

# Aids and Adaptations Policy

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## 1. Purpose

This policy and procedure sets out clear criteria specifying the level of service we agree to provide in relation to:

- the aids and adaptations service;
- the standards that customers can expect;
- timescales for service delivery;
- the assistance and support we can offer;
- the way we will manage the service ensuring that value for money (VFM) is achieved.

## 2. Scope

This policy and procedure cover how we will manage the assessment and delivery of the aids and adaptations service to our tenants. The policy statement and procedure guide are designed to inform and guide staff and all Occupational Therapy (OT) services that will be assessing tenants of our homes.

## 3. Statement and aims

### 3.1 Statement

By providing an aids and adaptations service, we are committed to doing everything reasonably possible to ensure tenants and other permanent members of the household are adequately housed and to enable them to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible.

### 3.2 Aims

The aims of this policy are directly linked to our vision, values and strategic objectives in particular:

- To provide a service that supports our tenants and other permanent members of the household to live independently in their home
- To ensure that we make best use of our existing housing stock
- Ensure tenants and other permanent members of the household are aware of all the options open to them when accessing the aids and adaptations service
- Provide a decision-making process to deliver a cost effective and accessible aids and adaptations service.

## 4. Legislation

There is a range of legislation relating to the necessity for and delivery of aids and adaptations, the main ones being:

- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- NHS and Community Care Act 1990

## 5. Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

The aids and adaptations service is provided as an inclusive and individualised service open for all tenants and permanent members of the household. The service is provided with the aim of positively advancing equality of opportunity.

This service ensures that disabled people are able to maximise their independence and supports family life. We will endeavour to work with our tenants and their families, partners and contractors to innovate and provide unique solutions to aids and adaptations, which would benefit our vulnerable tenants.

We aim to treat all customers of the aids and adaptations service fairly and with respect. We have assessed the policy in relation to the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

## 6. Training and awareness

Training and awareness of this policy will be raised with all staff and published on our intranet system.

Tenants will be made aware of this policy through our website, social media, newsletters and information leaflets.

The external recommending OT service, in-house OT's and contractors involved directly in the delivery of this policy will receive training appropriate to their role.

## 7. Definition of aids and adaptations

For this guide we use the following definitions:

### 7.1 Aids

An aid is a piece of equipment which is portable and not permanently fixed in your home.

Suitable aids are identified during an assessment by a relevant Occupational Therapist (OT); this could be social services, health services, learning disabilities etc.

This equipment, where possible to do so, will be issued free of charge on a loan basis and is returned to us to be recycled when no longer required. An aid will always be considered as a first option before any major adaptations are recommended. Examples of aids include a perching stool, chair raisers, toilet seats/frames and bathing equipment.

### 7.2 Adaptations

An adaptation is the provision of fixed equipment and/or modification to the property, or associated land, where it has been recognised by an OT that an aid alone or specialised equipment, will no longer meet an identified need to enable tenants or other permanent members of the household to live independently and safely in their home.

There are two categories of adaptations:

- Minor adaptations or minor alterations – any requested or recommended works which costs less than £500 (ex VAT). This includes items such as grab rails, lever taps and stair rails. These adaptations can be requested through the repairs and maintenance service.
- Major adaptations – any recommended work which exceed the value of £500 (ex VAT). This includes items such as level access showers, wet rooms, stair lifts, over bath showers and the provision of door access ramps.

### 7.3 Who qualifies for aids and adaptations?

- We will normally only consider requests for aids and adaptations if the disabled/vulnerable person is the tenant or another permanent resident of the household or would be if the adaptation was done. Undertaking major adaptations to the physical structure of premises which will only fulfil a short term need or where the accommodation is of a temporary nature or offers only limited security may not be cost effective and may be refused. Any requests for assistance will be reviewed on a case by case basis.
- Non-permanent members of the household do not qualify for any adaptations and will be signposted to Sunderland Social Services
- We recognise that leaseholders have a significant legal interest in their homes and can decide who this can be passed on to. We will not fund aids and adaptations within their home or within the common parts. Such requests for assistance will be signposted to Sunderland Social Services

### 7.4 Fitting of specialised equipment

The provision of specialised equipment which is supplied and installed through the relevant OT service, and which requires fixing to the fabric of the property will require an external OT assessment and permission must be sought before the work can commence. If permission is granted, the installer must ensure that all health and safety procedures are followed.

### 7.5 Rental of straight track stairlifts

We will consider an external OT recommendation for the provision of rented straight track stair lifts (not curved) on a temporary basis (12 months which will be reassessed by the recommending OT during this period) for those waiting for suitable rehousing or with a terminal/palliative illness. Each case is considered on an individual basis with supporting medical evidence.

