

Costs and effectiveness of accessible housing registers in a choice-based lettings context

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Department for Communities and Local Government

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Research summary

This study examines the costs and effectiveness of accessible housing registers in a choice-based lettings context. Choice-based lettings is a system used by social landlords where properties available for letting are advertised or made known to potential applicants who then bid for the properties. A small proportion of social rented homes are 'accessible', that is to say they are designed to 'mobility standards' or are equipped with adaptations (e.g. ramps, grab rails, stair lifts) to make them more suitable for people with various disabilities. Both to improve quality of life for disabled people in unsuitable housing and to make the most effective use of this 'limited resource' accessible housing registers have been established in many areas. As defined by the Department for Communities and Local Government an accessible housing register is 'a list of suitable homes for disabled people with access needs'¹.

Not all areas have an accessible housing register and there is no standard approach to their operation. A key policy question is the relationship between the operation of an accessible housing register and choice-based letting. Where an accessible housing register is applied, lettings involving accessible or adapted properties may be operated in parallel with choice-based letting or, alternatively, a choice-based letting scheme may fully integrate the letting of such properties alongside mainstream stock. Or there may be hybrid models. This study finds that there are many differences in practice between social landlords that operate an accessible housing register, for example from the way they classify properties to the approach to prioritising households with adapted housing needs.

This report examines the costs and effectiveness of accessible housing registers within the choice-based letting context via a small number of case studies that are illustrative of the issues and the associated costs and (financial) benefits for social landlords rather than providing a full analysis of cost-effectiveness. The main focus of the report is on the processes that address the needs of tenants with accessible housing requirements. In doing so it draws out the differential approaches between localities.

The analysis begins by setting out a typology of accessible housing registers and then details the research method. The research method establishes the underlying logic and the framework for the analysis. The next section profiles the three accessible housing registers that are the focus of the research. The subsequent analysis is divided into a series of sections representing building blocks or elements that represent different aspects of the processes of addressing the housing requirements of households with adaptive housing needs:

¹ See p28 in: Communities & Local Government (2008) *Disability Equality Report by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government* <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1114602.pdf>

- Processes and costs of identifying households with special needs
- Assessment of housing stock suitable for accessible or adapted needs
- Other set up and running costs accessible housing register
- Scale and costs of adaptations
- Households with accessible/adaptive housing needs
- Matching of households and housing via accessible housing register
- Bid cycles and numbers of bids for lets involving accessible/adapted properties
- Duration of wait for priority households before rehousing in adapted housing
- Average letting times/void periods for lettings of accessible housing and for all lettings
- Links between adaptations and lettings
- Cost effectiveness

Each section can also be read as stand alone discrete analyses. Finally the conclusions bring together the findings and discuss strategic issues.

The research task faces a number of challenges as social landlord accounting systems are not activity based which means that there are difficulties in isolating the costs of accessible housing registers. There also difficulties because the precise boundaries of an accessible housing register in practice are not necessarily precisely defined. In other words the formal definition above of an accessible housing register as simply a list of properties is too narrow. Further the outcomes attributed to accessible housing registers also suffer from a lack of formal monitoring and a degree of fuzziness. The consequence is that there are gaps in the data to make a full assessment of the costs and effectiveness.

The research begins by setting out the three potential different models of accessible housing register:

- Open accessible housing register
A comprehensive listing of accessible and adapted properties is compiled, and accessible homes are let via choice-based letting with bidders needing such properties given priority over all others.
- Closed accessible housing register
A comprehensive listing of accessible properties is compiled together with a companion listing of people needing accessible housing and seeking to move. Relevant properties becoming available for letting are matched by staff to the 'most appropriate' applicant with highest priority as registered on 'companion listing'. Applicants on companion listing are also free to bid for 'mainstream' properties as advertised under choice-based letting.

- Open Partial accessible housing register
This model does not provide a full list of adapted properties. Instead it offers a 'weekly' list of such housing. That is to say properties becoming available for letting are assessed in terms of their 'accessibility features' in the course of initial void inspection and accessible/adapted properties are advertised within the choice-based letting system with a marker. Bidders with a need for such properties are given priority over all others.

The analysis examines the costs and effectiveness of a case study of each of the three different approaches to letting accessible/adapted properties under choice-based letting given above. These case studies are summarised as:

- A London Borough – open accessible housing register
- B Provincial city – closed accessible housing register
- C Mixed urban authority – open partial accessible housing register

These case studies were chosen to reflect different types of community and also on the basis of the willingness of the local agencies to participate in the provision of data. Within each scheme the **effectiveness** of the matching process by accessible housing registers is compared using a number of criteria:

- How successful is the accessible housing register in allocating/matching adapted housing to tenants with associated needs?
- How do tenants with adapted housing needs fare compared with standard tenants in terms of waiting times?

The key question at the end of the analysis is not just whether accessible housing registers are an **effective** way of housing people with adapted housing needs but also whether it is **cost effective**. To assess this the research needs to consider potential savings for example by a more efficient use of the existing adapted housing stock and by reducing expenditure on adapting general needs housing.

The research involved an initial visit to each scheme and an interview with the key staff members. The principal sources of data for the study therefore are the records of the schemes and associated costs data available. The analysis has been supplemented by CORE data where appropriate. In addition relevant contextual information has been included from the Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix and Business Plan Statistical Appendix.

The three models of accessible housing register reviewed are very different in virtually every aspect of classifying households and housing and the matching process. The differences are partly driven by the size of an authority, for example the approach of the mixed urban authority could only be carried out on a small scale. The accessible housing registers considered are relatively new and in at least one case in the process of refinement.

In all three choice-based letting schemes there is still some administrative processing of lets for households with accessible and adapted housing needs.

In terms of the cost and effectiveness of these models the analysis has been hindered by both these differences and the incomplete financial evidence available.

The importance of local circumstances and data deficiencies mean that there are a number of areas where it is not possible to have definitive conclusions. In one sense more research is required, and this point is made at specific points in the text but this will not provide any further insights until there are fundamental changes to local accounting procedures to provide more clearly defined activity based costing.

The analysis has examined the construction of an accessible housing register in the different case studies subdivided into the following elements:

- Processes and costs of identifying households with accessible needs
- Assessment of housing stock suitable for accessible or adapted needs
- Other set up and running costs accessible housing register
- Scale and costs of adaptations
- Households with accessible/adaptive housing needs

The next stage considered the operation and efficiency of accessible housing register allocation processes:

- Matching of households and housing via accessible housing register
- Bid cycles and numbers of bids for lets involving accessible/adapted properties
- Duration of wait for priority households before rehousing in adapted housing
- Average letting times/void periods for lettings of accessible housing and for all lettings
- Links between adaptations and lettings

Finally the analysis reviewed the cost effectiveness of accessible housing registers.

Given the variety of models, the differing interpretation of accessible housing register boundaries, the very different characteristics of the areas and the paucity of data it has been difficult to make full comparisons, even of the relative costs between case studies. Some conclusions can be drawn on the costs and effectiveness of accessible housing registers:

- The number of adapted properties represents a relatively small proportion of all lettings and an accessible housing register is a useful catalyst for identifying and addressing accessible/adapted housing needs.
- The setting up and running costs of the accessible housing register (ignoring classification of households and housing) appear to be a small component of the costs of running a choice-based letting scheme and are

difficult to identify and disaggregate from overall costs. The classification of housing is very costly if done all at once, rather than gradually over time.

- Considerable sums each year are being spent on adapting property but these adaptations are not necessarily recorded on a central database except as part of a full accessible housing register.
- The strategic links between the activities of meeting the demand for adaptations via physical improvement or lettings policies appear limited.
- The use of the accessible housing register in allocation systems still does not necessarily match adapted housing to households even where the demand for accessible housing outweighs the supply. This element of accessible housing registers is arguably still work in progress.
- An (almost) open choice-based letting accessible housing register can work effectively with households bidding for properties certainly in circumstances where there is a large social housing stock and shortages of adapted property.
- Waiting time for households with adaptive needs to be allocated an adapted home were difficult to quantify but are likely to be more a reflection of the stock available than the application of an accessible housing register.
- Letting times for general and adaptive needs in an open accessible housing register can be comparable.
- The cost effectiveness of a full accessible housing register centres around the reduction in the expenditure requirement to adapt stock and the financial analysis of the London case study suggests that an efficient full accessible housing register could pay back its costs over five years if it could remove the need for 15% of adaptations. The financial case will vary with local circumstances in terms of the percentage of accessible stock, current household mismatches, and existing knowledge/databases on the characteristics of the stock.
- There are other financial benefits too in the long term through freeing of occupational therapy resources and the use of the accessible housing register to support strategic housing needs assessment.
- The partial accessible housing register approach is financially attractive in the short term as it has no initial capital costs and from the tenant's perspective it provides the same choice-based letting service. This approach offers the possibility, through the incremental inputting of the information collected on to a register, of building up to a full accessible housing register, with its long term strategic benefits. The annual running costs can be supported by utilising savings from the adaptations' budget. It is possible that a partial accessible housing register represents the optimum solution for at least small local authorities given limited financial circumstances and that it can also be built up to a full version. However, the different accessible housing register models can be applied to all sizes of authority.

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This study examines the costs and effectiveness of accessible housing registers in a choice-based lettings context. Before proceeding to the analysis it is useful to begin with some definitions and context. First, choice-based lettings is a system used by social landlords where properties available for letting are advertised or made known to potential applicants who then bid for the properties. The matching of applicants to vacancies is then determined on the basis of the home-seeker's bid that has the highest priority. This approach to lettings is relatively new but is increasingly being applied across social housing, and is encouraged by central government. The Department for Communities and Local Government has a target that all local authorities will have choice-based allocations schemes by 2010 (Pawson et al, 2006).
- 1.2 A small proportion of social rented homes are 'accessible', that is to say they are designed to 'mobility standards' or are equipped with adaptations (e.g. ramps, grab rails, stair lifts) to make them more suitable for people with various disabilities. Both to improve quality of life for disabled people in unsuitable housing and to make the most effective use of this 'limited resource' accessible housing registers have been established in many areas. As defined by the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG) an accessible housing register is 'a list of suitable homes for disabled people with access needs'². Like choice-based letting the application of accessible housing registers is a relatively new phenomenon.
- 1.3 Not all areas have an accessible housing register and there is no standard approach to their operation. A key policy question is the relationship between the operation of an accessible housing register and choice-based letting. Where an accessible housing register is applied, lettings involving accessible or adapted properties may be operated in parallel with choice-based letting or, alternatively, a choice-based letting scheme may fully integrate the letting of such properties alongside mainstream stock. Or there may be hybrid models. This study finds that there are many differences in practice between social landlords that operate an accessible housing register, for example from the way they classify properties to the approach to prioritising households with adapted housing needs. This complicates the comparative analysis of accessible housing registers even before the research assesses their performance within a choice-based letting framework (that also varies between areas). It also means that there is no baseline for the study.
- 1.4 This report examines the costs and effectiveness of accessible housing registers within the choice-based letting context via a small number of case studies that are illustrative of the issues and the associated costs and (financial) benefits for social landlords rather than providing a full analysis

² See p28 in: Communities & Local Government (2008) Disability Equality Report by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government <http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/communities/pdf/1114602.pdf>

of cost-effectiveness. The analysis is set within the local housing contexts defined in terms of allocation policies and performance, and the balance between demand and adapted housing supply constraints. The main focus of the report is on the processes that address the needs of tenants with accessible housing requirements. In doing so it draws out the differential approaches between localities.

1.5 The analysis begins by setting out a typology of accessible housing registers and then details the research method. The research method establishes the underlying logic and the framework for the analysis. The next section profiles the three accessible housing registers that are the focus of the research. The subsequent analysis is divided into a series of sections representing building blocks or elements that represent different aspects of the processes of addressing the housing requirements of households with adaptive housing needs:

- Processes and costs of identifying households with special needs
- Assessment of housing stock suitable for accessible or adapted needs
- Other set up and running costs accessible housing register
- Scale and costs of adaptations
- Households with accessible/adaptive housing needs
- Matching of households and housing via accessible housing register
- Bid cycles and numbers of bids for lets involving accessible/adapted properties
- Duration of wait for priority households before rehousing in adapted housing
- Average letting times/void periods for lettings of accessible housing and for all lettings
- Links between adaptations and lettings
- Cost effectiveness

Each section can also be read as stand alone discrete analyses. Finally the conclusions bring together the findings and discuss strategic issues.

1.6 The research task faces a number of challenges as social landlord accounting systems are not activity based which means that there are difficulties in isolating the costs of accessible housing registers. There are also difficulties because the precise boundaries of an accessible housing register in practice are not necessarily precisely defined. In other words the formal definition above of an accessible housing register as simply a list of properties is too narrow. Further the outcomes attributed to accessible housing registers also suffer from a lack of formal monitoring and a degree of fuzziness. The consequence is that there are gaps in the data to make a full assessment of the costs and effectiveness.

2 Models of accessible housing registers under choice-based lettings

2.1 As noted above an accessible housing register can be formally if narrowly defined as a list of suitable homes for disabled people with access needs. As the report below shows this is really only a starting point as accessible housing registers can be applied in different ways. The research begins by identifying three different models as follows:

- Open accessible housing register

A comprehensive listing of accessible and adapted properties is compiled, and accessible homes are let via choice-based letting with bidders needing such properties given priority over all others.

