



# **Scrutiny Report**

## **Aids & Adaptations Service**

**November 2011**

Prepared by: **ETHOS.**

Date of Issue: **November 2011.**

Review Date: **To Be Negotiated**



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Appendix One: **ETHOS update and framework documents.**

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## 1. Acknowledgments

The members of the **ETHOS** who took part in the project

- **Peter Browne:** North Liverpool
- **Beth Edwards:** Runcorn
- **Margaret Guppy:** South Liverpool
- **Joyce Lyle:** South Liverpool
- **Dorothy McCarten:** North Liverpool
- **Muriel O'Hanlon:** Kirkby
- **John Williams:** North Liverpool

**ETHOS would like to thank** the staff who took part in interviews and provided information during the course of the project. These included:

**Housing & Support Team:** Nicola Williams, Jon Metcalf & Soeb Patel.

**Business Intelligence:** Claire Wilde & Hannah Furniss.

**Customer Service Centre:** Caroline Hopkins & Kellie Haywood.

**Property Services:** Jan Offlands & Damian Whittingham.

**ETHOS would also like to thank** the tenants who took part in the telephone survey.

**The Scrutiny Project was facilitated & supported by**

**Jo Phillips:** Resident Involvement Team Leader and

**Debbie Despres:** Resident Involvement Officer.

A series of **framework documents** illustrating the scrutiny processes, together with an outline of the newly established relationship with the LHT Board can be found as appendices to this report.

## 2. Purpose

- The purpose of this report is to present the findings of ETHOS scrutiny of the **Aids & Adaptations Service**.
- The Scrutiny Project was carried out between **August 2011 and November 2011**.

## 3. Approach to the Aids and Adaptations Project:

Scrutiny of the Aids & Adaptations service entailed an overview of current service delivery, performance and customer feedback to explore what currently worked well, identify where improvements could be made and recommend actions to implement these changes.

The project commenced in August 2011, and over a 14 week period the seven members of ETHOS met weekly to complete the full process. A Project Plan and Timeframe (**Appendix 2**) were developed in support of this exercise and included three main stages as outlined below:

### 3.1 Stage 1: Fact Finding:

ETHOS considered the following information:

- Aids & Adaptations Policy and flowchart
- Self- Assessment section of Annual Report
- Customer Service Standards Monitoring Information
- Complaints Log 2010-2011
- Performance Data for 2011-2012
- TSA Standards for Home
- Upheld Ombudsman Complaint: Liverpool City Council
- Aids & Adaptations Survey Results 2010-2011
- Good practice about other policies
- Housing & Support Efficiency Statement 2010/11

The policy & performance data (as detailed above) was presented by Claire Wilde Business Intelligence Manager.

A presentation & overview of the service was delivered by Nicola Williams Supported Housing Manager.

### 3.2 Stage 2: Compare & Challenge:

Initial scoping of the project resulted in the identification of four Key Areas of Focus:

- Focus One: **Tenant Satisfaction & Feedback.**
- Focus Two: **Access & Information.**
- Focus Three: **Performance**
- Focus Four: **Impact of Location on Service.**

In addition ETHOS has provided opinion on two further service developments which are being considered as part of the wider Service Review being carried out by the Housing & Support Team. These are

- **Recycling of Adaptations Equipment &**
- **Incentive Schemes to release adapted properties to meet need.**

Three main Scrutiny activities were then selected to facilitate further exploration of the Aids and Adaptations service. The activities chosen were:

1. **Literature Review & Benchmarking:** Documentation considered included, service leaflets, Newsletters, suite of letters, website appraisal & benchmarking of other organisations.
2. **Tenant Audit:** Two members of ETHOS completed a telephone survey of tenants who had recently received Major & Minor Adaptations to gain insight into tenants' experience and views of the service.
3. **Staff Interviews:** Interviews were held with members of staff from the following departments who had direct involvement with the development, monitoring and delivery of the Aids and Adaptations services. These included the Customer Service Centre, Property Services and Housing and Support Teams.

### 3.3 Stage 3: Analysis & Recommendations:

A number of group sessions were held to share findings from the scrutiny exercises and agree recommendations for the service. Several members of the group participated in a workshop to influence & prepare the finalised report.

### 3.4 Stage 4: Implementation & Review:

The Service Manager & Director were invited to meet with the panel to discuss the report findings. In addition, this also provided the opportunity for an Action Plan recording ETHOS' recommendations, Service Managers Response and agreed actions which will be monitored and reviewed after a period of six months.

### **3.5 Quick Wins!**

At the outset of the project, panel members met with the Service Manager to gain an overview of the service. During these first meetings a number of initial recommendations were jointly agreed and considered appropriate for immediate implementation. These included:

- **Completion of Complaints Learning Log.**

Details of a Learning Log were provided to ETHOS as part of the initial scrutiny of documents. Whilst this was felt to be a useful tool, the pro-forma used by the Housing & Support Team to record lessons learned was only partially completed. It was agreed that in future the responsible officer should ensure that the form is fully populated in order to gain full benefit of the facility.

(Ref:3.5a)

- **Wording amendment to existing Satisfaction Forms.**

An amendment to the current wording of the Customer Satisfaction Form was agreed. “Would you recommend a friend” to be replaced with “Would you recommend the service”. (Ref:3.5b)

- **Creation of new Performance Indicator for Appeals take-up.**

The PI's provided to ETHOS included monitoring how many people were offered the opportunity to appeal against the Adaptation Request Decision. The Panel suggested that this should be extended to include a recording of how many people took up this right to appeal- as this was more meaningful in terms of understanding the service. (Ref 3.5c)

## **4. Findings & Recommendations**

### **4.1 What Worked Well**

#### **Customer Care & Tailoring Services**

The tailoring of service to meet tenants' specific needs together with identification and referral of support needs to Housing and Support by the Customer Service Centre Officers were felt to be extremely positive and should be commended.

