



**Home Environment**  
Assessment & Response Team

## HEART Annual Report

April 2022 to March 2023

## **Introduction.**

The year from April 2022 to March 2023 has ended and there are many reasons to be pleased with the way the HEART service is delivering for our customers.

We have received a record number of new cases and a highest amount of capital spend approved from the annual allocations from central Government. That's not to say it was all allocated so there is still more to do to achieve the required grant approvals within the year.

The unprecedented demand on the service, vacancies and projects being undertaken within the year has caused waiting lists to begin to rise, especially towards the end of the financial year. However:

- 836 customers had some form of grant approved within the year.
- 284 customers were assessed and referred to Council Housing teams for adaptations.
- 190 separate customers received social care equipment.

The service directly helped 1310 residents and households to remain independent within their homes and assisted to prevent accidents and ill health through the provision of major and minor adaptations, referrals, repairs and improvements to remove hazards.

The team and all involved with the service can be proud of these achievements making enabling people to better use their homes safely.

I would like to thank all the team members for carrying out all of broad range of important functions across the service and also for the support of the HEART Board for enabling us to achieve these goals. Our performance information system across the adaptations and home improvement service within Warwickshire is second to none within the sector and provides a sound basis for reporting on the achievements of the service.

This report is a new version of the annual report and has been redesigned to provide the details of financial performance, service performance, work and projects completed within the year and provide an insight into the work planned in the coming year.

I hope it is informative and helpful.

Paul Coopey  
Head Of Home Environment Services  
HEART

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# 1 Financial Reports

## 1.1 Out turn for 2022/23

HEART BUDGET MONITORING 2022-23		MONTH			
				12	
Details	BUDGET 2022/23	Budget to Date	Paid to date	Variance to date	Comments
	£	£	£	£	
Salary related costs	1,519,923	1,519,923	1,451,504	(68,419)	Salary underspends
Running costs	54,302	54,302	31,337	(22,965)	
Payments to Partners	101,850	101,850	101,850	0	
<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>1,676,075</b>	<b>1,676,075</b>	<b>1,584,690</b>	<b>(91,385)</b>	
<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>(1,676,075)</b>	<b>(1,676,075)</b>	<b>(1,547,552)</b>	<b>128,524</b>	Deficit in income due to lower fee income and contribution from reserves yet to be applied.
<b>NET (SURPLUS)/ DEFICIT on shared service (TO BE SHARED ACROSS PARTNERS/RESERVE)</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>(0)</b>	<b>37,139</b>	<b>37,139</b>	<b>£37k deficit to be funded by the contribution from reserves.</b>

1.2 The outturn for 2022/23 was a deficit of £37k. However support from the reserve was budgeted at £97k and only £37k was required so £60k was able to be retained in the reserves to support future years or alternative spending. Overall the service performed within the budget parameters.

### 1.3 Budget for 2023/24

	Details	BUDGET 23/24
1	Salaries - NBBC - New HEART posts	759,928
2	Salaries - NBBC	164,291
3	Salaries - NWBC	40,027
4	Salaries - RBC	43,533
5	Salaries - WCC	502,004
6	Salaries - Warwick	41,816
7	Salaries - Stratford	40,329
8	<b>Salary related costs</b>	<b>1,591,928</b>
9	Training Costs	8,484
10	Flare licenses (ferret)	718
11	Travel and subsistence	2,800
12	Protective Clothing	2,040
13	Equipment - New & Maint	1,000
14	External IT support	19,590
15	API Links for new Civica	9,050
16	Printing and Stationary	500
17	Broadband connection WDC	700
18	Postage	1,500
19	Mobile Telephones	3,920
20	Advertising and promotions	4,000
21	<b>Running costs</b>	<b>54,302</b>
22	Contribution to NBBC original funding overhead arrangements	68,200
23	NBBC recharged costs - IT , insurance, finance and accommod	34,323
24	<b>Contributions</b>	<b>102,523</b>
25	<b>TOTAL EXPENDITURE</b>	<b>1,748,753</b>
26	Fee income - based on 70 % expenditure of expected capital bu	-614,974
27	Contribution from reserve for shortfall in fees	-50,910
28	Contribution from reserve for Staff	-18,757
29	Salary contribution - NBBC	-164,291
30	Salary contribution - NWBC	-40,027
31	Salary contribution - RBC	-43,533
32	Salary contribution - WDC	-41,816
33	Salary contribution - SDC	-40,329
34	Salary contribution - WCC	-502,004
35	In kind support	-68,200
36	Loss of Grant contribution*	84,093
37	Contribution from WCC for HAO appointed by HEART	-24,659
38	WCC Home safety check income - WCC strategic commission	-35,545
39	HRS funding	-152,000
40	Contribution from Public Health - all	-35,800
41	<b>TOTAL INCOME</b>	<b>-1,748,753</b>
42	<b>NET (SURPLUS)/ DEFICIT on shared service (TO BE SHARED ACROSS PARTNERS/RESERVE)</b>	<b>0</b>

1.4 The budget for 2023/24 was agreed during the year and is reproduced in the table above. The budget includes further support from reserves for this 2023/24. At the start of 2023/24 there is residual reserve (after in year contributions from reserve) of £97,340 should there be an adverse out turn.