- Closed accessible housing register

A comprehensive listing of accessible properties is compiled together with a companion listing of people needing accessible housing and seeking to move. Relevant properties becoming available for letting are not let through choice-based letting but are matched by staff to the 'most appropriate' applicant with highest priority as registered on 'companion listing'. Applicants on companion listing are also free to bid for 'mainstream' properties as advertised under choice-based letting.

- Open Partial accessible housing register

This model does not provide a full list of adapted properties instead it offers a 'weekly' list of such housing. Properties becoming available for letting are assessed in terms of their 'accessibility features' in the course of initial void inspection. Accessible/adapted properties are advertised within the choice-based letting system with a marker. Bidders with a need for such properties are given priority over all others.

2.2 The research considers the practical application of each of these three models.

3 Research method

3.1 An assessment of the costs and effectiveness of accessible housing registers is a complex task as there are no national standardised monitoring data available and individual schemes do not undertake assessments of this kind. The research has therefore had to collect its own raw data and the resources available necessitated a case study approach. The analysis examines the costs and effectiveness of a case study of each of the three different approaches to letting accessible/adapted properties under choice-based letting given above. These case studies are summarised as

A London Borough – open accessible housing register

B Provincial City – closed accessible housing register

C Mixed Urban Authority – open partial accessible housing register

3.2 Each of the three case study areas has very different characteristics. For example there are differences in size and type of stock, level of demand for general and accessible housing, proportion of stock held by registered social landlords, degree to which choice-based letting is used (and limits to bids), and number of offices, employees and associated rent/wage rates. These are discussed in detail later but it makes it very difficult to compare the different types of accessible housing register and limits the conclusions.

3.3 Within each scheme the **effectiveness** of the matching process by accessible housing registers is compared using a number of criteria:

- How do tenants with adapted housing needs fare compared with standard tenants in terms of waiting times?
- How successful is the accessible housing register in allocating/matching adapted housing to tenants with associated needs?

The key question at the end of the analysis is not just whether accessible housing registers are an **effective** way of housing people with adapted housing needs but also whether it is **cost effective**. To assess this the research needs to consider potential savings for example by a more efficient use of the existing adapted housing stock and by reducing expenditure on adapting general needs housing.

3.4 The research involved an initial visit to each scheme and an interview with the key staff members including the lettings manager and an occupational therapist. The meetings served as an opportunity to go through our detailed data requests set out in Appendix 2. The principal sources of data for the study therefore are the records of the schemes and associated costs data available. We are indebted to the help given by the staff of the case studies without whose generous cooperation the study could not have been possible. But the analysis is also limited by the local administrative records which of course are not designed to meet the needs of this study. This has

inevitably meant that the analysis has gaps where there is incomplete or no information.

- 3.5 The analysis has been supplemented by CORE data where appropriate but this data under-records the number of lettings in the case studies because not all landlords take part in CORE. This data is used as a comparator base for the data derived from the social landlords and hence has only been sourced for the relevant year. In addition relevant contextual information has been included from the Housing Strategy Statistical Appendix and Business Plan Statistical Appendix.
- 3.6 In interpreting statistical data on costs and effectiveness it is essential to distinguish between the different outputs in terms of the services offered and to what extent they achieve the goals set. It is important that we flesh out the methods used in each area in relation to:
- letting accessible/adapted properties and
 - the service provided to people seeking such accommodation

Such analysis includes the precise classifications of 'specialist properties' used in each case study and the detail of the rules which give households 'needing' such dwellings priority over others. It also seeks to assess (a) the extent to which specialist properties are, in fact, let to people 'not requiring such homes', and (b) how far it is the case that people needing adapted homes (and potentially entitled to 'overriding priority' for such) in fact bid for and accept non-adapted properties. In what circumstances do these eventualities occur? How frequently do adaptations previously installed at substantial cost end up being removed?

- 3.7 It is necessary to set the analysis within the local context in terms of the characteristics of the local housing stock with regard to the number and the proportion of adapted/accessible housing. The adapted stock needs to be compared with the scale of local demand by reference to the numbers of households, assessed as having mobility needs, who are not living in but seeking accessible/adapted housing. Judgement of the performance of an accessible housing register must also be compared with local average letting times and void periods for lettings. As noted above this makes analysis of comparative performance between social landlords difficult and it is not attempted in this study.
- 3.8 The setting up and application of an accessible housing register involves costs and these encompass compilation and upkeep of the accessible housing register database including additional necessary software, labour, etc. For comparative purposes the analysis aims to identify these costs and express them in per unit of stock, per adapted property, per letting and per adapted letting.
- 3.9 The effectiveness of an accessible housing matching process is ultimately judged by its success in terms of the speed and the degree of mismatch.

The building blocks required to make such an assessment include the following:

- Numbers of accessible/adapted properties let annually
- Proportion of all lettings accounted for by accessible/adapted housing
- Proportion of accessible/adapted housing allocated to priority households (classified as needing such properties)
- Proportion of general needs housing allocated to households needing accessible/adapted housing
- Waiting time of households who have been rehoused with accessible/adapted housing needs
- Waiting time of those households still awaiting rehousing (since date on register, since given priority, those actively bidding, ...)
- Void periods (and lost revenue) for accessible housing allocated to priority households

Each of these building blocks requires detailed analysis that is complicated by the data available and the different approaches/classifications applied between landlords partly in response to their local circumstances. In some cases data limitations severely constrain the research and findings.

- 3.10 To examine the cost effectiveness and potential savings the analysis also reviews the costs of adapting properties. It tries in particular to identify expenditure on the adaptation of properties modified for households who have recently moved and those properties adapted to households who have not recently moved. An efficient accessible housing register could make savings on these expenditures.

4 Overview of case studies and accessible housing register processes

4.1 In this section the analysis describes the context and the individual approaches applied in the three case studies. It provides some background to the case study areas themselves and explains the local procedures for allocations and the operation of the accessible housing register including the assessment of individual households with accessible needs and the suitability/classification of properties to meet these needs.

4.2 Open accessible housing register *London Borough*

4.2.1 At 1st April 2008 the borough had almost 100,000 dwellings of which around 13% were rented from the council and 27% were rented from registered social landlords. The registered social landlord sector therefore represents two thirds of social housing. The number of difficult to let housing is less than one per cent. Houses comprise 6%, bungalows less than half a percent and flats 94% of the council's stock. Overcrowding is a prominent issue in the borough with just over half of applicants lacking at least one or more bedrooms and one in six applicants lacking 2 or more bedrooms. Of those with an accessible housing register list award 52% lack at least one bedroom and 23% lack 2 or more bedrooms.

4.2.2 An arms length management organisation (ALMO) currently manages the choice-based letting service for partner landlords including the council housing of the London borough and fifteen local housing associations (April 2009). All these lets are pooled and managed through the choice-based letting scheme. New developments from registered social landlord partners are included. There is a comprehensive listing of accessible and adapted properties, and accessible homes which are let via choice-based letting with bidders needing such properties given priority over all others. There were just over two thousand general needs lets made via the choice-based letting service in 2008/09 of which 28% were to council stock and 72% to registered social landlord stock.

4.2.3 The choice-based letting scheme is not all embracing. While registered social landlords that are not full partners are subject to nomination arrangements, other properties are let outside the choice-based letting scheme. Registered social landlords use their own application and transfer lists for such lettings and these account for 30% of registered social landlord lettings in 2008/09 recorded via CORE. 16% of lets are transfers, planned to create chain lettings, and in some instances to address the overcrowding problem noted above. Most general needs lettings in the borough, including sheltered

housing, are let through choice-based letting. Supported housing lets are not generally included in choice-based letting but managed through other access arrangements.

4.2.4 A key aspect of the accessible housing register scheme is that a significant percentage of the social housing stock has been classified into accessibility categories led by an occupational therapist (98% of council owned properties and 46% of registered social landlord properties). There is a common housing register and once registered on it applicants are normally included in one of four community groups:

- **Group 1 Community Gain**
Emergency priority
Demolition or refurbishment
Council/Registered social landlord tenant with at least one bedroom less than current home
Extenuating repair needs
- **Group 2 Community Priority**
Extenuating social or health needs
From a quota group
Homeless households with an assessed priority need
- **Group 3 Community Mobility**
Others not in Groups 1, 2 or 4.
- **Group 4 Community General**
Registered social landlord tenants not a member of common housing register unless eligible for Groups 1 or 2
Owners or part owners of a residential property
Without a local connection

4.2.5 To facilitate disabled and elderly people receiving the appropriate priority for the stock for accessible housing categories has been designed to correlate with eligibility criteria. The categories are:

Category A Wheelchair Accessible

Purpose built properties that are designed to meet latest wheelchair accessible housing design standards, offering extra space and full access to all rooms and facilities. If the property is above ground floor level it will be accessed by two lifts.

Category B Partially Wheelchair Accessible

Properties that are designed to meet older wheelchair standards or have been significantly adapted to provide extra space and give wheelchair access to at least the entrance level of the property. These properties do not necessarily provide wheelchair access above the entrance level of the property; it may be just a ground floor bedroom, bathroom kitchen and living room that are wheelchair accessible.

Category C Life Time Homes

Housing that meets 'life time homes' space requirements to create an accessible and adaptable home. The main features include a level approach/entrance and wider doorways.

Category D Easy Access

The main features of these properties include a level approach to the entrance, a toilet at the entrance level, wider doorways and more space than in general needs housing.

Category E Step Free

General needs housing which happens to have a level approach/entrance to the property, and has limited potential for future adaptability of the stairs.

Category F General Housing**Category G Not Yet Assessed**

- 4.2.6 There is no limit to the number of bids that can be made each week, with a number of methods available to applicants for bidding. The accessible housing register is fully integrated into the choice-based letting scheme. Disabled people needing support are identified through a health assessment process. Clients are assessed for their needs and a recommendation for a property category made for bidding. A disabled applicant completes a health assessment application form, assessments are made by the health advisor or housing occupational therapists and the applicant is given an accessible housing register award category. A home visit may be made to assess the barriers for the individual and reasons for the move discussed. Advice is provided on alternatives to moving, on adapting the property, such as putting in a stairlift. The applicant may still wish to move as there may be extenuating health or other reasons. 17% of the assessed stock is accessible housing in some form, i.e. falls into Categories A to E.
- 4.2.7 Under the choice-based letting scheme the applicant with adapted housing needs makes the decision about which properties to bid for but there is a support team that provides information and help for bidding too. Individual households who need this service are identified through the health assessment.

4.3 Closed accessible housing register *Provincial City*

- 4.3.1 The city area has a stock of over 100,000 of which 24% are rented from the local authority/ALMO and 6% rented from registered social landlords. Some 5% of social housing is identified as difficult to let and 7% are classified as low demand dwellings. Houses comprise 51%, bungalows 5% and flats 44% of the council's stock.

4.3.2 The city's choice-based letting scheme offers a comprehensive listing of accessible properties that has been compiled together with a companion listing of people needing accessible housing and seeking to move. Relevant properties becoming available for letting are matched by staff to the 'most appropriate' applicant with highest priority as registered on 'companion listing'. Applicants on companion listing are also free to bid for 'mainstream' properties as advertised under choice-based letting.

4.3.3 Around 80% of properties are let through the choice-based letting scheme and the remaining 20% are let directly. The scheme encompasses stock owned by the council and a number of housing associations although the vast majority of lettings, 92%, are of council housing. Besides the closed accessible housing register the cases where properties are not advertised in the normal way through the choice-based letting scheme include:

- Housing management lets where any partner landlord needs to use a vacant property for a range of specific or exceptional management purposes, such as emergencies like fire or flood, asylum seekers, other national priorities or some homeless cases.
- Succession: where a secure tenant dies, it may be possible for a member of his or her family to claim their tenancy.
- Exchanges: where a council tenant is allowed to consider a direct exchange with other council tenants and tenants of other landlords.
- National Mobility Scheme: where customers wish to move from or to another area of the country.

4.3.4 In general, applicants are ranked by the length of their current tenancy. Those experiencing an immediate and urgent housing need can gain 'priority' status. This category is only applied in exceptional circumstances. The ALMO considers giving priority status if the applicant needs to move because of:

- severe disability or health grounds
- domestic violence, harassment or racial harassment
- homelessness
- planned demolition of applicant's home
- the applicants' home is unsanitary or statutorily overcrowded
- the applicant's welfare needs

It may be the case that the applicant has needs in more than one category which on their own may not be considered immediate and urgent but when combined are serious enough to be awarded priority status.

4.3.5 Priority status is time limited, usually for three months. The time limit will only be extended in exceptional circumstances. A health/welfare team at the property shop has responsibility for assessing health and welfare needs and awarding priority status as necessary. They are also responsible for matching the needs of disabled customers with appropriate adapted properties.

- 4.3.6 Known adapted properties are identified in the stock database by reference to the aid or adaptation. These adaptations are referenced by descriptors such as access ramp, shallow steps, adapted shower or wc, lift stair etc.