#### **Processing of initial requests & overall satisfaction with quality & standard of work completed.**

Both initial request processing and the high quality of adaptations appeared to be consistent and efficient. This was supported by evidence gained from tenant satisfaction data and also the results of ETHOS' own Tenant Audit.

#### **Service Improvements & Innovations**

During the course of interviews with staff a number of positive practices were highlighted. These included an established “Adaptations Working Group” which considers service improvements and developments. ETHOS were impressed with the work and ideas that appeared to be in progress, and recognised that innovations such as the Contractor Video for Tenants would be of great value once completed.

## **4.2 (Focus One) Tenant Satisfaction & Feedback:**

### **4.2.1 Tenant Views**

ETHOS were impressed with the satisfaction levels achieved for Major and Minor Adaptations. Positive Figures from 2010-2011 Aids & Adaptation Survey included

- Satisfaction with Adaptation: was consistently high (98% in 09-10 & 97% 10-11)
- Adaptation making life better: increased from 97% in 09-10 to 99% in 10-11)

This was further supported by results from their own telephone survey undertaken as part of the project. This revealed that the majority of tenants were very satisfied with both the standard of customer service and quality of their adaptation. (Complete Figures are available in the Project Evidence File)

### **4.2.2 Return Rate of Satisfaction Forms**

ETHOS were concerned with the low return rate of satisfaction surveys (Between April & September 2010: six out of 35 forms were returned, and in 2011 between February to August twelve surveys were returned) In particular they felt that it was important to encourage as much feedback as possible about Major Adaptations; given both the high costs associated with the works and the value of feedback in monitoring contractors work and the service as a whole.

As Tenant Satisfaction is currently only collected via a postal survey upon completion of the adaptation, ETHOS felt it may be useful to explore a range of alternative mechanisms for collecting and encouraging feedback. Whilst staff members indicated that the current reliance on paper forms was an attempt to ensure that tenants did not feel pressurised to answer face to face surveys by contractors or staff (particularly if they had negative comment), ETHOS felt that alternative options should be given due consideration. Specifically tenants could be asked which was their preferred option of feedback at the beginning of the request process and advised that they would be expected to provide feedback upon completion of the work.

The findings from ETHOS' own Tenant Audit indicated that respondents would have preferred to have been given alternative ways to provide their comments. These included a home visit or phone call. The telephone based exercise resulted in successful completion of thirty nine surveys from a contact list of 40 Major & 40 Minor Adaptations. ETHOS suggest that such results indicate that this form of contact could be successfully replicated in the future; either by Housing & Support Staff, or routinely by the CSC or the Tenant Auditors Group.

### 4.2.3 Incentives for completion of Satisfaction Forms:

The satisfaction survey currently used includes a free prize draw incentive for completed forms. Initial concerns were raised that this may be unnecessary given that an adaptation to tenants' homes is not only expensive but of direct benefit to tenants. ETHOS therefore felt that providing feedback about the work should not be further incentivised, but could become an obligatory part of the adaptations process.

In order to test this opinion, and given the low rate of satisfaction returns currently being achieved- ETHOS included within their own telephone survey a question relating to the incentives. Of the 39 Tenants contacted, 13 indicated that the prize draw incentive was not the main reason that they returned the form.

## 4.2 Tenant Feedback & Satisfaction:

### Recommendations

**Explore alternative options for tenants to provide feedback on their adaptation.** Options could include telephone surveys, face to face feedback via home visit. Regular targeted surveys could be commissioned and completed by either the CSC or Tenant Auditors. (Ref:4.2a)

**Obtain tenants feedback preference as part of application process.** Upon making an application, tenants should be asked which method of feedback they would prefer. This may assist in increasing the response rate for satisfaction. (Ref: 4.2b)

**Review appropriateness of Satisfaction Form Incentive.** Consider removing the "incentive" offered to tenants for completion of Adaptations Satisfaction Form. (Ref:4.2c)

## 4.3 (Focus Two) Access & Information:

### 4.3.1 Aids & Adaptation Publications:

The following leaflets were considered by ETHOS as part of their review of current literature about the Aids & Adaptations Service:

- Customer Service Standards.
- Making Services Better for Disabled People.
- Supported Housing & Tenancy Support.

In addition back issues of Highlights & Cornerstone Newsletters from the last 12 months were also reviewed.

The desktop review highlighted a number of issues and concerns in relation to both the quality and the way in which information is made available to tenants seeking details about the service.

ETHOS were concerned that printed versions of the Adaptations Application Form were not made available to tenants for completion in their own time. Currently the only way in which applications can be made is by telephone or home visit. While these existing processes were found to be effective and efficient, the Panel felt that tenants may prefer the alternative option of filling in the request in the privacy of their home, and in their own time.

In addition no service specific leaflet was available meaning that information had to be sought from within generic leaflets about Supported Housing or Customer Service Standards. For a tenant with limited knowledge of the organisation it may prove difficult to know where or which publication to refer to. General Needs Tenants for example may not obviously look at a leaflet about Supported Housing to find information about an Adaptation.

Inconsistencies were also found between the quality and tone of leaflets. The Customer Service Standards were found to be both comprehensive and informative including timescales, and were written in a positive inclusive language that was welcomed. The tone and language of the Supported Housing Leaflet however, was considered overly negative with almost a complete emphasis on exclusions (including a list of circumstances where adaptations would not be undertaken).

The review of Newsletters revealed only one article relating to the Aids and Adaptations Service. This was contained in the (summer 2011 Edition) of the Cornerstone publication for Supported Housing Tenants and utilised a real case study of how the Adaptations process works. This was very informative and positive in terms of publicising the service, and it was suggested that this or a similar case study may work effectively as a supporting document available on the website or sent to applicants at the beginning of their adaptations request.

ETHOS were however disappointed that a similar article was not replicated within the Highlights Newsletter. Indeed no reference to the Aids and Adaptations Service was made in any of the Highlights editions reviewed, and this was felt to be disadvantageous for any general needs tenants who may also be reliant on Newsletters to gain information about the Adaptations Service.

#### **4.3.1 Guidance & The Rights of Applicants:**

Throughout the literature reviewed, no written guidance was provided to applicants on their right to request a second opinion from an Occupational Therapist. Whilst information obtained from staff interviews indicated that such advice was given verbally to applicants upon request/ or during home visits the panel felt that it would be more transparent if such details were made available to tenants in published guidance notes.

### **4.3.2 Website Appraisal:**

The LHT Website was reviewed as a source by which Aids and Adaptation information is made available to tenants. Overall the impression gained by ETHOS was that service specific information was incredibly difficult to access for tenants visiting the site in search of guidance. No obvious pathways or headings were available which should lead to specific information/ or a dedicated page about adaptations. The limited information available on the site is reliant upon the tenant knowing in detail the departmental structures of LHT (for example that Aids and Adaptations sit within the Housing & Support Service)

Persistent searching of the site did eventually reveal an Aids and Adaptations Report (via search of Policies & Procedures) and a Frequently Asked Questions document that made limited reference to the service; however both were felt to be insufficient in providing the required detail a site visitor may be seeking. In addition, no supporting documentation or publications (either for reference or download) relating to Aids and Adaptation were found on the site.

### **4.3.3 Benchmarking :**

The LHT site was benchmarked against those of neighbouring Associations, which in the opinion of ETHOS, revealed some excellent examples of good practice (The Evidence File including these examples will be provided to the service manager as part of the Project). Specifically the best sites utilised an A-Z of services search facility which made direct links to relevant Adaptations information easy and straightforward. A dedicated page for the service was also preferred by the Panel, and in particular those felt to be the most impressive contained a series of related documentation including:

- Adaptations Policy
- Application Form to Download
- Application Process Map
- Service Specific leaflets &
- Case Study.

It is acknowledged that a wider review of the LHT Website is scheduled to take place in the near future.

### **4.3.4 Signposting to Other Agencies**

In the opinion of ETHOS, especially given the nature of the Aids and Adaptations process and its links to other organisations, it would be valuable to provide a signposting facility to tenants. This was not currently in evidence on the Website or leaflets, and only limited use of signposting was included in correspondence to tenants whose applications had been unsuccessful.

Whilst it is acknowledged that staff may offer signposting advice to tenants during individual contact, it would be helpful to have a comprehensive list of relevant agencies to issue to tenants. As part of the Scrutiny activities undertaken, a number of external organisations were researched and identified as valuable contacts or sources of guidance for tenants. A complete list is available in the Project Evidence File, however examples include:

- Liverpool Life House
- CAB
- Red Cross (for adaptations equipment)
- Local Carers Centres
- Relevant Local Authority/ Social Services Websites

### **4.3 Access & Information:**

#### **Recommendations**

##### **Develop a Service Specific Leaflet for Aids & Adaptations:**

This would ensure that applicants can access all relevant information regarding the service and processes in one document. The language and tone of the leaflet should be carefully considered to ensure the service is promoted positively and is inclusive. (Ref:4.3a )

##### **Create a Paper Application Form for Adaptation Requests.**

An Application Form (for Aids & Adaptations) should be developed in paper format for completion by tenants independently if requested. This should also be made available to download from the Website. (Ref: 4.3b)

##### **Increase Publicity & Awareness of the Service:**

Newsletter Articles raising awareness of Aids & Adaptations should be included in Highlights Newsletter (accessed by general needs tenants) in addition to its inclusion in issues of the Cornerstone publication. (Ref: 4.3c)

##### **Ensure Appeals Information is available to Tenants in written form.**

Details about rights to a second opinion by an Occupational Therapist should be easily accessible for tenants. Whilst verbal explanations are given during home visits the panel felt it was important that this information is formally available in literature produced about the service e.g. a leaflet. (Ref: 4.3d)

##### **Website Improvements:**

Whilst the Panel acknowledges that a review of the LHT website is currently underway, it is recommended that significant improvements & review of information relating to the service should be completed as a priority. Benchmarking provided the panel with useful examples of documentation and information that could be considered for inclusion on a revised LHT web page. Suggestions include (Ref:4.3e)

1. Providing an Improved Pathway (Heading or Tab) to Aids & Adaptations Information. The panel feel that it is important this is not "hidden" within the Housing & Support Area, as general needs tenants would not necessarily know to look in this area.

2. A dedicated page containing complete information about the service (including any supporting documentation/ policies etc.) should be created. Re-naming of this section should be considered to improve accessibility for tenants. A suggestion was “A Helping Hand in Your Home”
3. Recommended supporting information & documentation available on the page include an Application Process Map, Application Form, Frequently Asked Questions, and relevant policies & case study.

#### **Implement Signposting to external Agencies & Services**

Details of a number of local agencies and services providing alternative or additional Aids & Adaptations were collected as part of the Benchmarking Exercise. Consideration should be given for inclusion of these on Website or Refusal Letters. (Ref:4.3f)

Benchmarking Examples of these Recommendations are included in the Evidence File that will be issued to the Service Manager upon completion of the Project.

## **4.4 (Focus Three) Performance**

The Customer Service Standards Monitoring Information from July 2011 indicated that performance was good across a range of Aids & Adaptations Targets, with 100% Target achieved for both Acknowledgment of Tenancy Support Requests & Completion of Initial Needs Assessments within ten days. There were however, two main indicator targets not being met for completion of Major & Minor Adaptations within target timescale. It is these areas which ETHOS has focused on in more detail.

### **4.4.1 Major Adaptations:**

Performance Indicators relating to the completion of Major Adaptations for 2011-2012 showed that the completion of works within specified timescales was below target in the first quarter of the year, with an average of 7.41 months achieved against a 6 month target. Interviews with staff suggested that delays were the result of two main issues.

- **Delays in the authorisation of the Annual Adaptation Budget & Contract renewals:** have previously resulted in an approximate four week lapse prior to adaption work commencing at the beginning of the financial year. Major Adaptation contract is now agreed for a term of two years, which should mean that there is no delay in works starting in the first quarter of the new financial year.
- **Exhaustion of Allocated Adaptation Budgets:** an increased demand within the budget year for minor and major adaptations can and has resulted in the adaptations service being suspended until allocation of

monies is available in the new budget year. Historically the service has been suspended in January or February.

A principle concern for ETHOS was the impact these delays have upon the tenants awaiting Major Adaptations, however they were reassured during interviews that provisions are put in place to ensure delays to back logs are caught up by Quarter 3 and 4 without an impact on the quality and standard of the work.

#### **4.4.2 Minor Adaptations:**

Performance Indicators for 2011-2012 relating to the completion of Minor Adaptations within the specific timescale show significant delays in quarter one (Performance was twenty three days against ten day target) Interviews with Housing Support Staff who manage Minor Adaptations suggested that this had been due to Minor Adaptations being raised against a Priority Cat of ten days on the repairs system. Given that initial assessment work was also necessary prior to the jobs being raised this meant that often Minor Adaptations were completed outside of the target time.

ETHOS were advised that a solution to this issue has been established by creating a new five day response category against which Minor Adaptations can be raised.

### **4.4 Performance RECOMMENDATIONS**

#### **Authorisation of Annual Adaptations Budget & Contract Renewals**

Ensure that work associated with authorisation (via SMT) of Annual Budgets, and the renewal of Major Contracts (now every two years) are completed in good time to ensure that delays to commencing adaptation work at the beginning of the financial year are avoided. (Ref:4.4a)

**Monitor the effectiveness of Minor Adaptions Repair 5 day Category. (Ref: 4.4b)**

#### **4.5 (Focus Four) Impact of Location on Service:**

The geographical spread of LHT properties across a number of different Local Authority boundaries can have an impact on the way in which Major Adaptations are processed. It is acknowledged that there are notable differences in the policies and approaches of Local Authorities and this can result in significant delays (i.e. waiting list for Occupational Therapist assessments in Liverpool) The impact of this was reflected in interviews with staff from both Housing & Support and Property Services, and ETHOS

recognise that on-going attempts are being made to improve partnership working with Local Authorities.

The work that staffs are undertaking to establish a set of proposals for new working arrangements with Liverpool City Council for example is welcomed, particularly if they are able to replicate some of the positive partnerships LHT has established with other Local Authorities.

Having reviewed the Aids & Adaptations Policy, concerns were however raised that geographical differences in services were not acknowledged, and it is suggested that the policy should be revised to include an appended statement which explains differing approaches of respective Local Authorities. In addition, given that the majority of tenants are unlikely to refer to the Adaptations Policy it may be beneficial to produce a written explanation of these issues that could be given to applicants that they are aware of potential delays.

#### **4.5 Impact of Location on Service**

##### **Recommendations**

##### **Continue to improve Partnership arrangements with Local Authorities.**

SLA is already to be negotiated with Liverpool City Council, which would be beneficial to all LHT Teams involved in monitoring and delivering the Adaptations Service. ETHOS to review success of the work as part of six month review. (Ref: 4.5a)

##### **Amend Policy to include Statement about Geographical Differences :**

In addition produce written statement that can be issued to tenants upon application that explains differences. (Ref: 4.5b)

#### **4.6 Monitoring Contractor Commitments & Recycling of Equipment:**

Overall ETHOS were impressed with the completion of 100% post- inspection of Major Adaptations work, and in particular felt the close monitoring of each adaptation job was positive, as are the monthly contract meetings which enabled officers to immediately pick up and deal with defects or issues etc.

Other areas of contractor performance proved to be less effectively monitored across the departments. Specifically, the contract term for Major Adaptations includes a commitment to recycle equipment for future use. No dedicated or formal processes appeared to be in place to monitor this and no detailed information or figures on the % of equipment re-used within the last year were available.

During his interview the Supported Housing Team Leader raised potential cost issues with recycling relating to removal, re-installation and storage. Whilst ETHOS acknowledged that these perceived issues would need to be explored,

they felt that this had yet been given proper consideration or negotiation with the adaptations contractor (whose successful procurement was partially on the basis of such outline commitments).

Staff appeared to agree with the Panel that such pledges need to be implemented and reviewed formally as part of the wider management of this contract. Potential benefits could include value for money savings for the organisation and also direct improvements for those tenants currently awaiting adaptations.

