

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1.	Meeting	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2.	Date	16 th June 2014
3.	Title	Provision of a shower over the bath in empty RMBC bungalows
4.	Directorate	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

RMBC have many customers who, because of their medical needs, are not safe or would have difficulty climbing out of the bath once seated. Hence they are assessed as requiring a shower over the bath or level access shower when they approach the Council requesting re-housing on health grounds. The people who would benefit from such an adaptation include those with epilepsy, people at risk of blackouts due to, for example, substance misuse and people with moderate mobility problems who cannot stair climb but with the assistance of grab rails and equipment such as a bath board can shower safely by standing in a bath or sitting over the bath. We assess many people as requiring a ground floor property with walk in showers or showers over a bath to meet their health needs and presently we have too few of them to meet demand. People therefore wait a long time to get rehoused to accommodation which meets their health needs.

Over the last few years the demand for ground floor properties for people with physical needs with showering facilities has increased; it has now become evident that demand is outstripping supply as there is a limited stock of Council owned ground floor properties with showers. The implications of this shortfall are lengthy delays for customers moving to a different home who have been assessed as needing this type of bathing. This has a negative impact on the physical and mental health of customers who are waiting, sometimes in excess of 5 years, for a suitable property with a shower installed to move into.

One way of addressing this issue which will improve the options for a significant number of people is to fit more showers over the bath. This means those who need them can shower (perhaps with minor aids being used) and other family members can choose to either bathe or shower. Fitting such showers would be cost effective and significantly improve the waiting times for people needing to be housed in adapted accommodation. It improves quality of life, helping our customers' to remain independent and can prevent accidents, including falls, which have a negative effect on people's health, whilst impacting greatly on the resources of health and social care in Rotherham.

To summarize:

1. The demand for RMBC ground floor accommodation with showering facilities far outstrips supply for people with physical needs.
2. Our customers expect more choice, flexibility and control over where they live.
3. RMBC has a duty to supply adapted accommodation to meet the needs of disabled people.

6. Recommendations

That Cabinet Member:

- **AGREES TO INSTALL SHOWERS OVER THE BATH IN BUNGALOWS WHILST THEY ARE EMPTY**

7. Proposals and details

7.1 Reasons for revising the current processes relating to rehousing people with disabilities

In Rotherham the number of people over 65 is projected to increase by more than a half by 2028, from 41,500 to 61,400 (JSNA, 2011). The Council is already seeing an increasing demand on the housing register for ground floor properties with showering facilities from older adults and younger people with disabilities. This is resulting in a long waiting time for customers to be re-housed and very high demand for certain popular areas across the Borough. Whilst customers are waiting to move to adequate housing they are at risk of falls or injury and place increasing pressure on health and social care services in Rotherham.

During 2013/14, following an OT assessment the Adaptation team have completed 114 shower over bath, 76 in Council tenancies and 38 in private homes eg owner occupiers.

Customers' aspirations and expectations are also rising and it is not unreasonable for customers to expect to be offered properties which have a shower provided in line with similar properties available from landlords in the private rental sector and RSLs, many of whom fit showers as standard.

RMBC have the following ground floor stock levels, all of which are let at present and not all of which contain a shower to meet customers' health needs. There is currently no up-to-date record of which type of bathing facilities are fitted in Council's housing stock.

RMBC stock as at April 2013

1 bed bungalows -	2781
2 bed bungalows -	1915
3 bed bungalows -	44
1 bed flats –	2126 (this is the total stock of 1 bed flats including ground floor)
2 bed flats –	2645 (this is the total stock of 2 bed flats including ground floor)

RMBC customers requiring ground floor accommodation, either ground floor flats or bungalows, approach Key Choices and have an assessment of need based on their health and mobility. Those customers with an assessed need are awarded medical priority and placed in the priority band on the housing register. They have adaptations and bathing requirements applied to their application which restrict the properties on which the customers can bid. For example: a typical recommendation may be one or two bedroom property ground floor property with no more than two steps to the entrance and shower over bath. This recommendation prevents the applicant from bidding for bungalows with no showering facilities; this restriction causes anxiety and frustration as the bungalow maybe in an area of their choice.

At the time of writing the numbers of customers with Medical Priority are as follows:

Total number of applicants with Medical Priority requiring ground floor and showers

Customers requiring ground floor with a level access shower	837
Customers requiring ground floor with a level access shower or shower over bath	463
Total	<u>1300</u>

There are also 217 customers who have been assessed as needing conventional bathing. Usually these are people with no physical health needs but may have a mental health need to move home. These customers have a wider range of properties to move to, as dependant on their household size they can bid on houses, ground floor or upper floor properties with baths.

