



Policy Response

Capability Scotland 24th February 2014

Capability Scotland campaigns with, and provides education, employment and care services, to disabled people across Scotland. We are one of the Scottish Government's Key Strategic Partners for housing and disability issues and, along with the Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living (GCIL), we have undertaken an ambitious involvement project aimed at radically improving disabled people's access to suitable housing¹.

Consultation on the Home Report

General Points

- We have submitted a late response to this consultation as we were not aware of it. We see that the List of Consultees in the consultation document does not include any disability organisations – both concerning and a significant missed opportunity given the importance of the information included within the accessibility audit in the Single Survey in relation to making home buying suitable to disabled people and a range of others.
- According to the Scottish Government's own statistics 29% of those owning a home have a long standing limiting illness, health problem or disability. When considered alongside an ageing population and the housing needs of older people, demand for accessible information in relation to private property is set to grow significantly.
- The Government has clear evidence of the size and impact of the mismatch between the demand and supply for housing suitable for disabled people. The Government's own analysis of the 2004 Scottish House Condition Survey (SHCS) clearly illustrates a significant shortfall in the supply of accessible housing for disabled people. It found that the following accessible housing had been built in Scotland:
 - 26,000 ambulant disabled properties compared to 199,402 households using a stick or walking framework, which equals 13% of need met and an additional 173,400 properties needed.

¹Capability Scotland Housing Involvement Events 2010/11 <http://www.capability-scotland.org.uk/what-is-capability-doing-for-me-now/campaigns/housing-partnership/>

- 7,000 full wheelchair properties compared to 36,221 wheelchair users, which equals 19% of need met and an additional 29,221 properties needed.
- This situation has not changed significantly in the last 10 years. In Glasgow new build projects have only been averaging 30 new wheelchair accessible and barrier free properties a year. If new builds continue to increase at the current rate it will take approximately 133 years to make up the current estimated shortfall.
- Given the lack of fully 'wheelchair accessible' or even 'barrier free' properties in Scotland the problem for disabled people looking for houses and estate agents who want to comply with Equality Act duties in relation to the provision of their services is less about matching disabled people to existing properties and more about the need to create property search engines that identify potentially accessible properties. The accessibility report and the information it provides within the Single Survey would help with this significantly.
- Rather than seeking to narrow down the 'best' or most suitable property for a disabled person there is a need to mainstream 'accessible features' into general property search systems to the benefit all disabled people and in many cases older people or those with children – greatly assisting in the very early stages of a search by eliminating unsuitable properties.
- We would therefore ask the Scottish Government to fully capitalise on the benefits of the accessibility audit within the Home Report by considering funding a project that would allow Scottish Solicitor Property Websites and others to incorporate the 8 access criteria within the single survey into their property search engines.
- This would allow people across Scotland, wheelchair users, families with young children, people with mobility problems, families including an older person and a range of other cohorts the population to search for potentially adaptable houses by any permutation of the criteria below:

 - 1. Which floor(s) is the living accommodation on?
 - 2. Are there three steps or fewer to a main entrance door of the property?
 - 3. Is there a lift to the main entrance door of the property?
 - 4. Are all door openings greater than 750mm?
 - 5. Is there a toilet on the same level as the living room and kitchen?
 - 6. Is there a toilet on the same level as a bedroom?
 - 7. Are all rooms on the same level with no internal steps or stairs?
 - 8. Is there unrestricted parking within 25 metres of an entrance door to the building?

Answers to Specific questions

SECTION 1

Q4) Should a national register of Home Reports be established?

Capability Scotland would support the call for a national register of Home Reports. It would provide data invaluable to assessing the true picture in relation to accessibility of Scotland's private sector housing stock.

While the accessibility of Social Housing stock is currently monitored through the Annual Performance and Statistical Return process for RSLs, no similar process exists for private housing. This evidence would help Scottish and Local Government alike and would provide information highly relevant to the Local Housing Strategy process.

SECTION 2

Q10) Are home reports a useful marketing tool for sellers?

Yes.

Our advice team has received hundreds of requests for information about how to find an accessible house. The Home Report with its requirement that all properties in Scotland have an accessibility audit mainstreams accessibility.

No longer a separate 'disability' issue that requires 'matching' registers to resolve, the Home Report gives the Scottish Government the ideal springboard to allow everyone in Scotland to benefit from access information and the concept of potential adaptability – thus helping to future proof the current housing stock – through informed choice - without the need to lay a single brick.

Section 3

Q18) Does the single survey element of the home report provide an appropriate and useful level of information?

Yes. The question should be more about how this access information is being utilised to the benefit of potential house buyers across Scotland. We believe the 8 access criteria within the single survey should be incorporated into property search engines across Scotland in the simplest way possible. Precedent for this approach can be found in research carried out in 2004 by Richard Hamer for Ownership Options – and published in a research report commissioned by Edinburgh City Council called House Hunting For Allⁱ².

Home Report data should also be used to develop a statistical resource where possible although we do not believe the Home Report accessibility categories should be changed to match the Scottish House Condition Survey as this would downgrade the value of the information provided. At present the Scottish House Condition Survey does not collect useful information about accessibility but primarily covers adaptations.

ⁱ² Hamer, R. (2005) House Hunting for All: Opening up Property Search Systems to Disabled People. Edinburgh: