



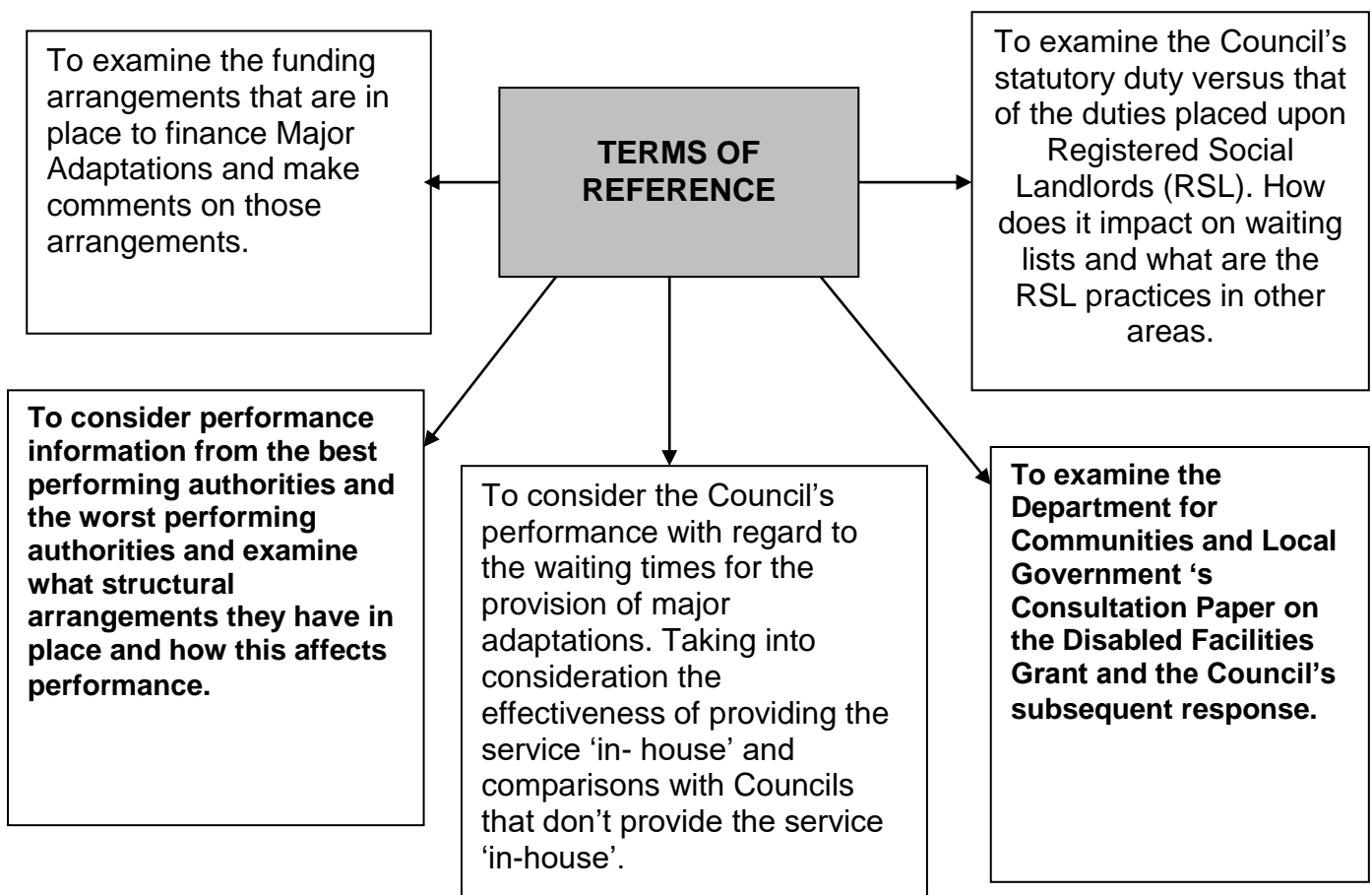
SOCIAL CARE AND ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY PANEL

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY – MAJOR ADAPTATIONS

The Review

The overall aim of the Scrutiny investigation was to consider the length of time people have to wait for the provision of major adaptations to their home, whether the wait is acceptable and if not, consider how waiting times can be improved.

The Terms of Reference



Findings

The Social Care Department maintained their 3 star status, with the quality of service and prospect for improvement as excellent. One of the issues for attention in the resulting action plan was the length of time people waited for the provision of major adaptations. The panel wanted to consider how long people waited in comparison to other areas and if there was any examples of best practice that could be implemented to reduce the waiting time.

In Middlesbrough there is an in house Home Improvement Agency which provides support and assistance to disabled residents in order to adapt and improve their own homes and to administer the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

The panel learnt that the DFG had a complex system of funding arrangements, however as the review continued, new government guidelines were introduced which it was hoped would reduce bureaucracy and speed up the process.

The panel compared waiting time figures with other authorities and officers undertook a detailed benchmarking exercise with a number of neighbouring authorities. What became clear from that exercise was that the figures which were sent to the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) by the different authorities were compiled differently by each authority. For example some Councils took into account waiting times from their local Registered Social Landlords (RSL). The panel had concerns that the figures in the table were not comparing like with like.

The panel considered how waiting times could be reduced and the panel had concerns about the length of time taken up by the Council's tendering process.

The panel also considered that it was important to plan for future needs and adhere to the Lifetime Homes Standard which was introduced in 1997 to encourage builders to build homes to a particular standard which would reduce the need for adaptations later on, for example lower light switches, level access etc.

Conclusions

The panel was unable to use the figures of the comparisons on waiting times from other Councils. One of the main influences on waiting times was funding and the panel recognised that Middlesbrough had a high demand for adaptations and the pressure that created. However methods should be undertaken to reduce the length of the waiting time.

The majority of Registered Social Landlords only undertook minor adaptations and the responsibility ultimately lay with the Council.

The panel thought it was important to plan for the future by undertaking a range of methods, such as redecorating homes that were vacant but had adaptations and encouraging people to move there. Developing modern style adaptations such as 'wet rooms' which were less likely to need to be taken out in the future.

Recommendations

That the Council should establish a target for waiting times that is no more than 25.4 weeks and the Council should maintain the level of funding to the service which was at least equivalent to the previous levels of match funding.

That the Council should investigate ways of speeding up the process to reduce waiting times including considering the tendering process and the role of Occupational Therapists

That the Council pursue a policy of developing accessible homes for the future.

Full details on the conclusions and recommendations can be found at the end of the report