#### **4.6 Recycling of Equipment Recommendations**

##### **Monitor and formally report on contractor commitment to recycle equipment:**

Important that respective departments work together to ensure opportunities for recycling are maximised. Contractor commitments to recycle should be properly monitored and reported upon. (Ref: 4.6a)

##### **Explore storage options for adaptations equipment**

Feasibility of an LHT storage facility to be established to store adaptations equipment, or alternatively consider negotiation with adaptation contractor to provide this facility as part of their initial commitments to recycling of equipment. (Ref: 4.6b)

#### **4.7 Incentives to encourage the release of Adapted Properties:**

Given that the wider Service Review of Adaptations may consider the implementation of a scheme to encourage the release of adapted properties, ETHOS to have given this issue some consideration. ETHOS understand that a pilot scheme was unsuccessful in attracting any existing tenants to take up this option, which they feel may have been partially due to the limited publicity and awareness raised about the scheme. ETHOS felt this was disappointing particularly given they had personal knowledge of existing tenants who would have welcomed the opportunity to take part in the scheme.

ETHOS concluded that given the current demand levels for adaptations and the waiting list for specifically adapted properties, such an initiative should be explored and re-launched. They were keen that, in developing the scheme, appropriate consideration be given to the duty of care commitments to existing tenants. In particular it was suggested that a combination of “incentives” and support would need to be offered to those giving up properties. Suggestions included utilising new build properties for alternative accommodation for the existing tenant as an incentive, and in terms of support providing assistance with moving etc.

In exploring options to address Waiting Lists for Adapted Properties, ETHOS also felt that alternative initiatives should be considered; for example successful property matching schemes jointly delivered by neighbouring Housing Associations.

#### **4.7 Incentives for Release of Adapted Properties** **Recommendations**

##### **Explore opportunities to re-launch Incentive Scheme.**

Utilise local knowledge from Neighbourhood Teams who may be able to identify appropriate candidates. Consideration should be given to what incentives that are being offered to ensure they are appropriate in encouraging people to move i.e. access to new build properties. (Ref: 4.7a )

##### **Explore Property Matching Schemes with Neighbouring Organisations.**

Good Practice examples of partnership working of Housing Associations to establish a property matching scheme in order to address issues with current Adapted Property Waiting Lists. (Ref: 4.7b)

## **5 Conclusion**

ETHOS acknowledges that a review of the Aids and Adaptations Service is currently underway by the Housing and Support Team, and it is hoped that the recommendations made as part of this Scrutiny project will be considered and fed into the wider Service Review. Overall ETHOS were impressed by the co-operation, professionalism and positive approach demonstrated by all of the staff they encountered as part of the scrutiny project and they look forward to receiving an update as to the progress of the service Action Plan they have agreed as part of the scrutiny monitoring arrangements.

## **6 Comments by Director & Service Manager**

The Director and Service Manager were invited to meet with the Chair and vice Chair of ETHOS to discuss the report findings & recommendations. This meeting took place on Thursday 17<sup>th</sup> November 2011.

“We would like to thank the ETHOS panel for their clear, honest and concise audit they have conducted. Many of the improvements recommended will be incorporated into the Aids & Adaptations service review that is currently being undertaken. It has been a good learning exercise for both ETHOS and Housing Support and it has helped us both to understand each other’s remit and how a very complex service can run more efficiently from a ‘fresh pair of eyes’.

The Team would also like to thank ETHOS for all the time and effort that has been put into producing this report. There have been a number of learning outcomes as a consequence of this exercise that the team will adopt.”

**Nicola Williams/ Donna Kelly November 2011.**

The accompanying Action Plan and agreed timescales have been jointly agreed by ETHOS and the Housing Support Team and will be reviewed by the ETHOS Panel after a period of 6 months.

## **7 Next Steps**

This report will be presented to SMT & Board by the Chair & vice Chair of ETHOS.

A Review of the Aids & Adaptations Action Plan will be completed in six months **(June 2012)**

The final Aids and Adaptations scrutiny report will be made available via the LHT website & publicised within both Highlights & Tenant Panel Newsletters. Full copies of the report will be available to download on the website and sent out to tenants if requested. This is to ensure that the wider tenant base is aware of the findings of the scrutiny process.

## **8 Comments by SMT**

As per the scrutiny framework process, the findings for the report were presented to SMT on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2011.

“SMT welcomed the report and would like to thank ETHOS for an excellent report produced to a high standard and much improved on the earlier report presented in May 2011.

The report makes a number of recommendations which will be incorporated into the overall review of Aids and adaptations which is currently underway.

ETHOS and LHT staff have obviously worked extremely hard to produce a thorough interesting read and LHT SMT would like to thank ETHOS for all the effort which has gone into this exercise.”

**SMT 8<sup>th</sup> December 2011**

## 9 Comments by Board

As per the scrutiny framework process, the findings for the report were presented to BOARD in December 2011.

“The Board would like to thank the ETHOS panel for a fantastic piece of work that gives an excellent account of the Aids & Adaptations service provided by LHT, highlighting a number of strengths and providing some really constructive recommendations about how the service could be improved for the benefit of our customers. The report and the presentation is really encouraging and we would like to thank you for your time, effort and commitment to producing this report within the time frame allocated.