Tenants or permanent members of the household who wish to install their own rental stair lifts will need to seek permission from the organisation and a decision will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with our in-house OT service.

## 8. Funding

As a Council we are committed to providing an adaptations service. Funding would be met by the Council, but our budget is limited and will be managed to meet our legal obligations and ensure that priority is given to those in most need first.

The long-term future use of the property will also be considered when assessing Value for Money.

## 9. The aids and adaptations process

All requests from tenants and leaseholders or permanent members of the household for major adaptations will be received by the Housing Services Team.

**9.1** The Housing Services Team will confirm receipt of the request and seek to arrange an assessment through the Council's Occupational Therapists who will co-ordinate all assessments.

**9.2** Once the assessment is completed to the prescribed timescales by the Council's Occupational Therapies Team the recommended actions and adaptations will be considered by the Housing Services Team.

**9.3** Where it is recommended that the tenant does require an aid or adaptation the Housing Services Team will review and where deemed appropriate approved the installation.

**9.4** The required works will be ordered by the Housing Services Team, where minor works will be completed within 20 working days and standard major works within 40 working days.

**9.5** We will notify the recommending OT on the completion of the work. We will quality inspect at least 10% of these. This will increase to 100% for the large works adaptations.

## 10. Joint partnership panel

We recognise that every case that presents will be unique to each tenant and their circumstances. It may be necessary to engage with wider partners on developing and reaching the right solution for the tenant.

Where it is felt that a case has wider complex considerations relating to the tenants, the property or wider household needs, and simple aids and adaptations may not be the sole solution a wider partnership response may be needed. When this is necessary, the Housing Services Team will arrange for a Joint Partnership Panel to meet to review the case and discuss the options available in helping the tenant and their family.

The partners on the panel will reflect the nature and circumstances of each case but could include representatives from Occupational Therapist, the Housing Teams, Together For Children, Adult Social Care and any other relevant organisations.

## **11. Minor adaptations and minor alterations**

Minor adaptations are items such as additional stair rails, grab rails and lever taps. The target for completion of the work is 20 working days from date of notification and on a date and time to suit the tenant.

We will also consider installing minor alterations such as thermostatic radiator valves, safety film or safety glazing, window locks, thumb locks, the alteration of light fittings or additional sockets and external lighting. These works can be requested without requiring any Occupational Therapist assessment.

## **12. Major adaptations (between £500 and £10,000)**

Where major adaptations are recommended, our Technical Co-ordinator will consider and assess all works in line with the Occupational Therapist recommendations. By using our inhouse Building Services Team or securing an external contractor via three quotes we will undertake the required works to the property in line with recommendations.

With complex or exceptional cases that may need wider involvement and input from the Joint Partnership Panel we will consider all elements of the case and recommended action before proceeding. All solutions provided on complex cases will be assessed for value for money and appropriate from a property use point of view, if deemed acceptable all works will be arranged through the Technical Co-ordinator.

We aim to complete these works within 40 working days on receipt of the relevant Occupational Therapist recommendation. Our contractor will contact the tenant direct to arrange a survey appointment and arrange an installation date.

Sometimes major adaptations may involve buying specialist bespoke equipment such as curved stair lifts or may require planning or building regulation approval. In these cases, the completion of these works may take longer than the agreed timescales. However, if this is the case we will inform the tenant or other permanent member of the household or their appointed representative.

## **13. Major adaptations (between £10,001 and £30,000)**

For adaptations in this range the Occupational Therapist will advise the applicant at the assessment stage that no recommendation can be agreed before being approved by the Housing Services Team.

For major adaptations the recommendation must be deemed to be reasonable and practical and must meet the long-term health and wellbeing needs of the tenant and all other alternatives must be explored and discussed with the tenant e.g. alternative housing.

Where major works are approved by the Housing Services Team the Occupational Therapist will submit their recommendations to the Housing Services Team who will confirm this in writing to the tenant or other permanent member of the household receiving the works or their appointed representative.

## **14. Major adaptations (over £30,000)**

Major adaptations over £30,000 will only be undertaken in exceptional circumstances when no other alternative solutions or properties are available.

All cases that include major adaptations must be fully assessed and explored for wider more suitable solutions. If no other options are available then the major adaptation will be considered.

The full details of the case and recommended adaptations along with a full summary for the reasons why the adaptations at this level are required must be issued to the Senior Housing manager to review and then this must be further considered and approved by the Assistant Director of Housing.