The majority of customers (1300) assessed as requiring ground floor with a level access shower or shower over bath can only bid for ground floor properties advertised in Key Choices with this type of showering facility. They can only bid for ground floor properties but are restricted in choice of

location as they are unable to bid for ground properties with conventional bathing, as the property (although it is ground floor) does not meet their bathing needs.

The figures below demonstrate the problem in that there is an over-supply of ground floor properties without showers.

During the year 1/4/12 – 31/3/13 the number of ground floor properties advertised with conventional bathing only, is as follows:

1 Bed Bungalow -	87
2 Bed Bungalow -	31
1 Bed GFF -	151
2 Bed GFF -	57
Total	326

The large majority of people on medical priority would not have been able to bid on these bungalows and flats as they have no showering facilities.

7.2 Changing the Assessment Process - If shower over baths were fitted as standard in ALL empty ground floor properties before they are advertised, the assessment process could be changed to only include the requirements for ground floor. This would widen options for customers who can manage with a shower over the bath as it would allow them to bid for ground floor properties in any area. There could be savings to services made in terms of reduced home care packages to assist with bathing and prevention of costly hospital admissions associated with accidents.

Some people with mobility problems cannot use a bath safely as they are unable to climb out of the bath once seated and are at risk of falls, for example older people with osteoarthritis, younger customers with epilepsy. If a shower is fitted over the bath then the customer is able to step into the bath and stand to shower, or alternatively they can use bathing equipment to assist them. Equipment such as a bath board helps the customer transfer over the bath where they can remain seated to shower which much reduces their risks.

The use of a shower over the bath and associated bathing equipment helps our customers to be independent and safe with their bathing. This has benefits for both the customer, in that people retain their independence and dignity for longer and also reduces the need for carers, either formal or informal to assist them with their bathing. There are savings to be made in terms of reduced home care packages and prevention of costly hospital admissions associated with accidents.

It is important to note that by changing the assessment process we would still retain the level access shower recommendation for customers who cannot manage a shower over bath, and continue to restrict them to being offered ground floor properties with level access showers. Ultimately, by increasing supply to other households who can manage with a shower over the bath, would mean that there would be more suitable properties with level access showers available to those assessed as needing a level access shower only. At the moment we offer both types of bathing to customers who can manage both. This means that we do not waste the investment on expensive walk in showers on those that can safely bath using a shower over a bath.

In this day and age it is not unreasonable for tenants to expect showering facilities, and this is becoming the norm in other forms of social housing, whereby housing associations are routinely fitting a shower over the bath in all new build properties, and more common in private rented stock.

7.3 Proposed changes

We can approach this issue in several ways:

Option 1 - When a bungalow with conventional bathing becomes empty install a shower over the bath prior to letting. (This is the Preferred Option)

This option increases opportunities for disabled tenants to secure suitable accommodation and meets aspirations of a wider group of tenants.

In addition to changing the assessment process as detailed in Section 7.2, when the tenancy of a ground floor property is terminated a pre-term inspection would be carried out by a Technical Officer. If the property is identified as having only conventional bathing then RMBC could install a shower over the bath to the current specification as attached in Appendix 1.

This specification is important as it meets the long term needs of our customers in that if their mobility declines then we can use the shower in situ to provide a level access shower. By removing the bath and supplying the shower tray, flooring and tiling to the space remaining converts the existing shower over bath to a level access shower at minimal expense to RMBC and minimal disruption to our customers.

This gives RMBC control over the type of shower, ie thermostatic, the position and tiling, installation of an extractor fan and ensures it will be installed correctly by qualified tradesmen and parts can be sourced well into the future. The Council would then also be responsible for maintaining the shower long term.

The benefits are:

- investing in RMBC stock for the future and meeting the expectations of many tenants;
- we would be offering suitable accommodation for those customers who are downsizing with medical needs and freeing up highly sought after family homes;
- we are providing our customers, largely older adults and people with disabilities, more choice in ground floor properties in all areas of Rotherham;
- work is completed prior to the customer moving into the property minimising disturbance;
- energy and water savings are made to our customers who can use the shower instead of a bath which is especially relevant with fuel poverty high on the current social agenda;
- many RMBC properties have a combination boiler installed so should this need a repair the customer has no access to hot water, provision of an electric shower provides customers with an alternative source of hot water regardless of their boiler type.

Option 2 – Showers over baths are fitted based on customers' individual need

This option increases opportunities for disabled tenants to secure suitable accommodation, and is cheaper.