4.4 Open Partial accessible housing register *Mixed Urban Authority*

- 4.4.1 This area is mostly made up of a number of mixed new and old urban communities with many workers commuting to a nearby city. The area has less than 40,000 dwellings with 19% council housing and a further 5% rented from registered social landlords. There are almost no difficult to let or low demand dwellings in the social rented sector. Houses comprise 70%, bungalows 15% and flats 15% of the council's stock. The council housing stock is managed by an ALMO.
- 4.4.2 The choice-based letting scheme is a partnership between the ALMO and ten housing associations. The management of the social housing stock in the partnership is dominated by the ALMO housing that accounts for 86% of the total.
- 4.4.3 The lettings service does not have a full list of adapted/accessible properties. Properties becoming available for letting should be assessed in terms of their 'accessibility features' in the course of initial void inspection (see para 4.4.7). Accessible/adapted properties are advertised within the choice-based letting system with a marker. Bidders with a need for such properties are given priority over all others. The accessible housing register service is run within the choice-based letting scheme.
- 4.4.4 Applicants are currently put in one of **four** bands, depending on their housing need:
- Band P** (for 'Priority') highest one for urgent housing need (for example people who can't leave hospital until they have a suitable home);
 - Band 1** high housing need (for example those who have a severe long-term illness);
 - Band 2** medium housing need (for example those wanting a move to help improve an existing medical condition); and
 - Band 3** low or no housing need.
- Applicants in Band P keep their status for 3 months, unless they are homeless in which case they only have one month to bid for a home.
- 4.4.5 Every applicant is allowed 5 bids per week. Every property advertisement contains information about eligibility criteria such as minimum age or number of bedrooms. The system now supports auto-bidding for vulnerable applicants. Bidding by proxy and by advocates also takes place but data is not held on how often this takes place. The numbers of households currently

in the priority band is 49 and 142 are in Band 1 of which some of these will have an accessible housing need.

- 4.4.6 With a comparatively small caseload in the upper priority bands, and a simple set of bands, the choice-based letting scheme and the occupational therapist and the support officer in particular are aware of the needs of those on the register with a requirement for an adapted or accessible property. The support officer has a key role in facilitating bidding by band P applicants as properties become available. He also emails property adverts to applicants and advocates. In relation to cognitive rather than physical disabilities, the housing needs manager outlined that if an applicant's mental health is affected by where they live the case is treated by the scheme's staff as seriously as physical disabilities. The process of matching people to properties still involves significant manual processing. In the scheme accessible housing register properties are advertised via choice-based letting but then a panel is convened to select the applicant most in need of the adaptations; the panel consists of the support officer, occupational therapist and the housing needs manager.
- 4.4.7 Routine inspection of vacant properties for adaptations is not yet fully operationalised. Vacant properties are meant to be checked for adapted features that are not already on the system, but not all staff are aware of adapted features and a visit may be required by the occupational therapist.
- 4.4.8 The characteristics of stock available for letting have 'descriptors' for a range of attributes including number of steps to the front door, whether it is disabled adapted, has a stairlift, a vertical ceiling lift, a CLOSOMAT toilet, door entry system, extension, grab rail, hand rail, level access shower or steps to back garden. This data is generally not held for each property. The choice-based letting service does not hold systematic data on the characteristics of the stock held for each partner landlord, including accessible or adapted stock. Only information on the lettings to purpose built properties with accessible features or adaptations would be available.

4.5 Overview

- 4.5.1 The three models of accessible housing register differ not only in their fundamental framework but also in the approach to prioritising households and the stock. In the London borough households are classified into four categories of housing need and housing into six classes on the basis of their suitability for accessibility/nature of adaptations. Households with special needs can be placed in one of three categories that link closely but not precisely to the different housing classes. The mixed urban authority has a similar priority system for households with four groups but does not classify its housing into classes, rather it simply lists the key accessibility/adaptations. This latter approach is also applied in the provincial city where ostensibly there is only one priority class for households. However, in the provincial city households with accessible/adaptable housing needs are matched to housing manually. In the mixed urban authority although accessible/adaptable

housing is allocated within choice-based letting the limited numbers enable a degree of 'manual processing'. This is also true to a degree in the London borough. Thus in all three choice-based letting schemes there is still some administrative processing of lets for households with accessible and adapted housing needs.

5 Processes and costs of identifying households with accessible needs

5.1 The report has so far set out the framework and context for the research. In this section the analysis begins its review of costs and effectiveness by examining the detailed processes of identifying households with adaptive/accessible needs. It addresses two fundamental questions – how are households identified and then asks how much does it cost. The format is that each case study is considered in turn followed by an overview noting differences and similarities, and also gaps in the knowledge base. This is the first step in the analysis of costs and effectiveness and the same approach and format is also followed in the subsequent sections that comprise the building blocks leading to our overall conclusions.

5.2 Open accessible housing register *London Borough*

- 5.2.1 The borough has a housing occupational therapy team of 2 job share senior practitioners and one full time fieldwork occupational therapist with temporary additional administrative support for one day per week. The team's main roles go beyond simply assessing individuals and include:
- Functional and environmental assessment of housing need.
 - Decide if an applicant is eligible for the extenuating or emergency health award or to refer the case to specialist health advice (now medical) for an assessment.
 - Make recommendations about suitable housing e.g. extra bedroom, access to a garden, floor level and assign an accessible housing register category A – F.
 - Handle appeals arising from decisions.
 - Accompany viewings of potential properties for disabled tenants – to see if a new or relet property is suitable for applicant and also suggest an adaptation if required.
 - Assess vacant properties that appear suitable for a disabled person where no previous assessment has been carried out.
 - Assess and provide equipment, advice, re-education, adaptations to a disabled applicant's property to improve independence and safety in their current home environment and community, and new property. Where appropriate a person will be transferred to the social care occupational therapist service to provide and follow up on more complex adaptations.
 - Consult on new build design.

- Work on projects that promote and improve the housing service for disabled housing applicants e.g. developing the accessible housing register.

5.2.2 Approximately 15–20 referrals are received per month, a number which has increased over the past two years. The senior occupational therapists screen all new referrals and categorise them in line with complexity (see Appendix 2). Seniors make desk top re-housing decisions where there is enough information, i.e. an occupational therapist from another service who is presently allocated that person will carry out the housing needs assessment on request of the housing occupational therapist. These make up a quarter of cases and home visits are required for the remainder. An experienced occupational therapist can assess 4/5 'standard' cases per week. No decisions are made on users with mobility issues without a referral to an occupational therapist.

5.2.3 The occupational therapist assessment and report in the borough provides:

- A functional assessment of everyone in the household who has medical problems or a disability.
- An opinion regarding the impact the housing is having upon the applicants' disability, independence, quality of life and safety.
- A summary of the environmental barriers within the home and ways in which these can or cannot be reduced or removed for example, further rehabilitation, equipment, minor adaptations, major adaptations.
- A clear recommendation with justification stating if an applicant warrants the health priority or not.
- A suitable housing category (this is required as part of the London Accessible Housing Register).
- State if an occupational therapist will need to attend any viewing in the future.

5.2.4 Some referrals may need a quicker decision or a more urgent visit. The service uses the following criteria to determine the urgency of the referral:

- Information suggests that the applicant is unable to receive appropriate care or treatment within the home and this is seriously detrimental to their wellbeing
- Applicant is unable to return home as it is inaccessible
- Unable to access toilet and cannot reasonably use a commode
- Unable to reasonably and safely maintain hygiene
- Serious risk of falls due to design of housing
- Manual handling equipment is not being used
- Decant status

Due to staff shortages and a growing workload new build nominations and consultations during the new build process have not been provided as fully as the service would like. Meetings are taking place to clarify occupational therapists' early involvement in the new build process and where work with development ends and lettings starts.

- 5.2.5 The staffing budget for the accessible housing register team is £104.8k comprising a senior practitioner occupational therapist (job share), a fieldwork occupational therapist, plus 0.2 full-time equivalent of an administrator. These costs include national insurance and pension entitlement but do not include administrative support, training costs, management support costs and are set out in more detail in Appendix 1.

5.3 Closed accessible housing register *Provincial City*

- 5.3.1 The accessible housing register service has an occupational therapist, a district nurse and a community psychiatric nurse all seconded to the service.

- 5.3.2 The assessment process for priority on health grounds is based on a health self-assessment questionnaire. The form covers health and disability problems, the applicant's current housing circumstances and adaptations. It includes a series of 'grids':

- Physical Health Grid – rate the 'difficulty' in accessing essential services within the home
- Mental Health Grid – rate how the current property and neighbourhood affects mental health and the support currently received
- Welfare Grid – rate how access to specific support services affects the customer's or dependant's welfare

If two 'amber' grid boxes or one 'red' grid box are ticked then a further assessment is required.

- 5.3.3 If a further assessment is required this is then reviewed by the health professionals within the service (the occupational therapist and community psychiatric nurse, and district nurse) to determine whether an in-depth assessment is required.
- 5.3.4 A recent study for the council recommended bringing the accessible housing register within choice-based letting, but the council believes that it would require significant changes to working practices as more information would be required from choice-based letting applicants at the start of the process to facilitate effective short-listing.

- 5.3.5 According to the Council the core accessible housing register service is based on:

Occupational Therapist (S01) – approx 1/2 day per week

Senior officer (Scale 6) – approx 1 day per week.

The information supplied suggests the costs amount to £7.1k. It should be stressed that the landlord adopted a narrow remit of accessible housing register activity for this estimate based on the number of applicants assessed for 'Medical (Physical) priority' of which there were 104 awards in 2008/09. This is not comparable with the cost estimation methods of the other case studies where the remit was defined more widely.

5.4 Open Partial accessible housing register *Mixed Urban Authority*

- 5.4.1 The service is primarily provided by a 0.6 occupational therapist managed by the housing needs manager and with limited additional support from a member of the choice-based letting team. The total cost is £37.9k (see Appendix 1 for details). The scheme seeks to maximise access rather than devising separate procedures for certain vulnerable groups (e.g. for people with learning difficulties). Currently the support officer coordinates services for high priority applicants (including arranging occupational therapist assessment) and assesses whether the applicant can sustain a tenancy.
- 5.4.2 Most new applicants in need of assistance are identified via the application form. The second most common way in which vulnerable applicants are identified is through support agencies contacting the support officer. The choice-based letting scheme encourages voluntary and statutory agencies to advocate for their clients, albeit that this advocacy is via correspondence and bidding by proxy rather than via case conference meetings. Referrals from social services/hospitals are also taken. In addition there is a medical self-assessment form for applicants with medical or social conditions affected by their housing. The self-assessment form includes a declaration that the applicant gives consent for the choice-based letting scheme to access relevant information from a GP or health professionals. When this declaration is signed a form is sent to the relevant professional seeking information on what sort of property would help address the applicant's medical or social condition.
- 5.4.3 The accessible housing register service operates at a scale where the occupational therapist knows her case load and there is less of an imperative to document procedures and to computerise records than in a larger service. In essence the occupational therapist applies her professional judgement to each case in assessing their requirements and the impact of their current housing on their health and well being.

5.4.4 The support officer works two days a week with the procurement team specifying the accessibility and adaptations investment requirements of households, a process that is linked to the council's planned improvement programme but this is not included in the costs above (see 8.4). On an occupational therapist's recommendation the local care trust can directly arrange small adaptations up to £250 such as a grab rail at no charge, including to home owners. If works are required that exceed £250 the home owner may be eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant. In addition the care trust has over 38,000 pieces of community equipment to help meet social and health needs.

The equipment includes:

- alarms and door-entry systems
- beds and accessories
- bathing and showering equipment
- toileting aids
- chairs and accessories
- hoisting equipment
- kitchen aids
- personal aids, such as walking aids, grab rails and wheelchairs
- pressure-relief equipment
- moving and handling equipment
- equipment specifically for children
- equipment for people with visual and hearing impairment

5.4.5 Council tenants may be eligible, on an occupational therapist's recommendation, for works from the council's annual budget for adaptations. The planned improvements programme of Decent Homes has also been used to install many adaptations.

5.5 Overview

5.5.1 The essential work of administering an accessible housing register is undertaken by occupational therapists and support officers. Occupational therapists involved in accessible housing registers may devote only part of their time to this task but the exact boundaries of their work seems to be fuzzy and vary between case studies. There seems little connectivity between lettings via the accessible housing register and adaptations programmes. For example, in the mixed urban authority the council/health teams administering applications for home adaptations under a housing options type approach do not capture data on the extent to which households assisted into housing via the choice-based letting scheme have subsequently submitted applications for home adaptations.

- 5.5.2 The time spent by occupational therapists on property assessment and needs assessment activities in particular shows a marked difference between the London borough and the mixed urban authority. In the London borough only about 20% of occupational therapist time is spent assessing the adaptability or accessibility of properties because of the comprehensive nature of the accessible housing register stock data held. Whereas in the mixed urban authority which has only a partial accessible housing register and hence a lack of stock data it was estimated that 96% of occupational therapist time is spent on this activity. Unfortunately the time activity split was not available for the provincial city.

6 Assessment of housing stock suitable for accessible or adapted needs

6.1 An essential task in the construction of a full open or closed accessible housing register is the requirement for a survey of the local housing stock to identify the status of properties. However, in the partial solution only voids need to be assessed. This raises questions about the relative costs and the effectiveness of the alternative approaches. This section examines the mechanics of these assessments.

6.2 Open accessible housing register *London Borough*

6.2.1 The accessible housing register database was constructed in two stages. First, a housing survey by the council was completed in 2006, on all council-owned ground floor properties, including houses and bungalows, and first floor properties with at least two communal lifts to identify accessible properties. In total over 1000 properties were individually visited, but applying the cloning of data for similar stock archetypes and utilizing other sources detailed in Table 6.1 enabled approximately 6500 properties to be classified as accessible/adapted housing.