We look forward to receiving your next report on Voids in Spring 2012”

**Clare Nelson Chair of LHT Board, 14<sup>th</sup> December 2011.**

Ethos Scrutiny Report: **Aids & Adaptations** (2011 Review)

**Action Plan.**

Action Point Ref	Recommendation	Service Area Response/ <b>ETHOS response</b> (if required)	Action	Who	When	Status
<b>Quick Wins</b>						
3.5a	Completion of Learning Log	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- There are occasions where some parts of the Complaints Learning Log are not applicable to a specific case.</li> <li>- Agreed that the Log should be completed in full but officers indicate which parts are not applicable.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Staff briefed to ensure learning log is actioned after every complaint completed.</li> </ul>	Housing & Support Team	Immediately	
3.5b	Wording amendment to current Satisfaction Form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- When 4.2a is implemented Satisfaction Form to be amended to reflect the audience and method of collection.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Amend wording on current Form.</li> </ul>	Business Intelligence/ H Support	Quarter 1 2012	
3.5c	Creation of new PI for Appeals take-up.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- To investigate possibility of setting a new PI.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Collection &amp; recording of Additional Data.</li> </ul>	Business Intelligence/ H Support	Quarter 1 2012	
<b>Feedback &amp; Satisfaction</b>						
4.2a	Explore alternative feedback options for tenant's satisfaction.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Face to Face Surveys completed by Officers felt to be inappropriate method of collecting feedback.</li> </ul> <p><b>This explanation accepted by ETHOS.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agreement made to utilise Tenant Auditors to complete routine sample</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Surveys to be included in Tenant Auditor Programme.</li> <li>- Notify Applicants: Letters on AIDA to be updated to include details of the Audit.</li> </ul>	DD/JP/NW	Commence: Quarter 1 2012	

		telephone surveys in future.				
4.2b	Obtain Feedback Preferences as part of Application process.	- New Feedback Option via Tenant Auditors agreed as per 4.2a above.	Action as per 4.2a	N/a	N/a	
4.2c	Review appropriateness of Satisfaction Form Incentives.	- Incentive to be removed when completing an Adaptations Survey.	- Remove Incentive information from Satisfaction forms	Business Intelligence/ H Support	Commence Quarter 1 2012	
<b>Access &amp; Information</b>						
4.3a	Develop a Service Specific Leaflet for Aids & Adaptations.	- Previous publications review recommended the reduction of service specific leaflets.  - Agreed that dedicated Aids & Adaptations Leaflet would be beneficial to ensure information about the service is easily accessed.	Produce an Aids & Adaptations Leaflet.	Business Intelligence/ H Support	To be included as part of Corporate Leaflet Review (Date tbc)	
4.3b	Create a paper Application Form for Adaptation requests.	Paper Forms have been previously used, however removed from use due to being returned incomplete.  CSC or Home Visit completion felt to be a more effective & efficient method to ensure all required info obtained first time. <a href="#">Explanation/ Decision accepted by ETHOS.</a>	After further investigations- a pilot self-referral form will be available to tenants who wish to complete their own referral form. This will be a plain English form and be available via the website.	H Support	Self- Referral to be included as part of the Tenancy Support Review January 2012	N/a
4.3c	Increase publicity & awareness of the service.	- Currently limited space available in general Highlights Newsletter for Housing & Support Articles as the	- Service to be advertised on current website.	Business Intelligence	To be advertised on Website and	

		<p>service also has a designated newsletter (Cornerstone)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agreed that positive case studies etc. would be valuable for inclusion in general needs publications.</li> <li>- Wider LHT Newsletter Review due to be completed shortly. As part of this exercise explore possibility of extending the space available in Highlights to include A&amp;A information.</li> </ul>		e/ H Support	Newsletter where possible.	
<b>4.3d</b>	Ensure appeals information is available in written form.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Right to 2<sup>nd</sup> opinion for OT can be included in application correspondence.</li> </ul>	To be incorporated onto notification letters on AIDA.	H Support	Immediately	
<b>4.3e (1-3)</b>	Website Improvements	<p>Comments &amp; recommendations about website accepted, and will be valuable information to feed into wider LHT Review of Website.</p> <p>The following interim improvements can be explored:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Direct Tab for Adaptations Page.</li> <li>- Service Specific Leaflet available to download once completed (see 4.3a)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- ETHOS comments to be considered as part of wider Website Review.</li> <li>- Explore feasibility of direct tab for Adaptations Information on Website.</li> <li>- Leaflet to be made available via the website- of current website allows due to restrictions. Via post as an alternative</li> </ul>	<p>B Intelligence</p> <p>B Intelligence/ H Support</p> <p>B Intelligence</p>	<p>To be included as part of the website review and docs uploaded where possible.</p> <p>Date TBC</p>	

				e/ H Support		
4.3f	Implement signposting to external agencies & services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Given the geographical spread of LHT stock it is difficult to include full details of all agencies in different regions.</li> <li>- Suggested alternative is to signpost tenants to Local Authority Websites which do contain area specific information &amp; agency signposting.</li> <li>- Recent revisions to the Housing &amp; Support Web Pages now include external agency contact details.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Details of managing agents now available via the supported housing webpages.</li> <li>- Update Website with Local Authority Links if current website allows due to restrictions.</li> </ul>	B Intelligence/ H Support	To be included as part of the website review and docs uploaded where possible.  Date TBC	
<b>Performance</b>						
4.4a	Review Authorisation of Annual Adaptations Budget & Renewal of Major Contracts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agreed that budget reports to SMT (Annually) &amp; renewal of Major Adaptations Contracts (bi-annually) should be started in good time to ensure they are completed ready for new financial years.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Work on budget Reports for SMT &amp; Contract Renewals to commence Earlier as required.</li> </ul>	H Support/ Property Services	Annually  Bi-Annually	
4.4b	Monitor the effectiveness of Minor Adaptation(5 day cat)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- New processes are in place.</li> <li>- Update on progress and impact on PI will be shared with ETHOS as part of 6 Month Review.</li> </ul>	No further actions required. Monitoring will be completed as part of existing PI data.	Business Intelligence e/H Support.	On-going. Update to ETHOS in June 2012.	
<b>Impact of Location</b>						
4.5a	Continue to improve Partnership arrangements with Local	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- On-going work</li> <li>- Update on progress to be provided to</li> </ul>		Housing Support.	On-going. Update to ETHOS in	