#### 1.5 Capital Allocation 23/24

	<b>Grant Allocation 2023/24</b>	<b>Expected Additional Allocation</b>	<b>Total</b>
	£	£	£
<b>Nuneaton and Bedworth BC</b>	1,652,119	144,164	1,796,283
<b>Rugby BC</b>	717,236	62,586	779,822
<b>North Warwickshire BC</b>	794,560	69,333	863,893
<b>Warwick DC</b>	999,427	87,210	1,086,637
<b>Stratford BC</b>	961,444	83,895	1,045,339
<b>Total</b>	<b>5,124,786</b>	<b>447,189</b>	<b>5,571,975</b>

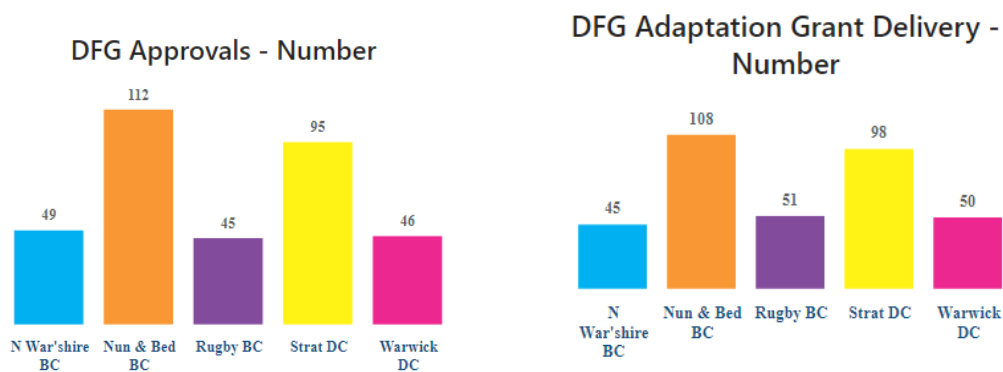
1.6 The capital allocations for 2023/24 are identical to the 2022/23 allocations. However it has been stated that there will be additional funding over the next 2 years from the Department of Health and Social Care. This will be capital allocations. The expected allocations are shown in the table above. This would represent a 9% increase on the previous year.

## 2 Service Performance

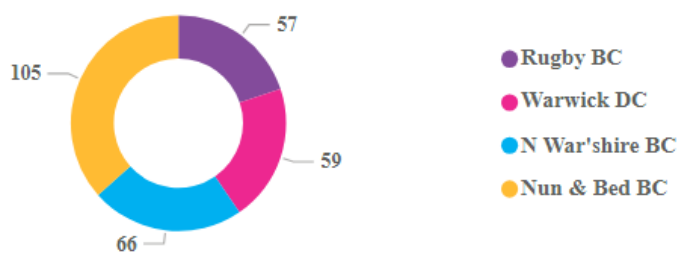
2.1 The following charts and data relate to the performance of the service across the majority of its services during the financial year. The final quarterly report provides more depth which has been shared with each partner member of HEART.

## 2.2 Grants

The service provides a range of grants funded via the DFG capital allocations and delivered under the Warwickshire shared Housing Financial Assistance Policy.



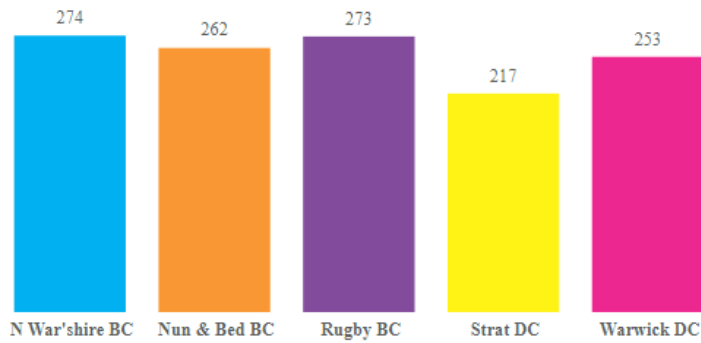
## LA Referrals Made - Number



2.3 In total the number of referrals for council adaptations and the number of DFG approvals made by the team was 631. DFG's in the private sector amounted to 347 with 284 referrals for Council Housing.

The service completed 355 DFG's within the year.

### Average End to End Times - Calendar Days



2.4 End to end times measure the time it takes from the enquiry to the service to when DFG works have been completed. The process is complex and requires assessments of needs and of the property and against the qualifying criteria for DFG's. The quotes and building works then need to be arranged on behalf of the customer. The end-to-end times vary widely due to the small and straightforward adaptations being compared against large and complex extensions and adaptations with either property difficulties or complex personal needs. Generally, the service operates on average within the same time frame across the 5 local authority areas.

Work Type Group	Case Count Works
Stairlift	98
Ramp	27
Level Access Shower	234
Extensions & Conversion (Adults)	22
Extensions & Conversion (Children)	6
Other	624

The service delivered 234 level access showers, 98 stairlifts and 28 extensions or conversions.