Table 6.1: Methods applied to survey council properties

Employed two occupational therapy assistants to visit properties and complete accessible housing register checklist.
Local housing managers provided information on which properties were identical and which were not
Surveyed all plans of past knock-through projects, using archive files
Surveyed Right to Buy properties in a particular area, using the plans provided by the Right to Buy Team. Communal access was followed up by occupational therapy assistants
Looked back over all occupational therapist property access audits from past 10 years

6.2.2 As part of the survey all the sheltered and over 50s accommodation were visited to assess accessibility. The next stage of the process was a project in 2007/8 funded by a central government initiative that built on the 2006 survey and involved partner social landlords in the borough and amended the existing accessible housing register to be line with the London accessible housing register. By the end of stage 2 an accessible housing survey of 13,000 council properties had been completed. This second stage extended the accessible housing register to non-council social landlords (although it is not yet complete). Although most of the council stock has been assessed more than half of housing association stock has not. The overall costs of

developing the accessible housing register have been estimated at £150,000 in equipment, information and communications technology costs and staffing costs.

6.3 Closed accessible housing register *Provincial City*

- 6.3.1 All 220 variations of property type across the city have been surveyed for their potential as accessible housing. Each property where an adaptation is carried out is subject to a separate survey. No data were returned on the costs of this exercise.

6.4 Open Partial accessible housing register *Mixed Urban Authority*

- 6.4.1 The technical inspector inspects every void property to see what adaptations, if any, are present. This takes approximately 1 hour per void. Consequently the estimated cost is the hourly rate for the Technical Inspector. This makes no allowance for other costs such as data entry, travel or on costs etc which presumably would have occurred anyway. The estimated cost is £14.21 per void. However, when the data held for recent voids on council's stock data system was scrutinised it showed that the level of accessible housing register data captured by this process was negligible and that accessible housing register activity focuses principally on accessible new builds. It is not clear if this was simply because the results of surveys were not being recorded on the database.

6.5 Overview

- 6.5.1 These case studies show that the task of compiling an accessible housing register is not simple and there are different ways of approaching it. The case study of the London borough demonstrates that the task of constructing an accessible housing register database involves substantial up front expenditure even with the creative use of existing data sources. The need to examine 220 house types in the provincial city reinforces this argument. The approach adopted for the partial accessible housing register in the mixed urban area is very different and has the attraction that it can be undertaken by augmenting existing inspection processes. It could over time achieve the same goal if the data was accumulated.

7 Other set up and running costs for an accessible housing register

7.1 So far the research has considered the classification and identification of suitable accessible stock and the identification of household adaptive housing needs. There are high set up costs associated with the survey of housing for a full register. In addition there are potentially other set up (and running) costs for an accessible housing register that have yet to be assessed in terms of the creation of a bespoke database for the register including additional necessary software, labour, etc. These are now considered in this section.

7.2 Open accessible housing register *London Borough*

7.2.1 The accessible housing register is held on the main housing computer system where the overall common housing register resides. This is a shared application with homelessness and other services across the Council and the ALMO. The overall information and communications technology costs are covered by a 'service level agreement' which covers all the information and communications technology systems but disaggregating the accessible housing register costs is not currently possible.

7.3 Closed accessible housing register *Provincial City*

7.3.1 The caseload management aspects of the accessible housing register are handled on an Access database developed 'in-house' by an occupational therapist. The accessible housing register system has no additional costs and so it did not have significant set up costs. The stock related accessible housing register aspects are held on the Council's main housing computer system and are not separately costed in the information received.

7.4 Open Partial accessible housing register *Mixed Urban Authority*

7.4.1 The system requires only limited data to be held on the computer system and there was no significant set-up costs as these were absorbed within the salaries and on-costs for existing employees. The ALMO therefore consider that the accessible housing register set up cost was indivisible from the overall choice-based letting service set up costs.

7.5 Overview

- 7.5.1 The setting up and running costs of the accessible housing register (ignoring classification of households and housing) appear to be a small component of the costs of running a choice-based letting scheme and are difficult to identify and disaggregate from overall costs. The costs appear to be minimal if the accessible housing register is set up at the same time as a choice-based letting scheme.

8 Scale and cost of adaptations

8.1 The emphasis of the analysis to date has been on the processes underpinning an accessible housing register and how much they cost. In this section the focus changes to outcomes in terms of the number of adapted/accessible housing units and types/nature of these adaptations within each case study. For convenience the costs of these adaptations are also considered in this section by reference to the details of budgets and expenditures on adaptations in each locality.

8.2 Open accessible housing register *London Borough*

8.2.1 According to the 2008 Business Plan Statistical Appendix, the Council had a Disabled/Elderly/Adaptations budget for 2007/08 of £745k for 300 council housing (Housing Revenue Account) properties and the actual outturn expenditure was £595k on 241 properties. For 2008/09 the same budget and spend targets were set as those for 2007/08.

Table 8.1: Social Housing rented stock held on London Borough's accessible housing register by accessibility category and property usage

Accessible housing register Category	Property Usage				Total	% of assessed
	Over 50s	Over 60s	Sheltered	General usage		
A – Wheelchair Accessible	1		1	32	34	0.1
B – Partial Wheelchair Accessible	12		12	102	126	0.5
C – Lifetime Homes				56	56	0.2
D – Easy Access	119	1	168	1989	2277	8.3
E – Step Free	157	3	14	2010	2184	7.9
F – General	612	10	48	22258	22928	83.1
G – Not Assessed	189	1	173	17379	17742	
Total	1090	15	416	43826	45347	

8.2.2 The number of known adaptations is shown in Table 8.1 by category. While most of the council stock has been assessed as noted earlier more than half of housing association stock has not. Nevertheless a further breakdown by the assessed stock owned by the Council and registered social landlords given in Table 8.2 reveals that the vast majority of Category A and B properties are owned by housing associations. Within the council housing stock there are very few fully wheel chair accessible units and the majority of accessible properties are classified as easy access or step free. However, Table 8.2 also shows that the identified accessible housing as a proportion of the stock is a very small percentage.

Table 8.2: Breakdown of Social Housing held on London Borough's accessible housing register by accessibility category, property usage and landlord type

Accessible housing register Category	Council	% of all council dwellings	Registered social landlord	% of all registered social landlord dwellings	Total	% of all
A – Wheelchair Accessible	0	0	34	0.1	34	0.1
B – Partial Wheelchair Accessible	24	0.2	102	0.3	126	0.3
C – Lifetime Homes	9	0.1	47	0.2	56	0.1
D – Easy Access	304	2.4	1973	6.1	2277	5.0
E – Step Free	1631	12.7	553	1.7	2184	4.8
F – General	10869	84.7	12059	37.4	22928	50.6
G – Not Assessed	238	1.8	17504	54.2	17742	39.1
Total	13075	100	32272	100	45347	100

8.3 Closed accessible housing register *Provincial City*

- 8.3.1 The 2008 Business Plan Statistical Appendix reports that the council had a Disabled/Elderly/Adaptions budget for 2007/08 of £2.8m for 500 council housing properties while the actual outturn reported was £2.8m spent on 528 properties. For 2008/09 the same budget and spend targets were set as those for 2007/08.
- 8.3.2 Information on existing adaptations and related property elements (prepared for analysis back in 2007) is comprehensive with disabled and adaptations works being routinely captured on the main computer database. The housing stock database information from October 2007 has 5804 separate adaptations covering 4234 properties, which is approximately 14% of the stock. The most frequent adaptations are ramps 673, showers 3353 and lifts 1402. It is possible these numbers are an underestimate.
- 8.3.3 Further information on the process is provided by an Audit Commission inspection that noted the average waiting time for adaptations was 149 days in 2006/07 reducing to 140 days in 2007/08. Although several categories of adaptation are completed in below average times, the most common request is for level access showers and kitchen adaptations where customers wait an above average 210 days. The Audit Commission identified that applications for adaptations are not dealt with in priority order. While the council's occupational therapy service undertakes assessments of all applications, their recommendations are not prioritised beyond those in need of palliative care or those in need of access to toilet facilities and no service level agreement was in place.
- 8.3.4 In response to this report the council commissioned a private consultancy firm to review its aids and adaptations process, policies, structures and

budget. As a result, areas identified as key actions for the council have been reviewed, and revisions put in place.

8.4 Open Partial accessible housing register *Mixed Urban Authority*

- 8.4.1 As shown in the 2008 Business Plan Statistical Appendix, the Council had a Disabled/Elderly/Adaptations budget for 2007/08 of £340k for 320 council housing properties and the actual outturn expenditure was £267k on 281 properties. The following year, 2008/09, the same budget and spend targets were set as those for 2007/08. The management of this work forms a key role for the occupational therapist when not working for the choice-based letting scheme. These works are generally done for existing tenants whose needs are identified as part of the Decent Homes investment plans. The recording of these works onto the core property database was not found to be operationalised on the central computer database.
- 8.4.2 No systematic survey has been attempted of adaptations across the council housing stock or of the partners in the choice-based letting scheme.

8.5 Overview

- 8.5.1 Considerable sums each year are being spent on adapting property in all three case study areas. However, these adaptations are not necessarily recorded on a central database except as part of a full accessible housing register. There is no apparent strategic link between the activities of meeting the demand for adaptations via physical improvement or lettings policies but this is examined further in Section 14.

9 Households with accessible/adaptive housing needs

9.1 In the last section the analysis begins to look at outcomes and focuses on the stock of adapted properties. As argued earlier while an accessible housing register is normally defined as a list of adapted/accessible housing it is also important to think in terms of a parallel if fluid list of households with a priority that enables them access to accessible housing register properties. Indeed this is a necessity for a closed accessible housing register. This section summarises the evidence on the number of households with an adapted priority award and their specific needs in each case study. Another way to look at this is to view these households as measuring the demand for accessible housing. The analysis also considers whether these applicants are existing tenants seeking a transfer and broadly how long these households have been waiting for new accommodation. To put this in perspective each case study starts by reviewing the overall demand for social housing in the locality.

9.2 Open accessible housing register *London Borough*

9.2.1 The council's register of applicants has grown virtually every year over the last decade to almost 23,000 with more than 3000 households added every year in the past few years. It can be described as a high demand area. During 2008/09 a total of 774 households with an accessible housing register award were involved in bidding for properties (Table 11.2).

Table 9.1: Breakdown of Housing Applicants by Award of an Accessibility/Adaptability Requirement in May 2009

Accessible housing register Category	New Applicant	Transfer	All	%
A – Wheelchair Accessible	27	16	43	6.9
B – Partial Wheelchair Accessible	11	8	19	3.1
C – Lifetime Homes	8	5	13	2.1
D – Easy Access	12	31	43	6.9
E – Step Free	40	49	89	14.3
F – General	206	208	414	66.7
Total	304	317	621	100
Percentage	49	51	–	–

9.2.2 A waiting list snapshot is provided in Table 9.1 during May 2009 and finds 207 applicants had been awarded an accessibility/adaptability requirement and a further 414 that had been assessed were given a 'general' housing award. Those with an accessibility/adaptability requirement are split broadly

equally between transfer and new applicants although transfer requests are predominantly for easy access and step free accommodation. This suggests they are elderly tenants seeking to adapt to increasing frailty. Some 62 households had been deemed to require housing suitable for a wheelchair, Category A or B housing, equivalent to 10% of those applicants that have been assessed for accessible housing.

9.2.3 The bed-size requirements of the applicants with accessible housing register awards, given in Table 9.2 reveals that 18% are under-occupying, nearly one third need no increase in bed-spaces, 52% lack one or more bed-spaces and 23% lack two or more bed-spaces. Under-occupancy is therefore of minor significance but relatively higher for these households than for common housing register applicants as a whole. Nevertheless it provides an additional argument to promote the accessible housing register.

Table 9.2: Accessible Housing List Award (5th May 2009 snapshot) by beds lacking

Beds Lacking (minus indicates excess beds – and under-occupier)	CAT A Wheel-chair Accessible	CAT B Partial Wheel-chair Accessible	CAT C Life-time Homes	CAT D Easy Access	CAT E Step Free	Total	% of applicants with accessible housing register awards	Equiv. % for all Common Housing Register applicants
-3				2	2	4	1.9	0.4
-2				5	5	10	4.8	2.1
-1	3	1	2	8	10	24	11.6	5.1
0	11	4	2	16	28	61	29.5	41.9
1	12	7	6	8	27	60	29.0	35.1
2	7	4	1	4	10	26	12.6	9.7
3	5		2		5	12	5.8	4.4
4	4	3			2	9	4.4	1.2
6	1					1	0.5	0.03
Total	43	19	13	36	82	207	100	99.7*

* The equivalent full Common Housing Register percentages exclude a small number of applicants which lacked or had surplus bed-space categories not found for applicants with accessible housing register awards and so they do not sum to 100%.

9.2.4 As the borough is a high demand area it must be expected that access to social housing can be subject to a relatively long wait for households with no priority needs. Table 9.3 demonstrates for those applicants with accessible housing register awards this can also be true. The table shows applications live during 2008/09 by the year in which their current award was made. Nearly 1 in 3 applicants with accessible housing register awards had received their latest award before 2008/09 with a number in the higher accessibility need categories receiving their award some years ago.

