

Reuse and recycling Leeds City Council Housing Occupational Therapy

Background

It is recognised that there is a strong link between housing and physical and mental health. Leeds City Council addresses this through their Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

Leeds City Council has a designated Housing OT team that is one of many teams that contribute towards a key priority of 'Improving Health through Housing', with a strong emphasis on being fair, sustainable, and inclusive.

The team specialise in matching people with disabilities to already adapted homes to meet their physical, psychological, sensory, and cultural needs.

About the OT's

Originally, I was placed within Housing to support surveyors advising on larger complex adaptations. It wasn't long before colleagues in Lettings began to enquire about what to do with empty properties that had already been adapted. At this point there was no set process other than the adaptations being removed and discarded and the properties being returned to their original state. To me this felt wasteful in terms of financial resources and time. The trial solution was to work closer with the area lettings teams, matching adapted properties to applicants on the housing list with medical needs. It made sense to avoid wasting precious resources and speeding up the rehousing process for those in need.

The trial proved successful and the demand for matching properties increased. By recording what adaptations were being reutilised along with cost savings, helped justify further OT resources. With the addition of new team member, Sally, the service began to have a stronger OT presence allowing us to develop a more systematic approach. This guided the service in a new direction promoting the benefits of re using adapted properties thus reducing the amount valuable resources such as stair-lifts, ramps, wet floor showers from being removed. It also demonstrated the benefit of rehousing individuals and families that needed more specific adaptations creating a fairer more equitable service. In conjunction with working with Leeds City Council lift section obsolete or unrepairable stair-lifts and through floor lifts were also being reused for parts for repairs.

Over the past 10 years we have become more efficient with processes and recording what adaptations have been reused. Dedicated software systems have been put in place linking the Housing OT service to Lettings/Housing and we are now a team of 10 with a range of Senior and Community OTs, Graduates and Occupational Therapy Assistants. Our cost savings are based on Leeds City Councils average installation cost of each adaptation along with recording the re let of adapted properties. This supports the team's growth and commitment towards Leeds City Councils core values of spending money wisely, being fair in the application process of matching customer needs and sustainability in re using valuable resources.

Summary of Re use in terms of resources and cost savings.

Figures taken from April 2022 to April 2023

Number of Adapted Properties Re let	550
Number of Stair-lifts recycled	51
Number of Ramps Recycled	141
Number of Through floor lifts recycled	5
Number of Wet floor showers recycled	523
Overall Cost Savings	£3,453,422.31