	Authorities.	ETHOS as part of 6 Month Review.			June 2012.	
4.5b	Amend Policy to include statement about Geographical differences.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Agreed that statement can be included in Policy as an Appendix.</li> <li>- Policy Review due to be complete March 2012.</li> </ul>	Produce statement & Update Policy.	Housing Support.	March 2012.	
	<b>Recycling of Equipment</b>					
4.6a	Monitor and report on Contractor Recycling commitments.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Recommendation Agreed.</li> <li>- Recycling Issues will be considered as part of the A&amp;A Service Review due to be completed in March 2012.</li> </ul>	ETHOS comments to be considered as part of the wider review.	Housing Support/ Property Services.	Update to ETHOS in June 2012.	
4.6b	Explore storage options for Adaptations Equipment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Storage options form part of the Contractor Commitments. To be considered as part of the wider A&amp;A Review- March 2012.</li> </ul>	Contract due for tender 2012.	Housing Support/ Property Services.	2012.	
	<b>Release of Adapted Prop</b>					
4.7a	Explore opportunities to re-launch Incentive Scheme.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Scheme being considered as part of the A&amp;A Service Review due to be completed in March 2012.</li> </ul>	ETHOS comments to be considered as part of the wider review.	Housing Support	Update to ETHOS in June 2012.	
4.7b	Explore Property Matching Schemes.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- LHT Adapted Properties are included in "Access Liverpool" which is a partnership scheme with other Housing Associations.</li> </ul>	N/a	N/a	N/a	

## Scrutiny at Liverpool Housing Trust

LHT has demonstrated its commitment to the Government's new regulatory requirements by ensuring that changes have been made to its involvement and governance structures, which enables tenants to have a formal role in co-regulation.

The **ETHOS Panel** was established in 2010, its main aims are:

- To drive continuous improvement in performance and customer service excellence through the process of Resident Led Self-Regulation (RLSR).
- To ensure that tenants' views, aspirations and priorities are central to and directly influencing LHT's strategic direction and that this can be clearly evidenced.
- To conduct regular Scrutiny Projects of LHT's services, which result in making evidence based recommendations to SMT & Board.

"At LHT Tenant feedback allows us to shape services to ensure that we are meeting our tenant's needs. We want to ensure that we are accountable and transparent in the services that we provide, we firmly believe that by empowering tenants to take on a scrutiny role and hold us to account will lead to greater service improvements.

ETHOS has the responsibility to scrutinise any aspect of our housing services and we look forward to working with them."

**Sue Westwater, Managing Director LHT**

## Update on our current position

Following a successful recruitment exercise completed in November 2011, two new tenants have been appointed to the panel, increasing overall membership to nine.

Alongside support provided by staff, ETHOS have received on-going independent Training and support (TPAS and Trafford Hall) in order to build confidence and capacity in their role.

ETHOS carried out a pilot scrutiny project on aspects of the LHT'S Environmental Service in April 2011, and have just completed a full scrutiny exercise of the Aids & Adaptations Service. The Panel have committed to undertake a future programme of three scrutiny projects per annum. The schedule for 2012 has been identified as follows:

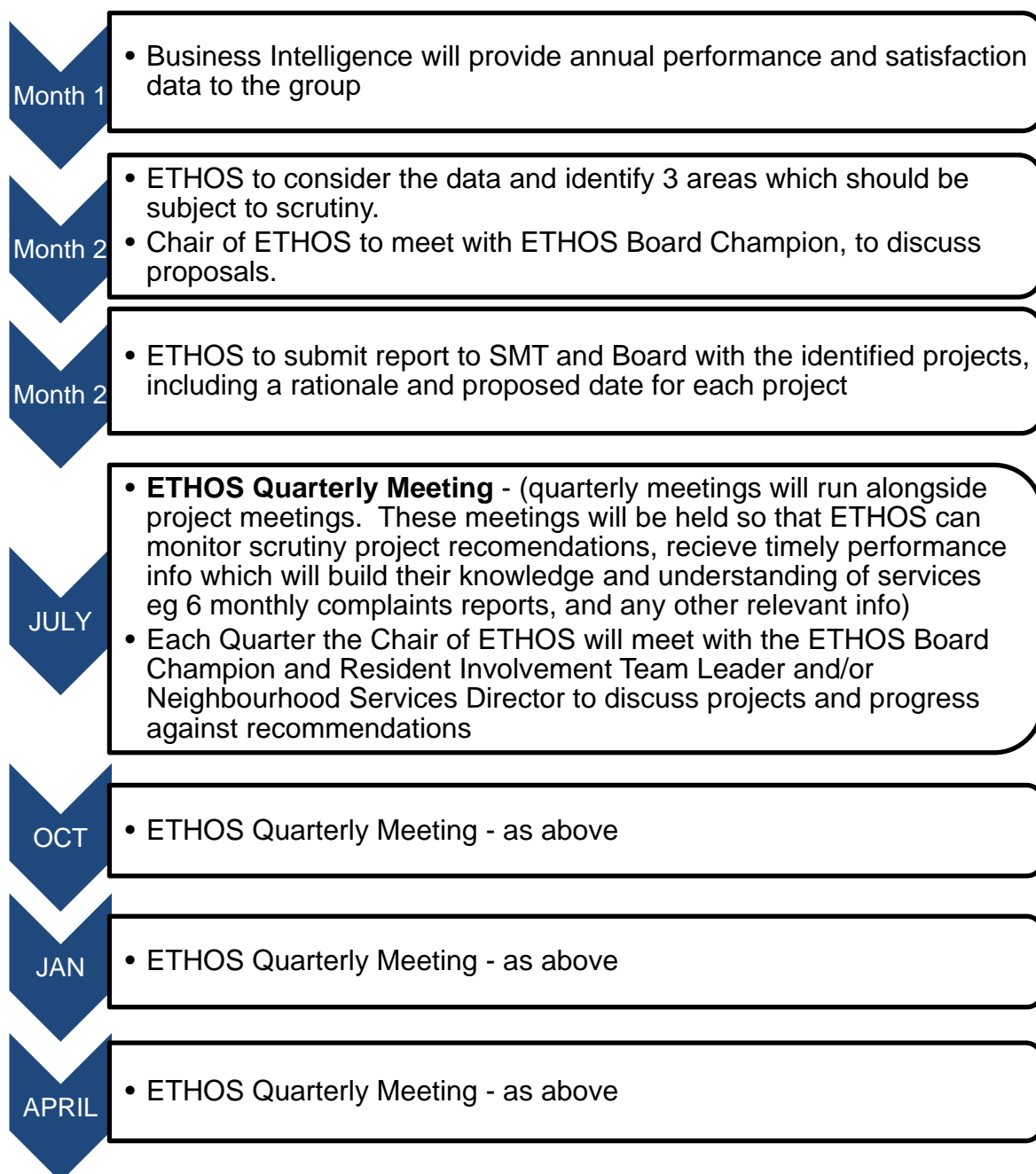
- **Voids**: to commence in January 2012.
- **Sheltered Housing**: to commence in May 2012.