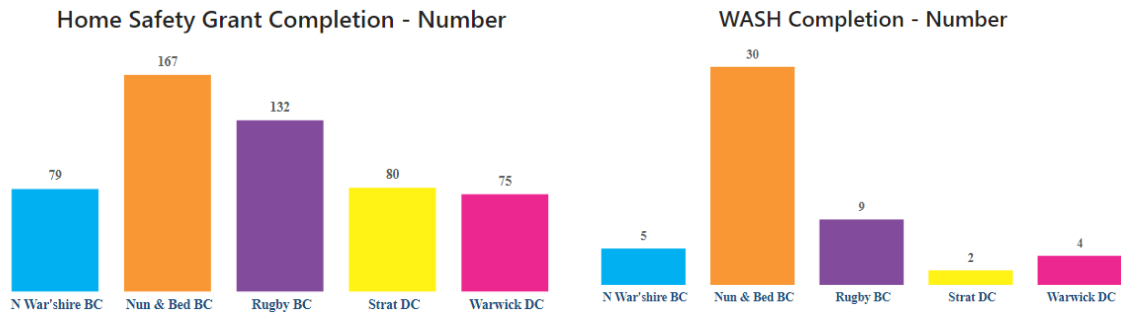




Level Access Shower Room funded through HEART with accessible wash basin and WC.



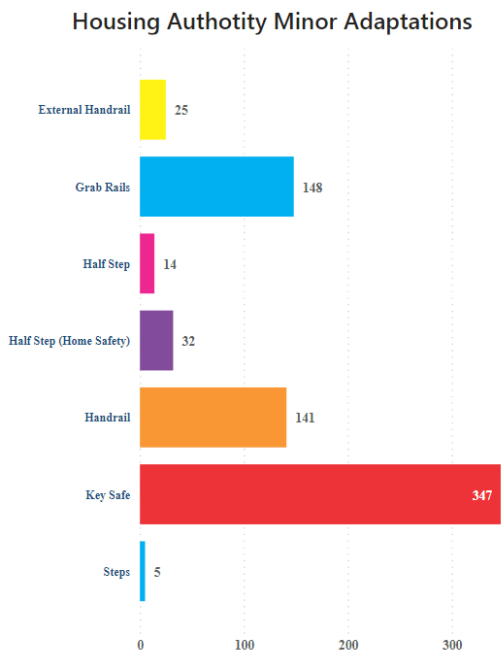
HEART funded access ramp and low threshold door.



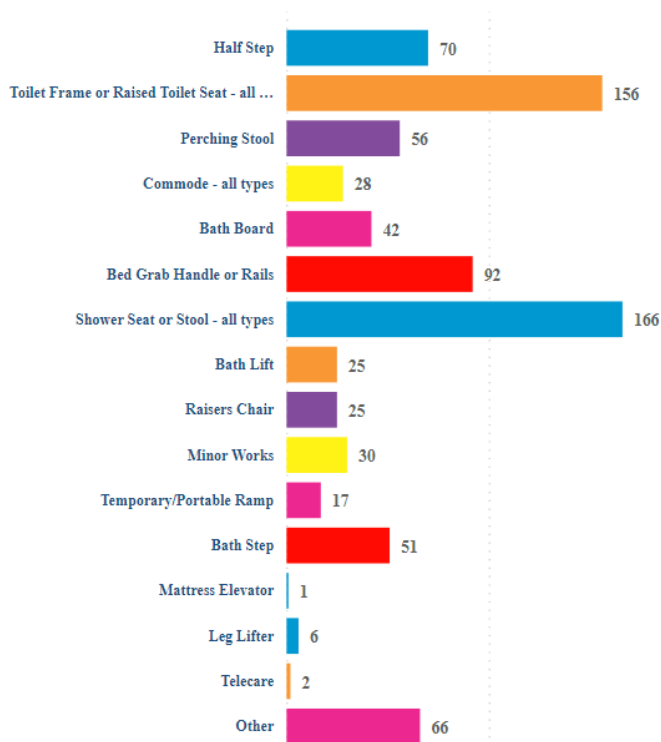
2.5 533 Home safety Grants were completed providing the minor adaptation described in the chart below.

2.6 50 Warm and Safer Homes Grants were completed removing 58 Category 1 hazards:

- Excess Cold: 35
- Damp and Mould: 12
- Personal Hygiene: 3
- Structural Collapse: 4
- Lighting: 1
- Electrical Hazards: 1