Customers assessed as needing ground floor accommodation would be invited to view empty properties and could be assessed by the Occupational Therapist to determine their ability to manage a bath safely. If they are not able to manage a bath but would be able to use a shower over the bath, either with or without equipment, a shower could be fitted at this stage so the customer can be offered the tenancy. This option would reduce expenditure and showers would only be fitted for those with an assessed need.

Option 3 - Customers fit their own showers over the bath

Customers who have been assessed as needing a shower regularly approach Housing Options to fit their own showers to facilitate a move however historically this has not been allowed at the letting stage.

There have been concerns that:

- customers may not fit quality showers or use qualified tradesmen;
- customers may sign the tenancy then not fit the shower as agreed leaving them at risk when bathing;
- there are legal risks if the property is let to a customer knowing that it does not meet their assessed needs;
- the on-going maintenance of the shower may fall to RMBC who may not be able to get appropriate parts.

To allow customers to fit their own showers RMBC could insist it is done to the attached specification and by our current contractors which will minimise issues of quality and maintenance but would increase costs to the customer.

7.5 Next steps

If agreed:

- Make changes to the assessment applications - which will take 1 month
- Amend contractual arrangements with Partners, including making changes to the lettable standard for bungalows – July 2014
- Write to all housing register applicants who have an assessed need for a shower over the bath – July 2014
- Implement the new assessment process – August 2014

8. Finance

8.1 Finance is available for this initiative. The approximate costs of fitting a shower in each suitable property would be £950. Based on last years' figures if the widest scope identified in option one where chosen, this represents an investment of £309,700 per annum, until all ground floor properties in the Borough are fitted with a shower. The priority would be for bungalows over ground floor flats so if the programme began with bungalows the cost would then be approximately £112,100 per annum based on current figures. An allowance has been made in the capital voids budget to cover the cost of adapting bungalows and a small number of ground floor flats and monitoring this will be ongoing. The new process will be reviewed after 3 months and 6 months and amended accordingly. The small number of ground floor flats that may be allocated to those who need a shower over bath will have one installed at request of the Housing Occupational Therapist on a case by case basis.

8.2 Staff working practices whilst changing assessment processes will not impact on staffing budgets but enable the service to adequately deal with the increase in demand for support and advice currently being experienced.

8.3 The changes needed to Housing Applications can be undertaken in-house at no extra cost other than allocating staff time.

8.4 Changes to the process will need to be effectively communicated to staff. This training will be undertaken in-house by the Housing Options Manager and Housing Occupational Therapy Manager.

8.5 There could be savings to services made in terms of reduced home care packages to assist with bathing and prevention of costly hospital admissions associated with accidents.

9. Risks and uncertainties

Risk 1: Do nothing, will mean that we cannot meet our customers health and housing needs into the future especially in light of the increase to numbers of people over 65 years in the Borough.

The RMBC properties advertised w/c 26th February 2014 highlights this issue very well:

- 8 bungalows advertised with baths only
- 9 ground floor flats with baths only

As these properties do not contain a shower most people with medical priority are unable to bid on them. We are missing an opportunity to let these properties to physically disabled people with the greatest need and this illustrates the consequence of maintaining the status quo.

Risk 2: The time a property is empty may increase but after careful consideration we expect this change to have minimal impact on the length of time a property is empty. The main work to the property would be tiling to the bath area, provision of a water supply for the shower and provision of electric power to the shower. All items for this work to be completed promptly are stock items, including the Mira shower, tiles, grab rails, etc, and work would be undertaken whilst any other repairs to the property are being carried out. Any impact on time would be carefully monitored as RMBC aims to minimise the turn-around time of empty properties. A phased approach may help manage this potential risk, for example beginning with bungalows and then ground floor flats.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Ensuring the Council's housing provision is as fair as possible will contribute to a priority of Rotherham Partnership's Community Strategy: *Support those that are vulnerable within our communities.*

It also contributes to four of the ten commitments within our new Housing Strategy:

- Commitment 1: We will deliver Council housing that meets people's needs
- Commitment 2: We will increase and improve the supply of affordable rented housing
- Commitment 6: We will help people to access the support they need
- Commitment 7: We will help people in Rotherham's most disadvantaged communities

11. Background papers and consultation

Background papers

- Rotherham Community Strategy 2012 – 2015
- Joint Strategic Needs Assessment 2011
- Housing Allocation Policy

Consultation

- John Brayshaw, Contract and Service Development Manager
- Sandra Tolley, Housing Options Manager
- James Greenhedge, Property Services Manager
- Sandra Wardle, Housing Advice and Assessment Manager
- Wendy Swallow, Housing Assessment Co-ordinator
- Andy Litchfield, Adaptations Co-ordinator
- Finance Department
- Legal Department

Managers above whose teams will be affected by these changes have been consulted to determine if there is support for a proposal of this nature. Of those consulted there was overwhelming agreement that this proposal will be beneficial for customers.

12. Contact details

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APPENDIX 1

SHOWER OVER THE BATH SPECIFICATION

Supply and fix MIRA FLEX ADVANCED 8.7kw thermostatically controlled shower unit with lever control, extra-long sliding bar and grab rails to be positioned as per OT's specification

A cord operated, double pole isolating switch or wall mounted switch is to be conveniently located outside the bath/shower room with minimum contact gap of 3mm both poles. The switch must be accessible and clearly identified with neon indicator light. A 30MA residual current device and 40 amp MCB unit is to be sited adjacent to existing consumer unit. Connector block and 2 No. 25mm² PVC double insulated and sheathed tails to meter.

Pipe work to run the shortest possible route to unit and to be chrome face fixed. Any variances to be discussed with Contract Administrator prior to works commencing.

Any new outlets must have means of isolation fitted.

Grab rails to be Ashby PVC grab rails (with a ribbed finish) or similar approved.

All cables recessed underneath plasterwork must be protected with PVC capping fixed with non-ferrous materials.

Remove existing tiles around the bath, make good as required and prepare to receive 5m² (approx) 150mm x 150mm white or cream ceramic tiles complete with trims as necessary to be fixed with water proof adhesive and grout.

Tiling - apply a waterproof adhesive to BS 5980 and BS EN 1347 to the area of the wall to be tiled. The tiles are to be evenly spaced and shall be both plumb in the vertical and level on the horizontal lines and provide a smooth and even surface when fixed. Fit plastic tile edging strips around window apertures and as vertical end stops where required.

Grout - apply waterproof grout to joints, filling all voids. Joints abutting window frames, door casings, skirtings, shower trays and baths to be sealed using silicone sealant to BS 5889 for use in wet areas. Wipe down all surfaces to remove residue of grout. Leave installation clean, tidy and ready for use.

Replace existing light fitting with TamLite Circular Nimrod Polycarbonate Bulk head fitting or similar approved, operated by a new pull cord.

Supply & Fit Silvavent 100mm axial extractor fan with a 15 litres per second extraction volume with a pre-set factory fitting. Fan to have an isolator fitted outside the bathroom to comply with BS7671.

Supply and fit fully weighted shower curtain to hang within 200mm of bath. To include rail, curtain runners and rings and to be fixed with plugs and screws as per manufactures instructions. Curtain to be ANTI-FUNGAL material.

Allow a 25mm lip minimum on wall side of bath for the fitting of equipment if needed and silicon seal bath area with anti-fungal silicon sealant to prevent water penetration.

Installation to be in accordance with the regulations of Electrical Engineers (17th Edition) issued by the Electrical Engineers and BS7671. A minor works electrical certificate is to be issued with the invoice covering the works carried out.

On completion of installation demonstrate operation of the shower and leave all operating instructions and guarantees with the user. An Electrical Completion Certificate must be provided in compliance with the latest addition of the IEE Regulations and to BS 7671:2001.

All debris to be removed and site left clean and tidy.

Agreement by the Contract Administrator is needed prior to any variations which are required on site.

Asbestos

A detailed intrusive asbestos survey of the individual property has not been carried out and Contractors are advised to proceed with care.

The locations where asbestos is likely to occur are:-

- Seals on boilers
- Seals on flues
- Warm air heater units
- Pipe boxing
- Bath panels
- Water tanks
- Lagging to pipes and tanks
- Internal skin of meter and airing cupboards
- Artex decorative finish to walls and ceilings
- W C flush cisterns
- Asbestolux panels to eaves soffits and dormer cheeks
- Rain water goods
- Roof tiles

Prior to any removal or disruptive work being carried out, each dwelling shall be surveyed by the specialist subcontractor's inspector if asbestos is suspected who shall be experienced in the recognition of asbestos based products and in their likely location.

If asbestos is encountered or suspected the Contractor must stop work immediately in the vicinity of the affected area and inform the Contract Administrator. The Contractor shall arrange the removal or encapsulation of asbestos products, which shall only be carried out by a licensed asbestos removal contractor.

Hazardous Substances

The contractor is advised to be vigilant for traces of other suspected hazardous substances concealed within the building structure. If suspicious substances are located work must stop immediately, the C.A. contacted for arrangements to be made for the substance to be analysed and instruction given for any necessary remedial actions.



Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

Directorate of Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

Neighbourhoods & Adult Services

Over Bath Shower Drawing - Left

Adaptation For:

SWIFT ID:

COT

