</b>
In private rented accommodation	<b>8</b>
In social housing	<b>27</b>
In home I own	<b>37</b>

•

### 9. Have you ever encountered a lack of knowledge on accessibility and housing from any of the following service providers? (Please tick all that apply)

Estate Agent	<b>9</b>
Student Accommodation Office	
Housing Officer	<b>15</b>
Local Authority	<b>19</b>
Private Landlord	<b>8</b>
Other (please specify)	

### 10. Would you feel confident that advice given by estate agents, local authorities and other housing providers would be accurate when it comes to access needs?

<b>Yes</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>47</b>

If “yes” Please give details

• I have had occasion to ask question s and either get
--

passed around from person to person or given differing information from different people.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General lack of disability awareness from all estate agents encountered</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• General lack of awareness of wheelchairs and our lack of ability to navigate steps etc.</li> </ul>

**11. Have any of the following issues limited your search for accessible accommodation? (Please tick all that apply)**

Trouble in accessing rooms which you can use fully and freely e.g. kitchen, bathroom	<b>17</b>
Lack of storage space for equipment	<b>14</b>
Width of doors	<b>11</b>
Height of handles for cupboards/doors	<b>11</b>
Ramped access	<b>17</b>
Lift size or reliability	<b>8</b>
Lighting	<b>2</b>
Other (please specify) (below)	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Height of plugs etc.</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• I have 5 steps that I have to go down and would like it made easy for me. Like making steps into a slope. Another step for front and back door as I have a job getting down them</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Properties advertised as “ground floor” and assured as such by estate agents turn out to have several steps at front door upon arrival to view property</li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• As a carer I noticed elderly complexes were not suitable as doors on wrong way so people with walkers had to walk from front room/or bedroom into door way open door and then</li> </ul>	

they could then get in bathroom the gap between their walker and door was tiny also would not be suitable for wheelchair users

**12. When looking for accommodation, has factoring in an additional bedroom for a Personal Assistant/Carer/Family member been a challenge and an additional expense?**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>19</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>29</b>
<b>Please explain</b>	

**13. Has a landlord ever refused to carry out minor disability-related adjustments and adaptations or refused to let you make your own adjustments?**

<b>No</b>	<b>32</b>
<b>Yes</b>	<b>13</b>

If so, please explain, including how you resolved the issues

- Had to be council approved adaptations took over 6 mths for appointment for an inspector to come out (to get on list) took another 5 mths for inspection to be done
- Kitchen replacement as not adapted for personal needs
- Ramped access as live in block of flats landing is communal so won't fit due to health and safety despite neighbours agreeing

**14. Do you feel that a lack of information from estate agents, local authorities or other providers has prevented or deterred you from living independently?**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>21</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>33</b>
<b>Please give details</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>When I 1<sup>st</sup> become disabled lack of knowledge at Thurrock Council was unbelievable. When I was re-housed the assessment wasn't disability friendly</b></li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Took too long to get adaptations during this time prevented living independently</b></li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Costly to have adaptations – or would have to go through lots of assessments and wait ages for adaptations to be put in</b></li> </ul>	

**15. Do you think property developers do enough to consult with and listen to disabled people when they plan and build homes?**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>56</b>
<b>Please give details (below)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No I don't think anywhere near enough is</b></li> </ul>	

<p><b>done for people that buy young, as they get older there are not suitable facilities.</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Rooms are too small for wheelchairs users – doors not wide enough!</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>In my experience not but maybe it is better now than years ago.</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Recent cases show lack of understanding no drop steps for access to new housing etc</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No one thinks about disabled when building or it's a add on</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Bungalows don't get built just flats and houses with stairs</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>They [are] only worried about how fast they build and money they make disabled access properties would be slower to build and cost more!</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Housing gets built and consulted upon/adapted after the fact</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Toilets are poorly planned out</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>For example disabled toilets, it's obvious that in most disabled/accessible toilets a wheelchair user didn't have anything to do with the design</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Access issues – not catering for everyone's needs</b></li> </ul>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>More consultation from people with various disabilities should be encouraged</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>No because there is always room for improvements</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>I think it becomes a requirement</b></li> </ul>

**16. If you moved away from your current home, are you confident that you would easily be able to find a property that would be suitable for the adaptations you require?**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>44</b>
<b>Please give details (below)</b>	<b>1 - Don't know</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>I live in a house, and really need a bungalow, but a bungalow is a lot dearer than a house, so I would find it difficult to find suitable alternative property</b></li> </ul>	

**17. "Most disabled people are just as keen to get on the property ladder as non-disabled people" Do you agree with this statement?**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>47</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Please give details (below)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>If you own your own property. You have to pay for adjustments for better living. Rent (from council) normally means you get the</b></li> </ul>	

<b>jobs done without any major expense.</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>With correct adaptations they can live independently</b></li> </ul>

### 18. Have you heard of the Disabled Facilities Grant?

<b>Yes</b>	<b>24</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>42</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Please give details of your experiences</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Very poor I've been waiting since 2004 for my kitchen</b></li> </ul>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>When speaking to CST (community solutions team) they were unaware this still existed and told me it didn't</b></li> </ul>	

### 19. Have you heard of Direct Payments?

<b>Yes</b>	<b>39</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>28</b>
<b>Please briefly share your experiences (below)</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>If as, I believe the Direct Payments are made to allow people choice of carers or services then it could be very confusing. When people have disabilities or problems they need to</b></li> </ul>	

<b>know they will be cared for and problems taken off of them, not having to keep sorting things out for themselves.</b>
<b>• Love D.P however poor information has led me to be in debt with the council</b>
<b>• We employ carers/P.As to work in the home and also for holidays using direct payments</b>
<b>• Too many loopholes and system needs to be streamlined</b>

**20. Would you feel confident about accessing the same level of care and support if you moved out of Thurrock?**

<b>Yes</b>	<b>25</b>
<b>No</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Not sure</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>Please give details (below)</b>	
<b>• Varies according to area</b>	
<b>• It would mean getting to know people at a different authority and getting them to know me and my needs.</b>	

**21. What do you think could be done to improve the experiences of disabled people looking for accessible accommodation?**

Disability awareness training for estate agents, construction companies and housing providers	<b>52</b>
Educating estate agents on the value of adaptations	<b>49</b>
Improving the access into high street estate agents	<b>40</b>
More information about access on websites	<b>37</b>
A database of accessible housing	<b>39</b>
Accessible affordable housing being allocated to disabled people	<b>46</b>
More planning for accessible homes with basic access – wide doors, lower switches, wet rooms	<b>45</b>
Making landlords aware of their legal obligations through factsheets/blogs/vlogs	<b>35</b>
Other (please specify)	

## 22. Do you have anything else to add?

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Why shout houses be necessarily be suitable for disabled – why cannot all internal or external doors be wider to start with – could become standard – then houses etc. would be for wider market</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>People should realise that not everyone has access to a computer or knows how to use one.</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>More needs to be done to access information from local authorities a disabled access criteria (strategy) need to be formed locally involving</b></li> </ul>

<p><b>council and their service providers, landlords, local business forums transport etc. and disabled people</b></p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Not enough local help for partially sighted like myself wait too long to get anything done</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>More houses and flats please for disabled love to be independent parents would help a bit</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>More information in easy read big writing and pictures would be better maybe audio as long as I can understand them (talk slow and clear)</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Landlords/council should be aware of obligations towards tenants and follow housing legislation because they are not</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>We live in an adapted council owned property various adaptations have been done over the years, mainly because we were supported by an excellent occupational therapist who understood our housing needs</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>As I am not disabled myself but have good friends that are I just feel that more can be done for these people. In some cases if they have their own property it gives them independence</b></li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>DWP ask for guarantor – leaves me with little choice – most disabled people are not in work in case housing benefit fails landlords scared as benefits suspended for any reason they can lose out</b></li> </ul>

**How to contact Thurrock Coalition:**

**Telephone: 01375 389 864**

**Textphone: 07977 531670**

**Email: [ian@thurrockcoalition.co.uk](mailto:ian@thurrockcoalition.co.uk)**

**Web: [www.thurrockcoalition.co.uk](http://www.thurrockcoalition.co.uk)**

**Twitter: [@thurrockULO](https://twitter.com/thurrockULO)**

**Write to us:  
Thurrock Coalition  
The Beehive  
West Street  
Grays  
Essex  
RM17 6XP**

**All of Thurrock Coalition's reports, recommendations and strategic position papers to date are available on our website:  
<http://www.thurrockcoalition.co.uk/projectsandreports.html>**