Table 9.3: Applicants with accessible housing register Award live in 2008/09 by date of that award

Accessible housing register award category	Year of accessible housing register award	Total
A – Wheelchair Accessible	1997/98	1
	2003/04	1
	2007/08	27
	2008/09	25
A – total		54
B – Partial Wheelchair Accessible	1999/00	1
	2007/08	11
	2008/09	27
B – total		39
C – Lifetime Homes	2007/08	11
	2008/09	8
C – total		19
D – Easy Access	2007/08	6
	2008/09	53
D – total		59
E – Step Free	2007/08	29
	2008/09	82
E – total		111
Total		282

9.3 Closed accessible housing register *Provincial City*

- 9.3.1 The city has experienced a substantial reduction in its overall waiting list from 13,000 in 2005 to less than 9000 in 2008 (HSSA data). Some of this reduction is believed to have been due to improved administrative procedures. Void relet times have reduced in the past few years from an average exceeding 70 days in 2006/07 to the outturn average at 31 March 2009 of 34.8 days.
- 9.3.2 Households who require accessible housing register properties generally fall under 'Medical (Physical) Priority' and receive a priority award for a time limited period. The time limit will only be extended in exceptional circumstances. Applicants receiving priority awards between 1 April 2008 and 31 March 2009 totalled 104 with 35 still open at the end of the year. These applicants represented 11.3% of all households with a priority award.
- 9.3.3 Snapshot data as at 31 March 2009 are given in Table 9.4 which includes households that had received awards prior to 1 April 2008. These dates reinforce that awards are typically given for a three month period and are only renewed by exception.

Table 9.4: Medical Awards current at 31 March 2009 in waiting list by type of award and earliest and average award date

Medical Award	Number of cases	Earliest Priority Award date	Average of Medical Priority Date
Physical	46	05-Mar-08	28-Jan-09
Mental Health	49	18-Sep-08	28-Jan-09
Welfare	21	31-Oct-07	10-Nov-08
Total	116		

9.4 Open Partial accessible housing register *Mixed Urban Authority*

No information

9.5 Overview

The evidence from the case studies is incomplete and classification varies but it suggests that households with accessible/adapted housing needs are a significant component of demand for social housing. There are contrasts between the London borough and the provincial city about how priority is measured and how long priority is held for. In the former where higher demand is experienced applicants do not have time limited awards presumably reflecting the expected longer duration before successful rehousing. The evidence stresses the importance of local market conditions in influencing both the allocation procedures applied in social housing and the accessible housing register.

10 Matching of households and housing via accessible housing register

10.1 An important measure of the effectiveness of an accessible housing register is how successful it is in the matching of households with adapted housing needs to the right type of accessible properties. The last two sections have identified the scale and nature of the demand for and the stock/supply of accessible properties. This section draws on these findings to consider the degree of matching between adapted properties and households with accessible needs. The analysis also draws heavily on CORE data which it was acknowledged earlier under-records lets but this does not necessarily presume bias in terms of the proportions of lettings to households with accessible needs, etc.

10.2 Open accessible housing register *London Borough*

10.2.1 Households with accessible/adapted housing needs allocated a home in 2008/09 represent just over 5% of lets through the common housing register and amounted to 109 such lettings (Table 10.1). The numbers seeking adapted/accessible housing appear far in excess of the numbers who are actually allocated such a home with 43% of applicants rehoused in general needs housing. These households with adapted housing requirements allocated mainstream housing may now have more appropriate accommodation (with perhaps adaptations promised) than previously otherwise they would not have moved, but there is no direct evidence available. The statistics presented below from the CORE data give some indication.

10.2.2 The CORE draft final data for 2008/09, finds that 6% of council housing and 4.3% of housing association lets in the borough have as the main reason the household left their last settled home as the property was unsuitable because of ill health/disability. This data also identifies only 2.8% and 3.1% of properties that were let to wheelchair standard letting for the local authority and housing associations respectively. The borough's common housing register lettings figures to accessible housing register applicants for 2008/09 shown in Table 10.1 give slightly higher figures, 4.6%. This information is of the same order but still leaves a variance with the CORE data for wheelchair accessible lets, and it is believed that direct allocations by registered social landlords to some of these properties explains the difference.

Table 10.1: Properties in London Borough let via common housing register to accessible housing register Applicants by Category of Property in 2008/09

Accessible housing register Category of Property Let to accessible housing register Applicants	Number of accessible housing register Awards	% of accessible housing register lets	% of common housing register lets
A – Wheelchair Accessible	5	4.6	0.2
C – Lifetime Homes	4	3.7	0.2
D – Easy Access	21	19.3	1.0
E – Step Free	13	11.9	0.6
F – General	47	43.1	2.2
G – Not Assessed	19	17.4	0.9
Total Let to accessible housing register Applicants	109	100.0	5.1
Total common housing register and accessible housing register Lettings	2146		

10.2.3 The letting figures for wheelchair accessible and lifetime homes presented in Table 10.1 are much lower than the percentages of households from the CORE data who regard themselves as having a disabled member – 14.1% of housing association tenants and 19% of council tenants. This suggests that many households with a disabled member do not appear to be applying to be assessed. The proportion of households that were rehoused according to this data source who have a member who uses a wheelchair was 3.2%, somewhat lower than the percentage of households who were allocated a wheelchair accessible home (see below).

Table 10.2: London Borough's all accessible housing register Lettings 2008/09 lettings by category of household and dwelling let

Accessible housing register Category of Let Property	Applicant accessible housing register Category Award						Total
	A	B	C	D	E	F	
A	4	1					5
B							0
C			1		1	2	4
D	1		1	5	7	7	21
E			1	4	3	5	13
F	2	1	2	2	16	24	47
G			1	3	6	9	19
Total	7	2	6	14	33	47	109

10.2.4 The data above implies that not all applicable households with accessible housing needs are formally assessed and this reduces the effectiveness of the accessible housing register. For those households who do apply for an assessment the internal effectiveness of the lettings system can perhaps best

be judged by Table 10.2 based on the common housing register lettings statistics directly. The results suggest a less than 50% matching success but with some households achieving a higher category of housing than they apparently require.

- 10.2.5 Further insight to these outcomes can be gleaned from Table 10.3 that considers the allocation of accessible housing register awards by the council and registered social landlords separately. There are some major differences – almost half of the households housed by the council are in the general housing category F and there is only one household classified in the top categories A and B. Three quarters of Category F households housed by the council are allocated general housing but the other quarter are allocated adapted housing beyond their requirements. The one Category A household is also housed in general housing as are the overwhelming majority of Category E households. Housing associations allocate 8 out of 9 of the category A and B households and place five of these in appropriate housing.

Table 10.3: London Borough's all common housing register Lettings in 2008/09 by accessible housing register category of dwelling let and accessible housing register household classification: breakdown between Council and registered social landlord lets

Accessible housing register Category of Let Property	Applicant accessible housing register Category Award												Total	
	COUNCIL					Total	Registered social landlord					Total		
	A	C	D	E	F		A	B	C	D	E			F
A							4	1						5
B														0
C										1		1	2	4
D				2	2	1	5	1		1	3	5	6	16
E		1	3	1	4	9					1	2	1	4
F	1				11	15	27	1	1	2	2	5	9	20
G										1	3	6	9	19
Total	1	1	5	14	20	41	6	2	5	9	19	27	68	

10.3 Closed accessible housing register *Provincial City*

- 10.3.1 An assessment of the matching process in the city is limited by the way the system allocates priority. Priority status as noted above is time limited to three months and unfortunately the data made available does not identify whether they are rehoused. While 104 households were given a 'Medical (Physical) Priority' in 2008/09 it is not known whether all 69 of these applicants classified as having a lapsed priority award status were rehoused. A further problem is that the data received from the council does not contain the same information for lettings to the council and registered social landlord stock so the data has therefore been analysed separately. The information supplied

shows all lettings and the medical priority of those receiving them but it does not provide evidence on the type of aid or adaptation in the property.

- 10.3.2 During 2008/09 some 94 households were rehoused by the council with a medical physical priority and a further 101 with medical, mental health and welfare problems out of a total of 2544 lets. Given that priority lasts for only three months in virtually all cases the household being rehoused must have only recently evidenced new need. There is no data on whether the households with a medical physical priority were rehoused in accessible housing or not.
- 10.3.3 For the registered social landlord sector comparison of CORE data with that from the choice-based letting scheme suggests substantial lettings activity by registered social landlords occurs outside the scheme: only 221 lettings during 2008/09 were through the choice-based letting scheme, whereas CORE data suggests 445 general needs lettings were made. Only 2 of the lettings via registered social landlords were allocated to applicants with medical (physical) priority and a further 5 went to applicants with mental health/welfare priority out of the 221 lettings under the choice-based letting scheme.
- 10.3.4 This suggests that a small number of lettings are allocated on the basis of a medical priority, 3.7% in the council sector (7.7% including medical/mental health priority) and 1% (3.2%) by housing associations as part of the choice-based letting scheme. It is possible that this latter figure is an underestimate as priority households could have been rehoused by housing associations as part of the 224 lettings (ie almost half of such allocations) not subsumed within the choice-based letting scheme. In terms of lettings relative to needs 96 physical priority households have been definitely identified as have been allocated a home compared with 104 households who were awarded such a priority during 2008/09. There is therefore almost a balance between numbers of priority awards and lettings but these statistics do not necessarily mean that these households were allocated the adapted housing they require or represent the effectiveness of the accessible housing register. Indeed, some 159 households were rehoused in sheltered housing but only 7 of these received medical (physical) awards.
- 10.3.5 One way to look at the effectiveness of the accessible housing register is to compare these figures with CORE statistics on lettings involving disabled households. This has limited usefulness here because the council does not participate in CORE and as noted above only half of housing association lettings appear to be allocated via the choice-based letting scheme. Nevertheless the CORE data finds that 6.1% of households rehoused by housing associations give as their main reason the household left their last settled home because the property is unsuitable as a result of ill health/disability. As this figure is well above the figure of 3.2% (including mental health problems) identified by the choice-based letting scheme it suggests that many of these households are allocated outside the scheme.
- 10.3.6 This conclusion is reinforced by the fact that 11.9% of CORE recorded lettings are to wheelchair standard and 10.4% of lettings are allocated to

households who consider that a member has a disability. On the other hand the CORE data record that only 3.4% of households allocated a tenancy has a household member who uses a wheelchair. If these figures are correct it implies that at least some of these adapted properties are being allocated to tenants who do not (yet) need all the modifications/special features (although it does not necessarily imply that those who did require these adaptations were excluded).

10.4 Open Partial accessible housing register *Mixed Urban Authority*

10.4.1 There is no evidence on the overall level of demand for adapted/accessible housing within the area. There is also no comprehensive direct information on the efficiency of the accessible housing register process. CORE data suggests that in 2008/09 there are 726 lettings including supported lettings. There are no precise figures available on the proportion of these let via the accessible housing register but CORE 2008/09 draft final lettings data for the authority gives 83 households rehoused whose main reason they left their last settled home was because of ill health or disability. This number is split between 13 rehoused by housing associations and 70 by the council, and overall they represent 14.5% of lettings in the survey. A much lower percentage of lettings in the same data, just 1.6%, involves letting of properties with wheelchair standards. In contrast a much higher percentage, 23.3%, of new tenants in this year regards themselves as having a member who is disabled, and 5.4% have a member who uses a wheel chair. This suggests again there is insufficient adapted housing for wheelchairs.

Table 10.4: Mixed Urban Authority – Selected accessible housing register lettings information by year, accessibility feature and whether needed by applicant

Year Let	Ceiling track hoist		Purpose built adapted property		Total
	Feature needed? Yes	Feature needed? No	Feature needed? Yes	Feature needed? No	
2007/08		1	3		4
2008/09	1	3	3		7
Total	1	4	6		11

10.4.2 Some doubts about the efficiency of the accessible housing register is given by lettings information provided directly by the ALMO on 11 lettings during 2007/08 and 2008/09. Although these do not reconcile to the draft 2008/09 CORE data they provide some insights. This information presented in Table 10.4 suggests from the small number of lettings information returned that as many as 40% of purpose built adapted properties have been let to a household that does not need the adaptation. However, the numbers are very small and the picture is complicated by the fact that some of these properties were allocated outside the choice-based letting system as Section

11 discusses in more detail. In 2007/08 3 out of 4 of the accessible housing register purpose built housing are allocated via choice-based letting to households that needed the accessibility feature but during 2008/09 some of the accessible housing register properties are allocated directly without bids being made. These properties were not allocated to households in need of the accessibility feature. It should be emphasised again that these are small numbers and only illustrative but indicate the nature of the issues.

10.5 Overview

- 10.5.1 The analysis shows that the paucity of statistics means that it is impossible to fully assess the effectiveness of the matching process within accessible housing registers. The use of accessible housing registers focus on the needs of households who require accessible and adapted housing but the matching process between the numbers and types of adapted properties and households needing such properties is not clearly determined in all three localities. Local data on the matching process is incomplete and the analysis has had to be creative in the interpretation of the data. The result is a forensic analysis of the minutiae of the statistics available that have not been designed for the task of this report, and conclusions that are limited. It is difficult to interpret the information because so many factors will affect the outcomes.
- 10.5.2 An assessment of the effectiveness of the matching process in accessible housing register under choice-based letting is further complicated by the fact that all schemes are still subject to administrative allocations and there is no pure system. Even though there are deficiencies in the information from the analysis of the allocation systems in the case study areas it is clear that the accessible housing registers studied do not necessarily match adapted housing to households' needs even where the demand for accessible housing outweighs the supply. The research has not been able to interrogate the data to find out why but clearly housing choices and bids are not simply based on whether a house is adapted but also location and the other characteristics of the house for example size and type. In a sense the analysis presented here is one dimensional. The counterfactual is also not known so it is unclear how much of an improvement is achieved by an accessible housing register and they are still works in progress. Ideally a time series analysis would have been undertaken encompassing the periods before and after the establishment of an accessible housing register but this was not possible because of data and resource constraints.

11 Bid cycles and numbers of bids for lets involving accessible/adapted properties

11.1 As the previous section notes not all households with adapted housing needs appear to interact with the accessible housing register within a choice-based letting scheme, and some are allocated housing administratively. One of the reasons for this occurrence is the route they come to be rehoused, such as being statutory homeless, but this does not seem to be a complete explanation. This links into questions of to what extent households with adapted needs can participate in choice-based letting within an accessible housing register framework and whether in practice there will be sufficient bids for the process to be meaningful. This section examines the nature of these processes and whether there are differences between different types of applicants/properties.

11.2 Open accessible housing register *London Borough*

11.2.1 Analysis of choice-based letting bidding activity reveals that most adapted properties are let on the first bid cycle. Sheltered housing is more prone to a second, third or even fourth cycle. Numbers of bids for individual properties are highest for mainstream housing but even for specialist properties there are substantial numbers of bids. Nevertheless as Table 11.1 shows bids for sheltered housing are the order of 30 compared with over 400 for general housing. However, the number of bid cycles and the void period are not necessarily correlated as indicated by the high void time for the 'general' wheelchair and partial wheelchair accessible housing (although there were special circumstances about new developments). Irrespective of numbers of bid cycles required lifetime homes and sheltered housing have on average higher void times.

11.2.2 If we focus entirely on households (who have applied for priority as needing accessible/adapted housing) rather than bids for particular housing types then Table 11.2 below indicates that there were 774 households with an accessibility priority and of these 639 (83%) were active bidders in 2008/09. Category C households, bidding for lifetime homes, have the smallest percentage of bidders, 63%. Overall this is clear evidence that the vast majority of these households are participating in the bidding process. The average number of bids placed by these households is much lower than households with no priority but this probably reflects the smaller number of suitable housing to select from.

Table 11.1: London Borough bidding activity for properties let via choice-based letting in 2008/09

Accessible housing register Category	Property Usage	Number of bid cycles for a property before let							Average Bids	Average Void Duration (days)
		1	2	3	4	5	6	Total		
A – Wheelchair Accessible	General	3						3	552.3	303.5*
	Over 50s	1						1	26.0	49.2
	Total	4						4	420.8	239.9
B – Partial Wheelchair Accessible	General	11						11	423.0	152.5*
	Over 50s	1						1	137.0	27.9
	Sheltered		1					1	27.0	147.0
	Total	12	1					13	370.5	142.5
C – Lifetime Homes	General	25	3					28	638.0	233.7
D – Easy Access	General	324	11					335	460.8	116.9
	Over 50s	9						9	62.7	20.9
	Over 60s	2						2	347.0	19.5
	Sheltered	11	6	1	1			19	25.1	81.2
	Total	346	17	1	1			365	427.7	112.1
E – Step Free	General	96	4					100	566.0	32.7
	Over 50s	8						8	78.9	23.6
	Over 60s	1						1	24.0	35.0
	Sheltered	4	2					6	39.3	50.0
	Total	109	6					115	499.9	33.0
F – General	General	866	36	2				904	565.5	38.1
	Over 50s	41	2					43	58.6	51.5
	Over 60s	2						2	323.0	21.0
	Sheltered	2						2	15.0	87.7
	Total	911	38	2				951	540.9	38.7
G – Not Assessed	General	188	4					192	524.3	47.5
	Over 50s	9						9	56.0	74.7
	Over 60s	1						1	33.0	49.0
	Sheltered	10	6			1	1	18	36.0	86.3
	Total	208	10			1	1	220	463.0	51.8
Total		1615	75	3	1	1	1	1696	503.7	60.3

*As noted earlier the Category A and B homes with long void durations relate to two registered social landlord schemes which had poor parking and lift provision and so proved difficult to let.

Table 11.2: London Borough bidding activity by applicants with an accessible housing register award for properties marketed or let during 2008/09

Accessible housing register Category Award of Applicant	No of applicants with award	No of active Bidders	Total Bids	Average Bids
No accessible housing register Award		15,322	1,252,545	81.7
A	54	41	1,057	25.8
B	39	33	560	17.0
C	19	12	252	21.0
D	59	42	1,172	27.9
E	111	95	4,204	44.3
F	492	416	37,901	91.1
Total	774	15,961	1,297,691	81.3

11.3 Closed accessible housing register *Provincial City*

No data as properties in accessible housing register are let administratively.

11.4 Open Partial accessible housing register *Mixed Urban Authority*

Table 11.3 Mixed Urban Authority – accessible housing register lettings information on purpose built properties – accessibility feature and whether needed by applicant by average period from available for offer until letting made and choice-based letting bids placed 2007–09

Year Let	Total Bids*	Ceiling track hoist	Purpose built adapted property			Purpose built adapted property average relet time (days)	Total
			Feature needed – Yes av relet (days)	Feature needed – No av relet (days)	Feature needed – Yes av relet (days)		
2007/08	1		20.0	0.5	7.0	7.0	
	3			18.0	18.0	18.0	
2007/08 Total			20.0	6.3	9.8	9.8	
2008/09	0	6.0		0.7	0.7	2.0	
	1		27.0		27.0	27.0	
	5		70.0		70.0	70.0	
	6		13.0		13.0	13.0	
2008/09 Total		6.0	36.7	0.7	18.7	16.9	
Total		6.0	32.5	3.5	15.1	14.3	

*All choice-based letting properties were let on their first bid cycle. Note these figures relate to properties where there is data on bids

11.4.1 Section 4 notes that in the mixed urban authority accessible/adaptable housing is allocated within choice-based letting but that the limited numbers enable a degree of 'manual processing'. There is no comprehensive data on the bidding process but Table 11.3 shows that all new purpose built properties were let on their first bid cycle although some properties are allocated to households who did not need the adaptations. Data of bid activity by applicant is not available. Average relet times are relatively short compared with other authorities.

11.5 Overview

11.5.1 The effective evidence on bidding for accessible housing register properties is drawn only from the London borough. The analysis suggests that an (almost) open accessible housing register can work effectively in circumstances where there is a large social housing stock and shortages of adapted property. The picture in the mixed urban authority is less convincing and may be because the reverse is true but more research is required to justify such a conclusion. In particular there is insufficient evidence from the case study on the local demand for accessible housing and what data there is about the accessible housing is limited to just a very few purpose built houses.

12 Duration of wait for priority households before rehousing in adapted housing

12.1 The effectiveness of an accessible housing register is judged by the matching of households with adapted needs to appropriate housing in Section 10. A further dimension of the effectiveness of accessible housing register's is the comparative length of time before rehousing for households with adaptive/ accessible needs relative to applicants for general needs.

12.2 Open accessible housing register *London Borough*

12.2.1 The average waiting time (in years) from the date of registration until letting for households with adaptive and general housing in 2008/09 in the borough was almost identical, 3.04 and 3.06 for non accessible housing register households and accessible housing register households respectively. There is little difference when these figures are split between the council and registered social landlords. The most common wait for both groups is 1–2 years and half of accessible housing register households are rehoused within 2 years compared with 45% of non-accessible housing register households.

12.3 Closed accessible housing register *Provincial City*

12.3.1 The evidence on time on the waiting list for the provincial city is more indirect as the only data available is on the duration of residence prior to rehousing as shown in Table 12.1. The table shows that overall medical priority applicants have lived longer in their previous home prior to rehousing with the modal period 5 to 10 years, and more than half having lived in their previous home for over 5 years.

12.3.2 For the purposes of this analysis it is more important to consider the time from the date of the award of the priority for the applicant to the point of rehousing. Given the way priorities are time limited in the city if a household has been rehoused into adaptive housing it must have only recently produced evidence of (new) need and given an award of priority. Information from the accessible housing register register snapshot shows that the earliest award of medical priority (welfare) was in October 2007 and for medical (physical) it was March 2008, and that most households had only recently been awarded priority. This finding and the short term nature of priority on the one hand suggests that the system leads to speedy rehousing for households awarded a medical priority (but not necessarily to adapted housing – see Section 10.3).

12.3.3 The difficulties of interpreting this data for our purposes are demonstrated by an analysis of the allocation of sheltered housing. These applicants have a long residence duration in their home before securing sheltered lettings. However, out of 159 households allocated sheltered housing during 2008/09 there were only 7 medical (physical) priority awards.

Table 12.1: Residential duration prior to rehousing in 2008/09 by the Provincial City broken down by medical classification of the applicant 2008/09

Residence Duration	Medical Physical		Medical Mental Health & Welfare		No Medical Priority		Total
	Lets	%	Lets	%	Lets	%	
3 months or less	0	0.0	3	3.0	75	3.2	78
3 to 6 months	4	4.3	10	9.9	139	5.9	153
6 to 9 months	7	7.4	9	8.9	124	5.3	140
9 to 12 months	3	3.2	9	8.9	108	4.6	120
1 to 2 years	5	5.3	18	17.8	394	16.8	417
2 to 3 years	6	6.4	11	10.9	282	12.0	299
3 to 4 years	6	6.4	13	12.9	196	8.3	215
4 to 5 years	7	7.4	3	3.0	158	6.7	168
5 to 10 years	24	25.5	12	11.9	432	18.4	468
10 to 15 years	7	7.4	2	2.0	164	7.0	173
15 to 20 years	5	5.3	5	5.0	59	2.5	69
20 to 30 years	7	7.4	0	0.0	68	2.9	75
30 years or more	10	10.6	1	1.0	58	2.5	69
Unknown	3	3.2	5	5.0	92	3.9	100
Total	94	100	101	100	2349	100	2544

12.4 Open Partial accessible housing register *Mixed Urban Authority*

12.4.1 In this area waiting times are much lower than in the London borough as Table 12.2 indicates. These figures are only illustrative but are indicative. Average waiting time from registration to rehousing, within the accessible housing register, to a home with a ceiling track hoist was 9.2 months and 13 months for a purpose built adapted property. These periods fall to 5 and 4.4 months respectively from date of priority award.

Table 12.2: Mixed Urban Authority – average waiting time from date registered to letting secured (months)

Average Wait from Registration (months)	Ceiling track hoist	Purpose built adapted property			Total
Year Let	Feature needed	Feature not needed	Feature needed	Purpose built adapted property Total	
2007/08		2.3	2.2	2.3	2.3
2008/09	9.2	16.1	23.7	19.9	18.4
Total	9.2	12.7	13.0	12.9	12.5

12.5 Overview

12.5.1 The evidence on waiting times suggests that once a priority has been established households with adapted housing needs do not have to wait long for rehousing in low demand areas. There are a few caveats to this conclusion as the statistics presented relate to successful applicants and do not necessarily imply an adapted house. Evidence presented in Section 9 suggests that those who require the highest level of adaptations can wait a long time in the London borough. There are also some doubts about the status of sheltered housing as accessible housing. There is only a direct comparison of letting times between general and adaptive needs for the London borough where no difference is found.

13 Average letting times/ void periods for lettings of accessible housing and for all lettings

13.1 Effectiveness of an accessible housing register can be judged not just from the point of view of the customer but also from the perspective of the landlord's finances. While a tenant's focus is on the length of time before rehousing as reviewed in the previous section here the attention is on the letting times or void periods of accessible and adapted properties.

13.2 Open accessible housing register *London Borough*

13.2.1 The average void duration in the London borough for both accessible housing register and non accessible housing register lettings in 2008/09 are almost identical, 81.4 days and 82.1 days respectively, with accessible housing register lettings very marginally shorter but not all these lettings have been allocated by choice-based letting. Table 13.1 breaks down these averages into a time profile, and shows that there is a high percentage of lets within the accessible housing register, almost 70%, that are let within two months compared with 58% for non-accessible housing register stock. However, there is a longer tail with 8% having a void duration over 9 months (see below).

Table 13.1: A comparison of banded void durations for accessible housing register and non accessible housing register lettings in the London Borough during 2008/09

Banded Void duration	Non accessible housing register	Accessible housing register	Grand Total	Non accessible housing register%	Accessible housing register %
Less than a month	663	43	706	32.5	39.4
1 to 2 months	536	32	568	26.3	29.4
2 to 3 months	256	6	262	12.6	5.5
3 to 6 months	384	13	397	18.9	11.9
6 to 9 months	115	6	121	5.6	5.5
9 months to a year	35	5	40	1.7	4.6
More than a year	48	4	52	2.4	3.7
Total	2037	109	2146	100	100

13.2.2 Repeating the analysis but distinguishing between council and registered social landlord lettings finds that there is a clear distinction in performance between the two. The average void time for registered social landlords is

much longer than for the council, 94.5 days compared with 49.9 days. registered social landlords application of the accessible housing register is particularly slow with lettings averaging 105.7 days, more than twice the average time of the council, 41.1 days (Table 13.2). As a result the average void duration of an accessible housing register letting is higher than for non accessible housing register lettings for registered social landlords while the reverse is true for council lettings. The main reason is that while almost 90% of accessible housing register lettings take two months or less housing associations are responsible for the long tail of void lettings periods noted above. A major reason is probably the bias created by new registered social landlord developments that proved difficult to let because of design issues (see below).

