



Householder permitted development rights

Directorate for the Built Environment
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Introduction

Sense Scotland is a leader in the field of communication and innovative support services for people who are marginalised because of challenging behaviour, health care issues and the complexity of their support needs. The organisation offers a range of services for children, young people and adults whose complex support needs are caused by deafblindness or sensory impairment, physical, learning or communication difficulties. Our services are designed to provide continuity across age groups and we work closely with families and colleagues from health, education, social work and housing. This breadth and depth of approach to service delivery helps us take a wider perspective on the direction and implementation of new policies.

We are pleased to provide brief comments on the proposals for permitted development rights on ramps and handrails. These are developments which have profound impact on disabled people being able to get in and out of the house safely and easily. We have known of disabled people having to rely on informal carers to literally haul them in and out of houses which have stairs while they wait for planning permission. This is unsafe and undignifying.

As a provider of services to disabled people, we too have experienced delays in getting planning permission for ramps and restrictive conditions being applied.

- Residential care homes: a lengthy process was applied to planning applications in relation to ramps and handrails at two properties some years ago. Both of these properties were in conservation areas. The ramps and handrails were needed to meet the changing needs of occupants. For one property, we had to use extremely expensive construction materials, rather than a cheaper alternative option, (other than as a temporary measure), of a ramp which could have been easily removed at a later date. For the other, we were required to build a ramp with a return to fit within a specified space making it much more difficult for people in wheelchairs to use, and almost impossible to use independently.
- Supported housing: We provide a range of support services to people living in their own homes. This can include identifying appropriate housing association property, liaising on adaptation required, fitting out, through to the provision of 24 hour support services. External adaptations are often required to make a property accessible for the new tenant. Delays in planning permission inevitably delays occupation.

Process delays often mean that disabled people are disadvantaged. It is particularly difficult where there is a real urgency for the adaptation required. Inability to make the required adaptation may lead to inappropriate admissions to residential care services.

The planning application system appears unable to proceed at anything other than one pace, for many too slowly. We accept that there needs to be regulations and standards which apply to erecting external ramps and handrails, and some formal process need to sit behind this. Any measures that can be put in place to enable disabled householders to make sensible adaptations to their homes promptly, and thereby prevent avoidable admissions to care, would be welcomed.