

Adaptations Policy

Linked strategies	Transforming Our Future
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Policy Owner	Head of Housing & Support Services

1 Policy Statement

- 1.1 We recognise the diverse needs of our customers and their family members who have disabilities. We will work closely with our Local Authority Partners, Health Professionals and other relevant agencies to make sure there is a coordinated approach towards adaptations, supporting independent living and promoting the efficient and effective use of resources.
- 1.2 We will ensure that major adaptation requests are subject to a full assessment of the individual needs and requirements. We will support our customers to access specialist assessments for their individual needs and requirements.
- 1.3 We have no statutory duty to provide adaptations for customers; however, we will meet legal and regulatory requirements, namely The Equalities Act 2010, Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 as amended by the Regulatory Reform Order 2002, and the Regulator of Social Housings' Home Standard.
- 1.4 We will endeavour to meet all commitments relating to adaptations as set out by the Transfer Agreement, namely the provision of a budget for undertaking adaptations, the amount of which will be no less than £150,000 per annum and uplifted by RPI each year.

2 Scope

- 2.1 Adaptions will only be undertaken on tenanted homes or in communal areas for the benefit of our tenants and/or family members living in their home. Adaptations will not be carried out in any property, where:
- A Right to Buy application has been made
 - There is a Right to Acquire Application with a live status
 - It is temporary accommodation
 - The layout and/or location of the current property make it unsuitable
 - The works would negatively impact the future desirability of the property
- 2.2 For individuals who are not the named tenant on the tenancy agreement, they must be registered as living at the property for council tax purposes, and if aged over 18 years, they should be registered on the electoral role for that address. Individuals who have no recourse to public funds will not be eligible for

assistance under the terms of this policy.

- 2.3 In cases where a child is disabled, and the parents are separated, adaptation works will usually only be completed at the property of principal residence (normally the residence of the parent who is in receipt of child benefit for that child).

3 Definitions

- 3.1 **Adaptions** are alterations or additions to any aspect of a dwelling to make it easier or safer for use by a disabled person.

- 3.2 A person is formally defined as having a **disability** under the Equality Act 2010 if they have a 'physical or mental impairment and the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on (the person's) ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.' NB: a person may be eligible for help under this policy even if they are not registered as disabled, upon recommendation by an Occupational Therapist.

- 3.3 **Minor works** are classed as works that cost less than £1000 and typically may include such items as grab rails, shower seats and plinths to raise white goods.

Major works are classed as adaptations that cost in excess of £1000 and may involve structural alterations such as level access showers, stairlifts, ramps and extending properties.

4 Policy Principles

- 4.1 Through the delivery of our adaptions we will:

- Ensure compliance with legislative and regulatory requirements
- Secure value for money, making the most effective and efficient use of resources
- Make best use of our stock
- Work effectively with partner organisations and external contractors
- Find the most appropriate, practical and cost-effective solution to meeting the needs of our disabled and vulnerable customers.
- Help customers access financial assistance through maximisation of grants and welfare benefits

- Deliver a customer focussed service, ensuring that customers are aware of what works we will do, and which works are the responsibility of customers.
- Expect customers who receive major adaptations to remain in that property for a minimum of five years from completion of works.
- Be open and transparent with customers where the provision of major works will increase their rent
- Ensure that decisions not to proceed with adaptations are objectively reasonable and considers all the circumstances.

4.2 Allocations

4.2.1 We will actively seek to understand any specific needs in respect of adaptations to ensure that the correct standard and type of home is offered. We will not offer a tenancy if a property is unsuitable or if it cannot be adapted reasonably and practically to meet the needs of the proposed new tenant.

4.2.2 We will support a transfer to more appropriate accommodation where it is the most practical and appropriate way of meeting the customer's needs.

4.2.3 We may grant management transfers to ensure the best use of our housing stock (i.e. offering priority to customers who have an immediate need for an adapted property or conversely occupy adapted properties which may be better suited to others.)

Where we grant a management move, we will remove the priority status where we believe there is no longer an immediate need, or a suitable offer of accommodation is refused. We will treat such cases on their merits.