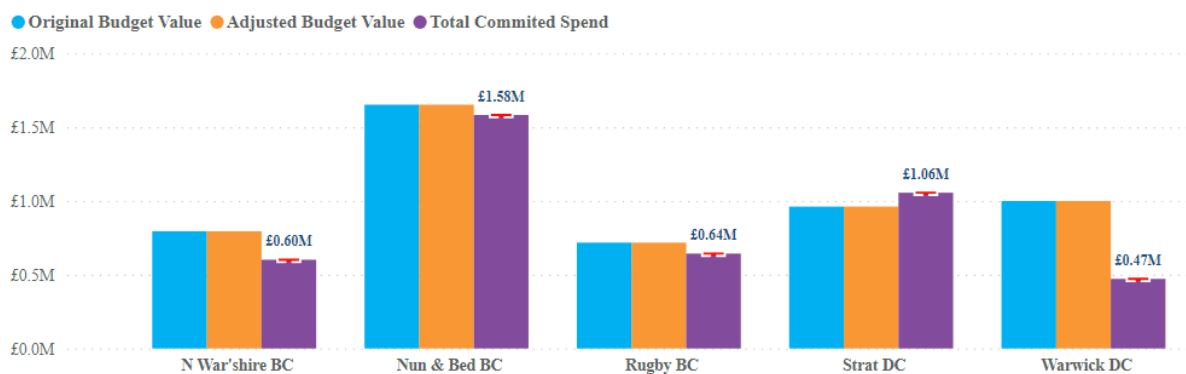


## Social Care Equipment Provided



2.7 Being a multi-agency service HEART provides equipment from the Warwickshire County Council Integrated Community Equipment Service. We provided the equipment described above either as a stand-alone solution or in combination with other forms of assistance.

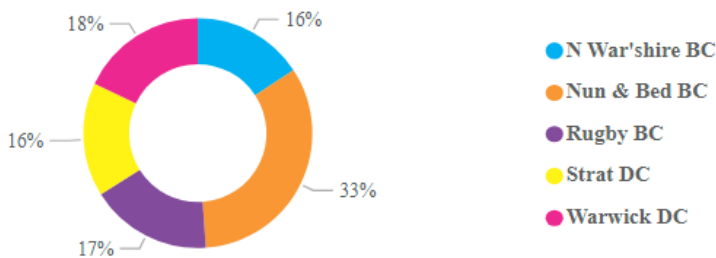
## Budget Management



2.8 There was a slight over allocation of budget in Stratford-on-Avon District Council whilst over councils realised a slightly lower allocation than the budget. Warwick District Council provides a unique challenge in the take up of grants. It is hoped a revised Financial Assistance Policy will help to increase take up. Overall the service allocated £4.35m from the £5.1m allocation.

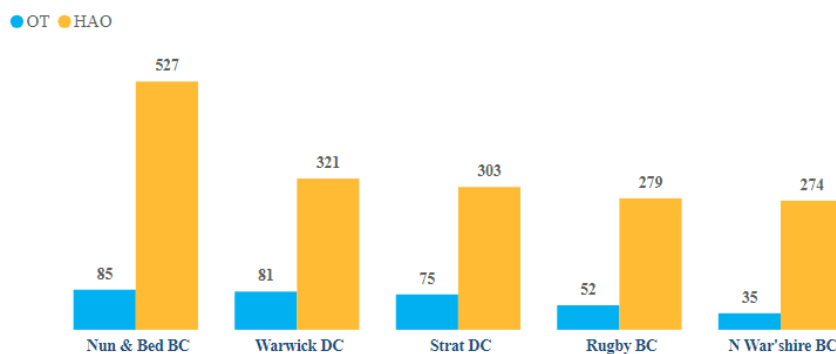
Local Authority	Enq Rec Q1	Enq Rec Q2	Enq Rec Q3	Enq Rec Q4	Enquiries Received
Nun & Bed BC	305	304	267	342	1218
Warwick DC	169	168	127	193	657
Rugby BC	142	170	151	168	631
Strat DC	154	148	128	160	590
N War'shire BC	145	148	143	142	578

## Enquiries Received by Local Authority



- 2.9 Demand for the service and therefore new cases produced by the service totalled 3674 during the year. This is 30% higher than in 2018/19. Roughly the new cases for all authorities were equal except for Nuneaton and Bedworth where demand is roughly double. This reflects the allocations made by central government each year.

## Completed assessments



- 2.10 Out Housing Assessment Officers carried out 1704 Home Environment Assessments relating to our Warwickshire residents ability to manage within their homes. Occupational Therapist carried out 328 Care Act Assessments.

## 2.11 Benchmarking – Foundations and Best Practice Guidance

- 2.12 Foundations: The National Co-ordinating Body for Disabled Facilities Grants and Home Improvement Agency in England, carry out some benchmarking

activities within the sector. In addition the Best Practice Guidance provides some targets for completing disabled facilities grants.

The best practice guidance provides the following targets for end to end times:

Type	Working Days	Calendar Days	Months
Urgent & Simple	55	77	2
Non-Urgent and Simple	130	182	6
Urgent & Complex	130	182	6
Non-Urgent & Complex	180	252	8.5