Table 13.2 A comparison of average void times in the London Borough broken down by Council and registered social landlord lettings

Average of Void duration days	Non accessible housing register	Accessible housing register	Total
Council	50.5	41.1	49.9
Registered social landlord	94.0	105.7	94.5
Total	82.1	81.4	82.0

- 13.2.3 More detailed analysis focusing entirely on choice-based letting let properties broken down by housing type given in Table 13.3 shows that void duration is higher for more specialist adapted properties. However, the Category A and B homes with long void durations relate to two registered social landlord schemes which had poor parking and lift provision and so proved difficult to let. Setting aside these properties accessible/adapted properties have similar void periods to general housing although sheltered housing has higher voids.
- 13.2.4 The implications for rental loss data by accessible housing register Category (calculations based on 2008/09 rents and service charges) are shown in Table 13.4. The data includes all common housing register lets by the property's accessible housing register category where rental data is available. Categories A to C seem to exhibit greater rent loss amounts, but this is skewed as explained above by difficult to let specific developments with poor design. It does highlight the potential financial risks associated with specialist properties.

Table 13.3: Average void durations for properties let via choice-based letting in the London Borough during 2008/09 comparing registered social landlord and Council lettings

Accessible housing register Category	Property Usage	Average void duration (days)		
		COUNCIL	Registered social landlord	Total
A – Wheelchair Accessible	General		303.5	303.5
	Over 50s		49.2	49.2
B – Partial Wheelchair Accessible	General	28.2	165.0	152.5
	Over 50s	27.9		27.9
	Sheltered		147.0	147.0
C – Lifetime Homes	General		233.7	233.7
D – Easy Access	General	21.0	118.9	116.9
	Over 50s	20.9		20.9
	Over 60s		19.5	19.5
	Sheltered		81.2	81.2
E – Step Free	General	31.3	38.7	32.7
	Over 50s	21.0	26.2	23.6
	Over 60s		35.0	35.0
	Sheltered		50.0	50.0
F – General	General	32.8	42.4	38.1
	Over 50s	25.4	67.1	51.5
	Over 60s		21.0	21.0
	Sheltered		87.7	87.7
G – Not Assessed	General	32.9	48.5	47.4
	Over 50s		74.7	74.7
	Over 60s		49.0	49.0
	Sheltered		86.3	86.3
Total		31.9	73.7	60.3

Table 13.4: Rent losses associated with voids of properties let via choice-based letting in the London Borough during 2008/09 comparing registered social landlord and Council lettings

Ownership	Accessible housing register category	Number of properties with rents data	Average rent loss £
Council	B	4	895.10
	D	19	578.98
	E	96	663.90
	F	458	600.10
	G	13	414.73
	All	590	607.72
Registered social landlord	A	11	3,713.63
	B	13	2,804.00
	C	33	3,545.00
	D	461	1,995.18
	E	52	1,593.68
	F	687	1,027.29
	G	281	1,314.92
	All	1538	1,507.74
Total		2128	1,232.31

13.3 Closed accessible housing register *Provincial city*

Data not supplied.

13.4 Open Partial accessible housing register *Mixed Urban Authority*

- 13.4.1 No individual void data are provided by the council although all purpose built adapted housing was let on its first bidding cycle. Average void losses shown in the table below indicate that such losses are very low for adapted properties that were let to households who needed the features but that some of these specialist properties lay empty for some time before being let to households who do not need the special features.

13.5 Overview

- 13.5.1 These results are partial but suggest that the application of an accessible housing register can be slower than the general lettings process. However, the picture is complicated as the experience of the London borough illustrates where council owned adapted/accessible properties are vacant for comparable times to general needs housing. Registered social landlord adapted properties in the borough are vacant much longer but this can be partly traced, but not completely, to difficulties in the design of specialist developments. The evidence from the mixed urban authority also demonstrates that there are more financial risks involved in building specialist adapted properties and this can have consequences in terms of expensive voids but this is not attributable to the application of the accessible housing register.

Table 13.5 Average void loss for specialist accessible housing register properties from the date they became available for offer until let in the Mixed Urban Authority

Year Let	Ceiling track hoist		Purpose built adapted property		Total
	Feature needed	Feature not needed	Feature needed	Purpose built adapted property Total	
2007/08		175.66	42.93	76.11	76.11
2008/09	55.43	327.04	5.48	166.26	150.43
Total	55.43	289.20	24.21	130.20	123.41

14 Links between adaptations and lettings

14.1 In Section 8 the analysis examined the scale and cost of adaptations. This section extends that analysis by a more in depth analysis that looks at the relationship between expenditure on adaptations and lettings. This is important because given the substantial initial expenditure required to construct a full accessible housing register there are potential subsequent financial savings through reduced expenditure on adaptations. This can be achieved because of the better match between adapted properties and households with similar needs with an accessible housing register. The analysis in particular considers the timing of adaptations and the date when a household moved in and the scale of adaptations removed as unwanted.

14.2 Open accessible housing register *London Borough*

14.2.1 The London borough's adaptations expenditure was in the order of £557k in 2007/08 and £668k in 2008/09. The relationship between this expenditure and tenancy date is given in Table 14.1. Almost a tenth of this expenditure predates the current tenant and so would be lost if the housing is not allocated to a household who needs the adaptation. A further £197k, 16%, of expenditure over these two years was spent within two years of a tenancy start (10% within one year). These sums are substantial but further detailed research would be needed to establish whether this expenditure could have been reduced with more efficient lettings.

14.2.2 One indicator of the inefficiency of the lettings system is the number of adaptations that have to be removed. Table 14.2 summarises information on stairlift removals in the council stock of the London borough. An average of more than three stairlifts are removed each year which highlights that although the accessible housing register categories are useful in assessing the appropriateness and adaptability of the stock for people with physical disabilities they are not honed to the individual needs of the household. For specialist equipment items this may be inevitable as the specific requirement for any individual can vary widely according to their medical needs. Nevertheless the total removal cost of these items over five years was £4685 while the cost of initially installing these items at current prices is almost £49k (although the Council recycles specialist equipment).

Table 14.1: Expenditure on aids and adaptations works during 2007/08 and 2008/09 by timing of work relative to tenancy commencement in the London Borough

Timing of work relative to tenancy commencement	Value of work £
Not applicable – Work to a block	4,523
Predated current tenant	56,427
With 1 year of tenancy start	126,247
With 2 years of tenancy start	71,180
Within 2–5 years of tenancy start	77,721
Within 5–10 years of tenancy start	190,327
Within 10–15 years of tenancy start	164,838
Within 15–20 years of tenancy start	143,390
Within 20–30 years of Tenancy start	332,652
Within 30+ years of Tenancy start	57,845
Total	1,225,149

Table 14.2: Annual removal of stair-lifts in the London Borough's Council Stock

Year	Count	Estimated removal cost £
2005	2	468
2006	3	701
2007	6	2,002
2008	3	748
2009	3	766
Total	17	4,685

14.2.3 The borough is considering reviewing how many adaptations elements are held on its accessible housing register to better match households to the adaptations in the property. This highlights the importance of effective voids and allocations procedures.

14.3 Closed accessible housing register *Provincial City*

14.3.1 Table 14.3 provides some evidence from the adaptations data supplied by the city council that in some instances adaptations considered 'permanent' such as 'level access showers' have been installed in the same property more than once implying the adaptation had been removed possibly as part of the voids re-servicing process. However, given the overall scale of the city's council housing stock portfolio exceeding 29,000 this is a relatively minor level of permanent adaptation re-provision.

Table 14.3: The Provincial City aids and adaptations property elements as at 18th Oct 2007 – instances where the same aid or adaptation has been installed in a property more than once by the nature of the adaptation

Element Name	Permanent Adaptation Not For Removal	Removable With Permission	Total
Access_Ramp Metal Deck		9	9
Equipment_Shower Unit		7	7
Internal_Kitchen Adaptation	1		1
Internal_Level Access Shower	12		12
Lift Stair_Lift Straight		2	2
Lift_Ceiling Track Hoist		10	10
Lift_Stair Lift		3	3
Lift_Stair_Lift Curved		1	1
Total	13	32	45

14.4 Open Partial accessible housing register *Mixed Urban Authority*

No data available

14.5 Overview

14.5.1 There is only limited evidence about the links between expenditure on adaptations and lettings within an accessible housing register but this data suggests such links are not as efficient as they could be. Even within lettings systems with an accessible housing register a small minority of properties have adaptations removed at the same time as substantial expenditures are being incurred in adding the same features to others or replacing those removed. The example of 16% of adaptations expenditure in the London borough spent on the housing of households in the first two years of a tenancy, also suggests that these households may not be being matched efficiently.

15 Cost effectiveness

- 15.1 Cost effectiveness of choice-based lettings has been measured previously by Jones and Pawson (2009) though balancing the additional costs of administration with the savings that arise from reduced turnover and the enhanced speed of letting resulting in less lost rental income. This approach was considered in the context of comparing the position before and after the introduction of choice-based letting. In theory the same approach could be applied here to assess how the different approaches to accessible housing registers – namely weighing up the additional costs involved relative to the savings in the cost of adaptations to the stock via better matching of households and housing. The evidence collected for the study has not been sufficient to undertake such a formal test of cost effectiveness. Part of the reason is that there are simply gaps in the data and in particular it is not possible to compare the cost effectiveness of a partial and full accessible housing register, we can't compare the costs of a full accessible housing register with and without choice involved. It is also difficult to compare costs and savings directly across the landlords in the case studies because of the different circumstances of each locality, in terms of the balance of demand to supply, and also the application of a range of approaches to nearly every facet of the allocation/accessible housing register process. In addition neither of the two 'open' choice-based letting accessible housing register's are completely open systems and some households with accessible/housing needs are allocated housing administratively. A comparative analysis has therefore not been undertaken.
- 15.2 From the perspective of the tenant the full and partial accessible housing registers give the same outcome – a list of available adapted properties at a point in time. The differences lie in the costs and a wider view of the outputs. The collection of the data to assess accessible housing registers, within a wide perspective that incorporates the full service provided to households with adapted housing needs, is hampered by the precise definition of an accessible housing register. The problem is one of boundaries – where is the division between the operation of the accessible housing register and general work to address the needs of households with accessible/adapted housing needs. Different schemes imply interpreting this boundary loosely or narrowly. Another way to look at this is the establishment of a full accessible housing register can free up a significant degree of occupational therapists' time to focus on need assessment and case work. In the London borough which operates a full accessible housing register only about 20% of occupational therapists' time is spent assessing the adaptability or accessibility of properties because of the comprehensive nature of the accessible housing register stock data held. In comparison in the mixed urban authority that applies a partial accessible housing register approach which lacks stock data on adaptations, it is estimated that 96% of occupational therapists' time is spent on this activity. These differences are quantifiable in these terms and should logically be integrated within a wider accessible housing register cost framework, so social landlords should consider the

wider ramifications of constructing a full accessible housing register when appraising the costs and benefits.

- 15.3 The analysis here does not attempt a formal approach to cost effectiveness. Instead it attempts to achieve some broad insights into the costs and benefits of the different approaches to compiling an accessible housing register. First it compares the costs of constructing a full and partial accessible housing register ignoring running costs and wider computer set up costs, as the evidence presented in Section 7 is that these are in relative terms trivial. It then compares these construction costs with the costs of adaptations. Finally it seeks to assess whether the costs of the accessible housing register in the London borough can be justified in cost effectiveness terms. Overhead costs are not included because they are partly location specific which is arguably a limitation but is unlikely to distort the conclusions.
- 15.4 The set up costs in the London borough of the accessible housing register were £150k (over a number of years) which is equivalent to approximately £6 for each housing unit covered. This cost can alternatively be expressed in terms of per letting. There were 2,146 general needs lets made via the choice-based letting service in 2008/09 of which 598 were to council stock and 1,548 to registered social landlord stock. Given that more than half the registered social landlord stock, 54%, has not been classified and applying this proportion to the annual lettings this broadly equates to £115 for each letting of assessed stock. The alternative approach of the partial accessible housing register by the mixed urban authority is cheaper certainly in the short term, costed at approximately £14 per void (not per letting). However, the full accessible housing register cost figure will of course reduce with each year of additional lettings so that after ten years of lettings it would equate to a crude average of £11.50 over the period.
- 15.5 There are a number of difficulties in comparing these figures even narrowly in terms of the costs of constructing an accessible housing register. First labour and other costs will be higher in London. Second, assuming a void ultimately leads to a letting it would still be necessary to apply a social discounted cash flow approach to the problem. Applying a social discount rate of 3.5% and assuming that both the number of annual lettings of assessed stock in the London borough is constant over ten years (as above) and the £150k compilation costs in the year prior to the introduction of the accessible housing register, gives a present value cost of £13.78 per letting. This is a marginally lower figure than the current cost of the partial accessible housing register per void cost in the other case study. But care needs to be taken in the interpretation of this finding as the accessible housing register compilation cost is only an estimate and costs are very dependent on local housing stock characteristics and scale factors. Nevertheless the fact that these costs are broadly of the same magnitude is a useful indicator to other social landlords of the expenditure involved.
- 15.6 A partial accessible housing register may also be seen as a transition phase to a full accessible housing register. If the results of the assessment within a partial accessible housing register are recorded in a register then eventually

this listing could contribute to the compilation of a full accessible housing register (although not in our case study). Given that the length of tenancies can be very long while some properties turnover frequently it is not possible to make a simple calculation about how long such a mechanism will require to provide an aggregate picture of the whole stock. It will almost certainly need to be supplemented with survey work.