4.2.4 Applicants who are seeking a transfer or mutual exchange will each be considered on their individual merit. This will include whether the applicant is requesting to move into a property which is not suitable or less suitable for their needs, in which case they may not be eligible for assistance under this policy.

4.2.5 Customers who are applying for works to their current home and are also registered for a transfer or mutual exchange to another property, would need to withdraw their application to move before works will be carried out on their current home.

- 4.2.6 Where major works, such as a structural extension of the property or multiple internal adaptations are undertaken, the Association may prioritise applicants who require such adaptations at subsequent lettings.
- 4.2.7 Where voids have existing adaptations in place, we will remove these as part of the void works.
- 4.2.8 The only exception to this, is where high value or bespoke items (such as a through floor lift) is in situ and may benefit a customer on the waiting list. In cases such as these, a report will be obtained by a qualified occupational therapist to determine suitability.

4.3 Minor Works

4.3.1 We may fund minor works up to the value of £1000. This threshold is likely to cover the following:

- Replacement of taps with lever taps
- Replacement of door handles with adapted handles
- Additional locks to doors or windows
- Window winders
- Installation of handrails
- Enlargement of door openings and or dropping of door thresholds
- Provision of ramps (which require minimal building work)
- Installation of non-slip flooring
- Provision of low temperature radiators, boxing in of pipework
- Installation of paths and paving (which require low level building work)
- Repositioning of electrical accessories, fuse boards/consumer units
- Repositioning of previously installed equipment
- Installation of over bath showers
- Installation of additional lighting/external lighting
- Payment of equipment service contract costs (stairlifts for example)

This list is not exhaustive

4.3.2 Requests for Minor adaptations are not usually subject to prioritisation; however, some may be marked as urgent to allow for hospital discharge or similar situations, and these requests will be fast-tracked.

4.4 Major Works

- 4.4.1 For adaptations we estimate will be in excess of £1000, we will advise the customer that they will need to seek an Occupational Therapist (OT) assessment. If a customer requires assistance in arranging an OT assessment, a member of our staff will help.
- 4.4.2 All requests for major adaptations such as level access showers, through floor lifts, stair lifts or multiple adaptations will be directed for Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) consideration. On receipt of an OT assessment requiring major works, the local authority will carry out a home adaptation assessment, and a financial assessment. In instances where DFG funding is agreed, we may agree undertake additional 'cosmetic' works (such as tiling and painting) to make good damage caused by major works.
- 4.4.3 Where customers fail to qualify for DFG or other grants, we may consider sharing the cost of the works with the customer. Each case will be assessed on its own merits.
- 4.4.4 Consent for major works may be withheld where any of the following circumstances apply.
- The customer is unwilling to move to a property that already has the necessary adaptations and meets their needs
 - The customer has agreed to move to a more suitable dwelling but has refused reasonable offers of accommodation.
 - The property is not suitable to the customer's needs. This includes longer term needs whereby we believe that following the major adaptation, the customer will still require alternative accommodation
 - The customer is under occupying the property. In such cases we may agree to the works in a property more suitable to the customer's needs.
 - The work is not feasible or is inappropriate to the type of dwelling (for example we will not generally fit level access showers in flats above the ground floor.)
 - The work would affect communal areas and we do not have 75% agreement from residents following consultation
 - The work would extend beyond the curtilage of the property rented by the customer
 - The customer is in breach of their tenancy agreement or is subject to a possession order from a County Court. (This will not automatically preclude an applicant; as each case will be looked at and decided on its own merits)

- The work requested is not covered by DFG funding.

The above list is not exhaustive, there may be other reasons for why requests for major adaptations are refused. Each case will be assessed on its merits and we will make our reasons for refusal clear to the customer.