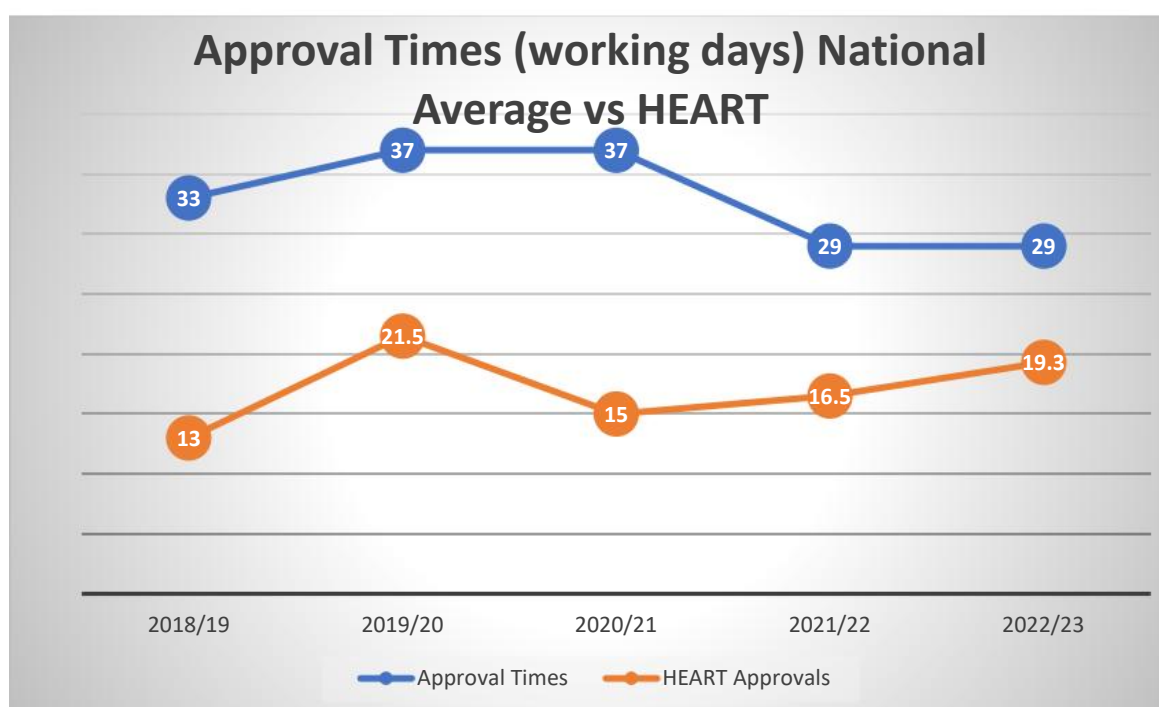
2.13 HEART achieved an average time of 252 days for all of our adaptations which corresponds with the non-urgent and complex time scale.

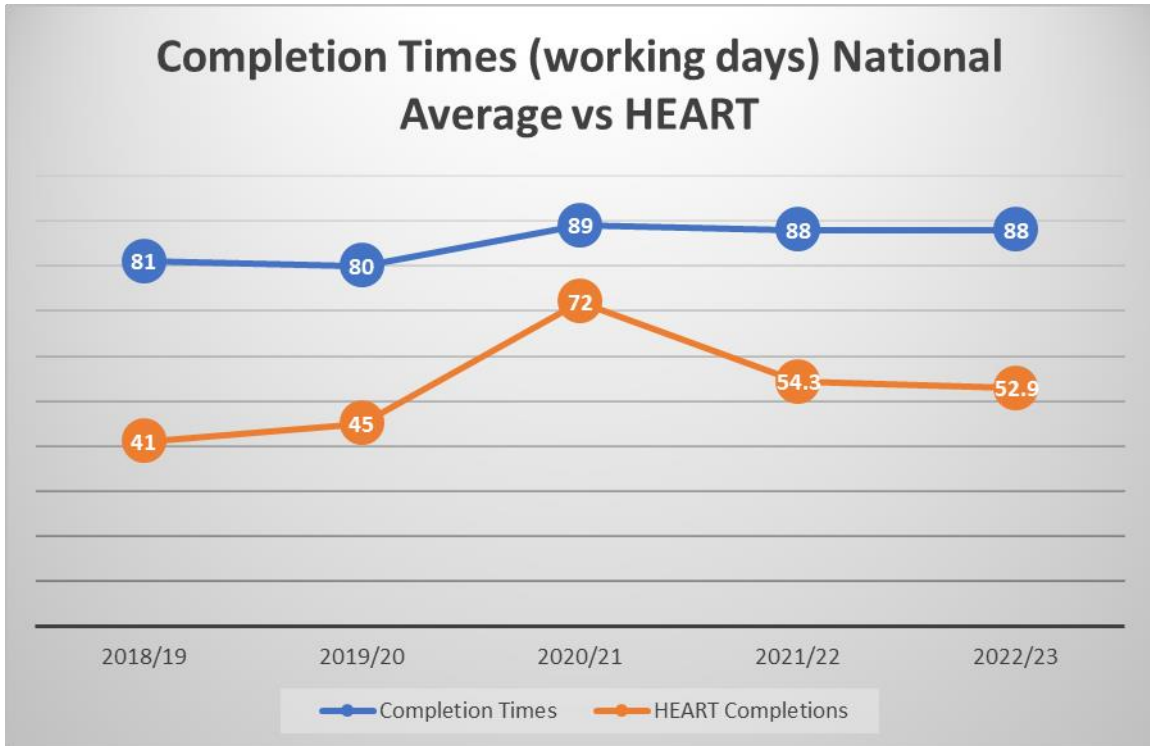
Single adaptation types took an average of:

Stairlifts 162 calendar days.

Showers 220 calendar days

Minor adaptations through the home safety grant took on average 49 days from enquiry to approval.





2.14 The above two charts compared HEART with the national average as collated by Foundations. Please note the national averages for 2022/23 are not yet available and so the previous year figure has been repeated.