- 15.7 The £150k costs of constructing a full accessible housing register in the London borough seems very high but must be seen in the context of the expenditure required for adaptations. In 2007/08 the budget for expenditure on adaptations of the London borough was £745k for 300 council houses and the actual outturn expenditure was £595k on 241 properties. For 2008/09 the same budget and spend targets were set as those for 2007/08. The cost is equivalent to around £2500 per housing unit. These figures do not include expenditure by registered social landlords on adaptations that own more than two thirds of the social housing stock. Applying broadly proportionality this suggests that the social housing stock covered by the accessible housing register has an annual adaptations expenditure of £1.19k representing 482 properties per year. This expenditure is much higher than the cost of constructing the accessible housing register. The cost of the construction of the accessible housing register is equivalent to 60 adaptations so the key question is how long it will take for this expenditure to reduce this number of adaptations (subject to the discounting over time of expenditure on adaptations). There is the order of 100 accessible housing register lettings per year in the London borough so there is the potential for this goal to be achieved.
- 15.8 The analysis in Section 10 suggests there is scope for an improvement in the efficiency of matching of households and adapted housing within accessible housing registers. In financial terms the potential savings from reduced expenditure on adaptations offers an incentive but also provides an indication of the financial equation underpinning the accessible housing register. The accessible housing register in the London borough is not yet fully matching efficiently and needs further development. There is still substantial expenditure, £200k, on adaptations being undertaken up to two years after tenants have moved in and adaptations are continuing to be removed at the same rate as before the adoption of the accessible housing register (Section 14).
- 15.9 Increasing the matching prowess of the accessible housing register to remove the need for these adaptations would more than pay for the cost of the accessible housing register in total (taking into account discounting of savings over time). This is probably unrealistic given that a key element of choice-based letting is tenants' choice and they may choose a property which needs some or extensive adaptations. Even where officers match, there will still often be a need for further adaptations when the person moves in. It is inevitably difficult to get a perfect match each time but simply reducing the number of 14 adaptations (£35k) per year over 5 years, ie 15% of adaptations, would pay for the capital cost (assuming social discounting).

- 15.10 The financial arguments of a partial accessible housing register are much clearer as it has no initial capital costs. The case study authority that operates a partial accessible housing register has an adaptations budget of £340k equivalent to just over £1000 per adapted building. With each void assessment costing £14 if each 70 assessments leads to one less adaptation required then the project is financially viable. Any increased matching capacity of households to adapted housing from the operation of a partial accessible housing register is likely to bring quick financial returns. The costs of building up to a full accessible housing register may be generated from the savings in the adaptations budget. The precise financial benefits will depend on the proportion of the existing stock with adaptations.
- 15.11 To conclude these figures for cost effectiveness are only indicative but the financial analysis from the London borough suggests that an efficient full accessible housing register could be more than justified in these terms if it led to the removal of the need for a relatively small number adaptations in the first years of a tenancy. There are other financial benefits to an accessible housing register in the long term through freeing of resources which have been impossible to quantify. The partial accessible housing register approach is cheaper in the short term but the long term benefits could be enhanced by the inputting of the information on a register as part of a process to build a full accessible housing register. It is possible that a partial accessible housing register represents the optimum solution for at least small local authorities given limited financial circumstances and that it can also build up to a full version.

16 Conclusions

- 16.1 The research presented is based on three case studies chosen for their different approaches and willingness to support the study. The three models of accessible housing register reviewed are very different in virtually every aspect of classifying households and housing and the matching process. The differences are partly driven by the size of an authority, for example the personalised approach of the mixed urban authority could only be carried out on a small scale. However, the different accessible housing register models can be applied to all sizes of authority. The accessible housing registers considered are relatively new and in at least one case in the process of refinement.
- 16.2 In all three choice-based letting schemes there is still some administrative processing of lets for households with accessible and adapted housing needs. In terms of the cost and effectiveness of these models the analysis has been hindered by both these differences and the incomplete financial evidence available.
- 16.3 The importance of local circumstances and data deficiencies mean that there are a number of areas where it is not possible to have definitive conclusions. In one sense more research is required, and this point is made at specific points in the text but this will not provide any further insights until there are fundamental changes to local accounting procedures to provide more clearly defined activity based costing.
- 16.4 The analysis has examined the construction of an accessible housing register in the different case studies subdivided into the following elements:
- Processes and Costs of Identifying Households with Special Needs
 - Assessment of Housing Stock Suitable for Accessible or Adapted Needs
 - Other Set Up and Running Costs accessible housing register
 - Scale and Costs of Adaptations
 - Households with Accessible/Adaptive Housing Needs

The next stage considered the operation and efficiency of accessible housing register allocation processes:

- Matching of Households and Housing via accessible housing register
- Bid cycles and Numbers of Bids for Lets involving Accessible/Adapted Properties
- Duration of Wait for Priority Households before Rehousing in Adapted Housing
- Average Letting Times/Void Periods for Lettings of Accessible Housing and for all Lettings

- Links between Adaptations and Lettings

Finally the analysis reviewed the cost effectiveness of accessible housing registers.

16.5 Given the variety of models, the differing interpretation of accessible housing register boundaries and the paucity of data it has been difficult to make full comparisons, even of the relative costs between case studies. Some conclusions can be drawn on the costs and effectiveness of accessible housing registers:

- The number of adapted properties represents a relatively small proportion of all lettings and an accessible housing register is a useful catalyst for identifying and addressing accessible/adapted housing needs at a strategic level.
- The setting up and running costs of the accessible housing register (ignoring classification of households and housing) appear to be a small component of the costs of running a choice-based letting scheme and are difficult to identify and disaggregate from overall costs.
- Considerable sums each year are being spent on adapting property but these adaptations are not necessarily recorded on a central database except as part of a full accessible housing register.
- The strategic links between the activities of meeting the demand for adaptations via physical improvement or lettings policies appear limited, in the sense that local decision making and budgets do not seem to recognise the potential interaction.
- The use of the accessible housing register in allocation systems still does not necessarily match adapted housing to households even where the demand for accessible housing outweighs the supply. This element of accessible housing registers is arguably still work in progress.
- An (almost) open choice-based letting accessible housing register can work effectively with households bidding for properties certainly in circumstances where there is a large social housing stock and shortages of adapted property.
- Waiting time for households with adaptive needs to be allocated an adapted home were difficult to quantify but are likely to be more a reflection of the stock available than the application of an accessible housing register.
- Letting times for general and adaptive needs in an open accessible housing register can be comparable.
- The cost effectiveness of a full accessible housing register centres around the reduction in the expenditure requirement to adapt stock and the financial analysis of the London case study suggests that an efficient full accessible housing register could pay back its costs over five years if it could remove the need for 15% of adaptations. The financial case will vary with local circumstances in terms of the percentage of accessible

stock, current household mismatches, and existing knowledge/databases on the characteristics of the stock.

- There are other financial benefits to in the long term through freeing of occupational therapy resources and the use of the accessible housing register to support strategic housing needs assessment.
- The partial accessible housing register approach is financially attractive in the short term as it has no initial capital costs and from the tenant's perspective it provides the same choice-based letting service. This approach offers the possibility through the incremental inputting of the information collected on to a register of building up to a full accessible housing register, with its long term strategic benefits. The annual running costs can be supported by utilising savings from the adaptations' budget. It is possible that a partial accessible housing register represents the optimum solution for at least small local authorities given limited financial circumstances and that it can also be built up to a full version.

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Appendix 1 Detailed costings for each scheme

London Borough

Post	Full-time equivalent	Grade	Spinal Point	Cost	Travel
Senior Practitioner Occupational Therapist – job share	1.06	PO3M (43–46)	46	54,288	2,656 (x2 staff)
Fieldwork Occupational Therapist	1.00	SSPS02 – PO2 (35–41)	36	40,062	1,328
Admin Officer	0.2	Scale 6 (26–28)	28	6,478	0
Total	2.26			100,828	3,984
				Total	£ 104,812

In terms of actual costs, the fieldwork occupational therapist is currently covered by a locum. The hourly gross charge for the Locum is £33 and the last quarter they worked 480 hours, equivalent to 1.14 full-time equivalent at a cost of £15,859 rather than £10,015 budgeted.

Time Apportionment of Occupation Therapy Service in London Borough

	%
Report Writing	33
Assessment	22
Travel	12
Case Admin	7
Assessment of equipment and adaptations	7
Accompanied Viewings	1
Other	18

The estimated costs provided by the Occupational Therapist team for accessible housing register aspects of the London Borough’s choice-based letting scheme:

State Job role	Hours worked per week	Full-time equivalent	Gross Employee Cost per annum 2009/10 (including National Insurance and any pensions related costs)	Estimated time (hours per week) spent on supporting and assessing people seeking accessible or adapted housing (including admin, IT and reporting related work)	Estimate cost – supporting/ assessing	Estimated time (hours per week) spent on assessing the adaptability or accessibility of properties (including admin, IT and reporting related work)	Estimate cost – property assessment	Estimated time (hours per week) spent on matching people requiring accessible or adapted properties to available properties (including admin, IT and reporting related work)	Estimate cost – matching	Estimated time (hours per week) spent on other non Accessible Housing related activities	Total estimated cost
Senior Practitioner Occupational Therapist – job share (PO3M spine point 46)	37	1.06	54,288	29.6	43,430	7.4	10,858	0	0	0	54,288
Fieldwork Occupational Therapist (SSPS02 – spine point 36)	35	1	40,062	28	32,050	7	8,012	0	0	0	40,062
Admin Officer (Scale 6 spine point 28)	7	0.2	6,478	5.6	5,182	1.4	1,296	0	0	0	6,478
Total			100,828		80,662		20,166				100,828

Open Partial accessible housing register *Mixed Urban Authority*

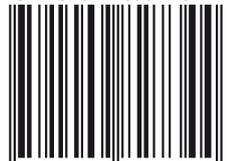
Job role	Hours worked per week	Full-time equivalent	Gross Employee Cost per annum 2009/10 (including National Insurance and any pensions related costs) £	Estimated time (hours per week) spent on supporting and assessing people seeking accessible or adapted housing (including admin, IT and reporting related work) £	Estimate cost – supporting/ Assessing £	Estimated time (hours per week) spent on assessing the adaptability or accessibility of properties (including admin, IT and reporting related work)	Estimate cost – property assessment £	Estimated time (hours per week) spent on matching people requiring accessible or adapted properties to available properties (including admin, IT and reporting related work)	Estimate cost – matching £	Estimated time (hours per week) spent of Other non Accessible Housing related activities	Total estimated cost £
Occupational Therapist	23	0.62	20,507	22	0	22	19,616	1	892		20,507
Choice-based letting support officer	37	1	21,702	5	2,932.70	1	587	1	587	30	4,106
Choice-based letting officers	37	4	21,702	4	9,384.65	0	–	1	2,346	32	11,731
Housing Needs Manager	37	0.04	38,330	1	1,035.95	0	–	0.5	518	35.5	1,554
Total		5.66			£13,353		20,202		4,342		37,898

Appendix 2 London Borough Housing Occupational Therapist Team Case work: Categories of complexity (2008)

Housing Needs Assessments (HNA) and Accompanied Viewings (AV)					
Category of Complexity	Action	Example	Approx time to complete		
			HNA	AV	
1.	No visit required – Senior Practitioner Occupational Therapist	Decision and recommendation: no additional information required	Well documented 'Application for re-housing on health grounds' or relevant medical/lift reports included. Likely that contact with another health professional and/or applicant will also be required to clarify function Straightforward issues, e.g. applicant lives on ground floor and home is to be demolished	1 hr. Immediate decision. Same day	10mins – phone advice. Same day
2.	No visit required – Senior Practitioner Occupational Therapist	Decision and recommendation, but additional information required	Same straightforward issues, or another occupational therapist can complete Housing Needs Assessment	1 ½ hrs. Minimum 2 weeks to complete	½ hr. Same day. Some info search required
3.	Visit – Fieldwork Occupational Therapist	Straightforward : one-off assessment	Non complex social and health situation, applicant can give good history and complete/participate in a functional assessment at home	8 hrs (inc travel, H.V, report writing & general admin of case)	3hrs Same day. Incs. prep work, AV, travel report writing & admin)
4.	Visit – Field work Occupational Therapist	Complex	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Complex conditions e.g. neurological, spinal, head injury – hospital discharge: out of borough Rehab Unit – complex family/social issues – ongoing social care issues e.g. require essential adaptation in present property or equipment to ensure safety in the home – interpreter required – need housing that is not currently available borough – technical advice required from surveyor 	Weeks/months	6hrs. 1 month. Incs. prep work, AV, travel, further visit/s with report writing & admin)

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