## **15. Alternative solutions**

Where a decision is made not to authorise adaptations, we will work with the relevant Occupational Therapist and the tenant or other permanent member of the household or their appointed representative to look for alternative solutions to meet their needs; these options could be:

- Rehousing
- Alternative adaptations
- Tenants may also have the option to request permission to make alterations themselves (secure tenants only).

## **16. Ramps, drop kerbs and vehicle hard standings**

External ramps and vehicle hard standings are a major adaptation which can be installed following an assessment by an Occupational Therapist to help permanent wheelchair users, and where the wheelchair has been prescribed by Wheelchair Services (NHS). External ramps will be installed to meet (Part K and M of the building regulations) and are not for mobility scooter use.

We cannot provide dropped kerbs on adopted highways and the tenant will be signposted to the Council's Highways Department for information. The exception to this is where these are required to enable access to the provision of hard standings within the curtilage of the organisation's properties and in these circumstances the Housing Services Team will support enquiries for the tenant.

We will consider an Occupational Therapist recommendation for the provision of ramps where the tenant or other permanent member of the household is a wheelchair user and are not able to access and egress their home safely.

## **17. Mobility scooters and self-purchased wheelchairs**

We will not provide adaptations (e.g. ramps, vehicle hard standings, door alterations, path alterations, the provision of electrical charging points, sockets and storage facilities) for tenants or permanent members of the household with a mobility scooter or a self-purchased wheelchair.

Should a tenant wish to undertake their own alterations they will need to seek written permission from the Housing Services Team.



## 18. Door entry systems

We will consider an Occupational Therapist recommendation for the provision of door entry systems.

If following a full assessment by the Housing Services Team and the door entry system is approved, we will arrange and fund the installation of the system and will be responsible for servicing and repairs.

## 19. Specialist toilets

We will consider an Occupational Therapist recommendation for the provision of specialist toilets.

If following a full assessment by the Housing Services Team and the specialist toilet is approved, we will arrange and fund the installation.

## 20. Sensory loss

Tenants or other permanent members of the household with sensory loss should seek advice from the Sensory Support Team.

Any recommendation received that will assist the tenant will be considered by the Housing Services Team. If the works are deemed appropriate we would arrange the fitting any items of specialist equipment and future maintenance covered by the Housing Service

## 21. Allocation of adapted properties

Adapted properties available for allocation will be considered against the Housing Register for applicants with specific needs. Wider consideration will be given to referrals made for those people who have a specific need and maybe considered within the Council's Direct let arrangements.

All enquiries with regards to the allocation of properties and properties are available with adaptations should be made through our Housing Services Team.

## 22. Service standards

We will ensure that our contractors comply with the following;

- Give the tenant at least seven calendar days written notice before they commence major adaptation work in their homes
- Protect the property and the tenant's possessions during the installation works
- Ensure all services are functional at the end of each working day
- The installations will be completed to the agreed timescales however, should unforeseen delays arise the contractor will keep the tenant informed
- The contractor will show the tenant how to use and maintain any new fittings and fixtures.

## 23. Value for Money (VFM)

We are committed to providing an outstanding value for money aids and adaptations service.

Through partnership working we will:

- Carry out joint feasibility visits with the relevant Occupational Therapist were deemed necessary and appropriate
- Facilitate as necessary Joint Partnership Panel meetings to consider high cost and complex adaptation requirements
- Provide minor adaptations to facilitate hospital and care home discharge to help alleviate 'bed blocking'
- Involve the Occupational Therapists in budgetary discussion and performance management
- Manage performance with the contractor
- Share good practice and look for innovative solutions

## **24. Planned maintenance and improvement programmes**

When we are planning improvement programmes, conversions, new build or environmental schemes, we will consider the incorporation of adaptations as part of the works. For example; housing demand for new build adapted properties, dropped kerbs, communal access issues and replacement kitchen and bathroom programmes, etc.

## **25. Recycling adaptations**

Where it is possible and practical to do so, we will reuse equipment that has become redundant in its current situation, such as stairlifts and metal ramping systems.

## **26. Appeals**

An applicant who is not satisfied with our decision not to proceed with an adaptation may appeal against that decision.

The appeal will be considered at a case review where the Senior Housing Manager who has not been involved with the original decision will consider the views of the applicant alongside the reasons for the decision not to proceed.

The Senior Housing Manager, having gathered such information they deem necessary, may decide to uphold the original decision, in which case the reasons for doing so will be provided to the applicant in writing, or, decide that the works will proceed.