HEART performs well against both grant approval times and works completions times.

### 3 Achievements and Challenges

#### 3.1 IT Replacement

During the whole of 2022/23 the service has been working to implement a new IT system. Civica Cx was chosen as it provided consistencies with, the current IT system whilst having vastly improved functionality. Nuneaton and Bedworth as the Host was also implementing Cx across its regulatory services and parallel projects were in place reducing the need for HEART to go it alone with its own system.

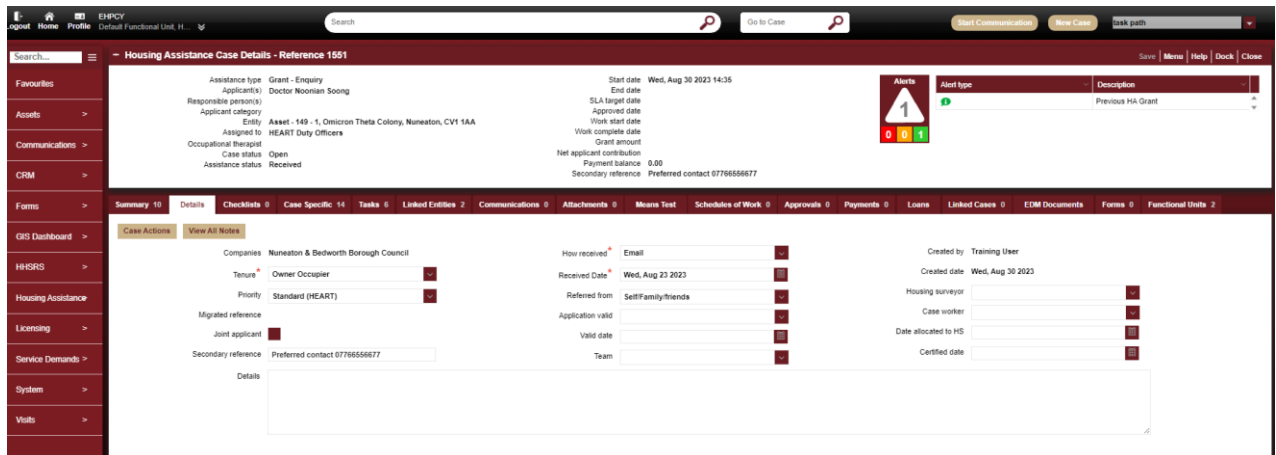
- 3.2 Resources were allocated to the project and external expertise was acquired to push forward the development and configuration of the new system.
- 3.3 Whilst Civica Cx is provided as a bare bones system it needs a large amount of “localisation” to run the processes and procedures that are bespoke to any particular service.
- 3.4 Whilst the processes in HEART are well established, they needed to be dissected and re-engineered to take advantage of new capabilities and then built within the Cx system.

DFG Pathway within Cx using tasks, milestones, communications and automatic decisions to progress along the correct pathway.



- 3.5 For a small team this was a major challenge as there was no internal experience of designing and configuring IT systems, everything had to be learned. By the end of March 2023, the system has been configured to where

it could be tested by team members and to consider whether User Acceptance Criteria could be met.



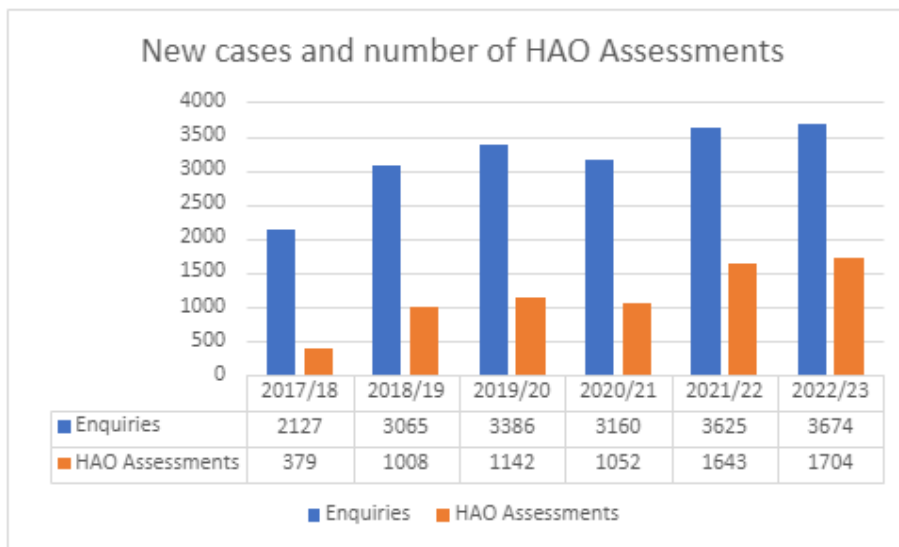
**Fig: Screenshot of the test Cx system.**

3.5 A staff training programme and implementation phased plan has been designed for 2023/24.

### 3.6 Demand and Capacity

3.7 In 2020/221 an external business consultant examined the service and determined that additional resources were required to meet in year demand. Whilst the service has sufficient capital resources, it requires additional revenue to increase capacity.