4.5 Post works

- 4.5.1 We will inspect all major adaptations and a proportion of minor works on completion to ensure that the work has carried out to standard and to check that the customer is satisfied with the work.
- 4.5.2 We will review the rent payable / service charges for all properties where major works have been completed and charge the revised rent from the point of completion of works.
- 4.5.3 Once installed, we will maintain adaptations or equipment. However, where major adaptations originally funded by DFG require replacement, we will support the customer to claim for a second DFG to fund the works.
- 4.5.4 Once works are complete, we will send a satisfaction survey to the customer to seek their views on the service received, including any improvements that could be made
- 4.5.5 Wherever possible we will recycle major adaptations such as stairlifts.

5 Support For Carers

- 5.1 As a signatory to 'Harry's Pledge', we support those who need care, and those who provide it.
- 5.2 As such, we commit to consider the needs of those receiving care and their families (including carers) to ensure that their home remains accessible whilst providing independence and dignity.

6 Implications for Customers

- 6.1 Customer data (including some sensitive information relating to health and disability) is collected as part of this policy.

- 6.2 A budget for adaptations is set prior to the start of each financial year to meet our obligations to the Transfer Agreement. Once this budget is spent further requests for adaptations will be deferred to the following financial year.
- 6.3 In cases where customers request changes to communal areas that constitute 'reasonable adjustments' (as defined by The Equalities Act 2010) we will consult with the other customers and / or leaseholders that the proposed changes would affect as this may have a financial impact on them.
- 6.4 In making our decision to proceed or not with the changes to communal areas we will consider the views of other residents and leaseholders alongside other factors such as cost and feasibility.

If 75% of the customers affected agree to the proposals, then we will take this as agreement for the works to continue. However, we will base our final decision on a range of factors as set out above.

6.5 Repairs to Stairlifts

- 6.5.1 In cases where a stairlift has been funded via a disabled facilities grant, we shall take on the obligation for the servicing and repair once the warranty expires.
- 6.5.2 We shall endeavour to undertake an annual service visit to maintain the condition of the stairlift, once the warranty has expired.
- 6.5.3 We shall set aside an annual budget for these repairs and services. The budget for repairs shall be managed by the Support Services Manager, and the budget for servicing will be managed by the Asset Compliance Officer.
- 6.5.4 If the cost of a repair is not economical to pursue, then we shall support the customer to make a further DFG application to fund a replacement (these will be prioritised in as much as practicable)

7 Information Sharing & Confidentiality

- 7.1 We will store information about adaptations on our asset management database. Access to this database is restricted to staff working in the Asset Management team
- 7.2 Contractors who work with the Local Authority will be required to sign data sharing forms.

8 Service Development

8.1 Information received from customer satisfaction surveys will be used to improve the service. Customers from our Asset Management and Development (AM&D) Panel will be consulted on changes to this policy.

9 Performance Management

9.1 We will make use of the following performance indicators to monitor and report on the effectiveness of the service. These will be reported (annually) to our Board and (quarterly) to the Asset Management and Development Panel (AM&D) and Executive Management Team (EMT)

- % of minor DFG's completed in target
- % of customers satisfied with adaptations

10 Responsibility and Decision Making

11.1 The table below illustrates the structure for responsibility and decision making in relation to this policy

Person Responsible	Scope
Head of Housing and Neighbourhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overall responsibility for ensuring that all activities are undertaken, and all performance measurements are met• Decision on case reviews for adaptation requests that exceed £15,000
Support Services Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Responsible for the day-to-day application and adherence to this policy• Preparing case reviews for consideration by HHSS
Asset Management Surveyor	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Completing all post inspections• Agreeing works to be undertaken with officers from the local authority where there is dispute

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaison with contractors undertaking major works
Neighbourhood Housing Officers / Independent Living Officers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Liaising with customers to provide excellent customer care and advice throughout the process.
Support Services Assistant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raising all minor adaptation requests • Updating databases with progress of applications and works • Carrying out satisfaction surveys • Maintain electronic files • Liaison with customers where minor works are undertaken

11 Review

- 11.1 This Policy will be reviewed every three years or in line with changes in legislation, whichever is the sooner. Updates or recommendations for changes will be presented to the SMT.

Associated Policies	Associated Procedures
Allocations Policy	Adaptations Procedure
	Procurement Procedure