- **Anti-Social Behaviour:** to commence in Sept 2012.

In support of the new involvement structure, a series of Framework documents have been created which illustrate the scrutiny processes they will follow in deciding upon and carrying out each of their projects and their relationship with the LHT Board.

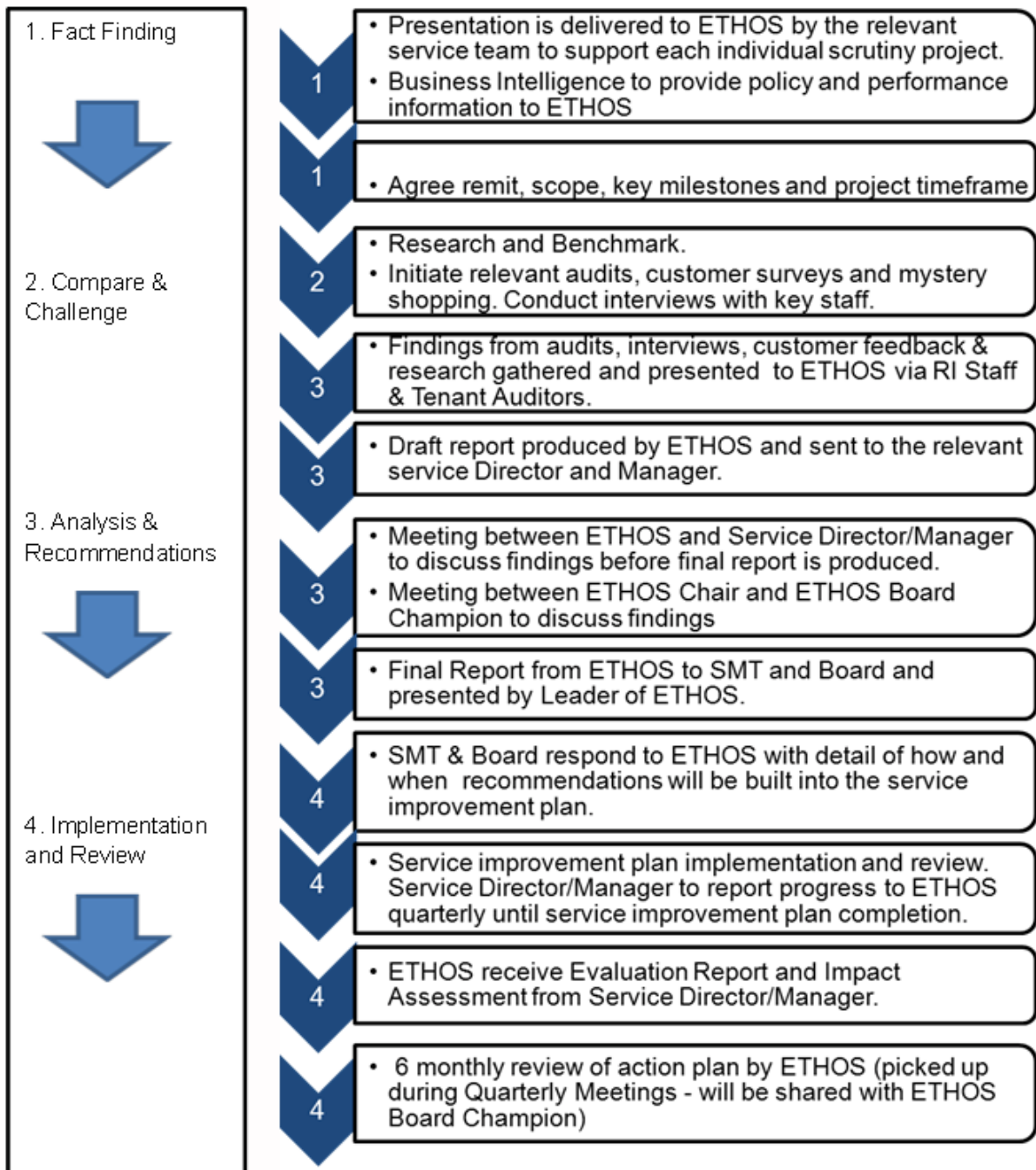
## ETHOS Scrutiny Framework

To determine annual scrutiny projects for the following process will be carried out.



# ETHOS Scrutiny Framework

## PROJECT PROCESS



Board  
Chair  
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