Demand for services has also been increasing over the years:





3.8 Therefore, the challenge remains with how to meet increasing demand. At the end of the year, waiting lists were increasing, partly due to increased demand and partly due to the Cx implementation which is utilising team resources.

Whilst capacity issues were forecast, it will remain a challenge to reduce the waiting lists especially if additional resources are not deployed.

### 3.9 New Performance Report

A new performance report was considered by Board and commissioned during the year. The service worked with an external data specialist to create a report that is largely automatically produced based on the agreed metrics. It makes use of Power Bi and provides a very comprehensive report on a quarterly basis. This allows partners and Board members to receive detailed data concerning the service, both holistically and bespoke to their authority.



Fig: Quarterly Performance Report Headings.

3.10 The report is likely to be one of the most comprehensive across the sector as it pulls together the total end to end process information and outputs from the service from social care equipment to extensions, and new cases to team assessments.

3.11 A future challenge will be to re-create the report during the Cx implementation project using the new database and reporting methods. Again, the service

intends to work with the data specialist to facilitate this development and any new functionality the system enables.

### **3.12 New Customer Satisfaction Survey.**

During the year Rugby Borough Council assisted the service by updating and developing a new survey for customers of the service. The previous survey was resource intensive and was in the original form from 2016/17. The new survey will involve digital methods as well as direct customer interactions. It has also been simplified.

Continuing with support from Rugby, it will launch in the first quarter of 2023/24 and become part of the quarterly reporting process.

### **3.13 Agreement on HR processes for HAO Staff**

The shared service has seconded employees from each of the partners with Housing Assessment Officers employed by each of the District and Borough Councils. This causes problems in terms of managing through diverse systems and processes across the 6 organisations for example 6 different sickness processes. As part of a move to streamline how this operates an HR Officers Group have been working to agree where the processes and systems can be harmonised. This will make it more efficient for line managers to provide management support to their team.

3.15 Whilst an outline of the streamlined processes has been agreed, the next step will be to implement this across the partnership, using the respective change management processes.

### **3.16 Agreement to extend the Partnership.**

3.17 The 5-year term of the partnership agreement was extended by 1 year for 2022-2023. During the year considerable work was undertaken to refresh the Business Case and the Partnership Agreement to take the partnership forward for a further 5 years. All partners decided to remain within the partnership.

3.18 This will provide a firm basis on which to develop and enhance the service, and likely respond to national and local challenges and opportunities over the next 5 years.

3.19 The unique nature of the partnership, bringing together 6 different local authorities under the direction of shared Board of partners across the health, housing and social care economy for Warwickshire has been recognised in reviews and best practice.

## Disabled Facilities Grant Delivery: Guidance for Local Authorities in England:

Local authorities should consider using a single, integrated team to handle the whole adaptation journey from first contact to completion of the works. A joint team, including both housing and social care professionals, overcomes the frustrations faced by clients when their case is passed between different organisations. There is emerging evidence that this more person-centred way of working reduces timescales and drop-out rates.

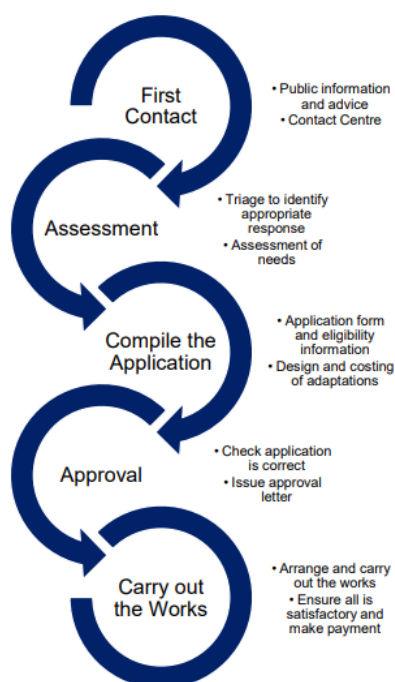


Fig: Disabled Facilities Grant Delivery: Guidance for Local Authorities in England: Elements of the DFG Process.

3.20 The HEART Partnership has been designed and will continue to meet the above criteria as set out in the Best Practice guidance delivering all elements of the DFG pathway and more.

### 3.21 Drafting of new Financial Assistance Policy

3.22 The current Housing Financial Assistance Policy was adopted in 2017 and was a further flagship achievement as it harmonised the diverse policies that existed within Warwickshire. It allowed the service to deliver an equitable service to all Warwickshire residents and removed variance in processes. As national capital allocations have increased over time and experience has

provided practical ideas to improve the policy, a new policy was drafted during 2022-2023.

- 3.23 This included consultation with the HEART delivery team and with the Housing Authorities Private Sector Housing Managers to ensure representation across the housing partners.
- 3.24 It is well known within the sector that the national means test is outdated and that the Government intends to review and update. It is also recognised that the maximum grant limits are not adequate.
- 3.25 Whilst Housing Authorities have discretion to set their own policies and thus the financial assistance provided, the Partnership has taken this opportunity to further review and update the policy to address some of the national constraints. The new policy will be offered for consideration by Housing Authorities during 2023.

### **3.27 Review of Service against best practice guidance**

- 3.28 Following the publication of the Best Practice Guidance March 2022, the service took the opportunity to carry out a self-assessment against the guidance to identify:
- Where it exceeds the guidance
  - Where it meets the guidance
  - Where we could take action to improve to meet the guidance.

- 3.29 This was a major piece of work and team members from all levels were included to achieve a comprehensive review.

The assessment recognises the very good service provides by the Partnership and teams but also identified improvements that can be prioritised and progressed to further enhance the service.

It is intended that the finding will be reported to the partnership Board along with recommendations to include in the improvement work plan.

## **4 Planned Future Activity**

### **4.1 Implementation of Cx System**

- 4.2 The new year will be dominated by the implementation of the Cx IT system. The 1<sup>st</sup> Quarter will largely consist of configuration, testing, reconfiguration

and training. There is a target “go live” date for new enquires to be entered on the system scheduled for 1<sup>st</sup> June 2023.

- 4.3 At that stage the service will be using both the old and the new system with phased go live for different team when they will transfer new allocations on to the Cx system.
- 4.4 Training manuals, operation manuals and configuration manuals will also be necessary to ensure that the process is standardised across users.
- 4.5 As the system is in its infancy there will be changes and improvements within future released which should allow the service to improve how it uses the system. However adequate time and resources to system management will need to be provided and system champions developed to allow for continued improvement. This will be an ongoing work stream within the service which will be necessary to enable the service and the public to take advantage of new and evolving capabilities.
- 4.6 On top of the Cx system, a whole new reporting system will need to be implemented and whilst the expertise needs to be developed it will allow much better data analysis and reporting than can currently be achieved. Reporting capability will likely reduce in the meantime whilst implementation take place especially as data will be contained on two distinct system.

Resources will be stretched further during this period, and it is expected that performance will be hindered as a result.

#### **4.7 Implementation of new Financial Assistance Policy**

- 4.8 If adopted by partner Housing Authorities, then the new Financial Assistance Policy will need to be implemented. New and improved forms of assistance will be provided, and the systems and public facing information will need to be amended to deliver the new policy. Teams will need to be trained and supported to provide consistent service delivery.
- 4.9 The Cx system configuration will need to be amended along with the reporting requirements.

This will be a major challenge and likely take place in the second half of 2023-2024.

#### **4.10 Expected Additional Capital Funding for 2023 and 2024.**

- 4.11 On the 4<sup>th</sup> April 2023 the Government published the policy paper: **Next steps to put People at the Heart of Care.**

**Contained within the paper was the following commitment and expectations:**

The [Disabled Facilities Grant](#) (DFG) already provides funding for individuals to make substantial adaptations to their homes - with around 50,000 grants every year. But we need to complement this with agile, adaptive services to provide more modest interventions and assistance in quicker time.

Therefore, from spring 2023 we will be investing an additional £102 million over 2 years to increase funding and support for people to adapt or maintain their homes. This new money will be distributed as a capital top up to the £573 million per year DFG funding and managed in the same way through the BCF.

Local housing authorities already have flexibilities to use their DFG funding to fund supplementary services that are agile and help people stay independent, support hospital discharge and make minor adaptations. There are lots of examples of local authorities already doing this effectively - for example, through the commissioning and delivery of Home Improvement Agencies. We want to encourage local authorities to use this additional funding to provide more of these supplementary services, with the support of the recently updated [guidance for local authorities](#) to better assist their residents. This will better ensure safety, warmth and timely access to the right adaptations and small alterations.

- 4.12 If allocations are in line with the DFG allocations, then Warwickshire will be due to receive approximately £450,000 for each of 2023 and 2024. It is expected that the Government will review the impact of the additional funding.
- 4.14 As this will be distributed as a capital grant the Partnership and service will need to consider how best to spend this extra funding in addition to the yearly allocations. Whilst the new Financial Assistance Policy could help with higher limits proposed relating to home safety grants, we will need to consider streamlining, targeting and delivery.

**4.15 Exploration of the new Foundations self-serve options for customers**

Foundations, the national co-ordinating body for Disabled Facilities Grants in England has developed a self-serve portal for customers to enable customers to self-assess their homes to see how well it meets their needs.

[Housing Adaptation \(adaptmyhome.org.uk\)](https://adaptmyhome.org.uk)

It then places customers in touch with their local agency delivering adaptations.

- 4.16 The work programme includes exploring the portal to determine whether it can act as a access channel to the service and the confidence we could place on customers carrying out self-assessments or whether they require secondary assessments.
- 4.17 The outcome could provide valuable knowledge for the service and the sector in general and if positive provide links to the self-assessment on our own web site and promotional material.

**4.18 Service Structure review**

- 4.19 The service structure has remained largely unchanged since inception and now 6 years later with higher demand and knowledge of the type of cases, the service structure is due for consideration. In 2020 there was the addition of a Duty team to process the teams' enquiries and referrals and carry out screening assessments, offer advice, referrals, and signpost to other services.
- 4.20 Should new revenue become available to support additional employees then the structure should be scalable to allow demand to be met. Therefore, it is intended to reconsider the structure and the service needs to enable future developments over the next 5 years.