



ADAPTATIONS POLICY

April 2006

1 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 The Association's Adaptation Policy sets out how it will seek to meet the needs of its disabled tenants through the provision of advice and assistance, working in conjunction with Social Services and other specialist agencies where necessary, to ensure that the tenant is able to maintain their home and independence wherever possible.
- 1.2 Whilst housing associations have no statutory obligation to provide adaptations, the Housing Corporation (HC) expects such provisions to be made. A range of Good Practice Guides on delivering effective Adaptations services have been produced, and many of the recommendations contained within these have been adopted in this policy and procedure.
- 1.3 The Statutory responsibility for funding adaptations is the duty of the local authorities who work within a specific legislative framework.
- 1.4 Demand for adaptations is rising and will continue to do so for several reasons:
 - Life expectancy of older people has increased as has the numbers of frailer older people.
 - Medical advances are enabling people to survive severe illness or accident, increasing the numbers of people with complex needs aspiring to independent living.
 - The recent emphasis of initiatives such as Supporting People has been to promote independent living with appropriate support, enabling vulnerable and disabled people to continue to live in their own homes.
 - The proactive work of housing associations in the promotion of adaptations services available to tenants increases awareness of the options available to vulnerable and disabled persons to continue to live within their own homes with appropriate support so they may enjoy independence, integration, and dignity.
- 1.5 The delivery of the Association's Adaptations Service has been structured so that it is co-ordinated by the Allocation and Support Team (AST) so that customers are able to access services at a single-point of contact. It is within this team that requests will be processed, liaison with customers and professional agencies will be co-ordinated and management of the Adaptations budget will take place.

2 POLICY STATEMENT

Objectives

- 2.1 The objectives of this Adaptations policy may be outlined as follows:
- To help residents or potential residents with disabilities to maintain their independence within their own communities through the physical alterations to their daily living environments.
 - To deliver equitable and transparent services to those vulnerable and disabled residents within the available resources.
 - To proactively encourage requests for adaptations through promoting the availability of the service as a means to assist in independent living.
 - To provide staff involved in the delivery of adaptations with clear guidelines on policy standards and priorities, and provide training where required.
 - To keep residents informed at all stages of the process of the services they can expect to receive and the estimated timescales.
 - To ensure that Association complies with its legal obligations and good practice.

Defining Adaptations

- 2.2 Adaptations are specialist equipment, fittings or minor alterations that enable tenants with disabilities and their families to continue to live in their homes due to the changes they make to their daily living environment.
- 2.3 The Association's purpose of an adaptation accords with the "social model" of disability, which seeks to identify individualised solutions to the problems people encounter within disabling environments. Adaptations enable disabled persons to live independently, with confidence and dignity.
- 2.4 Although not exhaustive, adaptations may include the following:

<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Grabrails• Level Access Showers• Walk In showers• Stairlifts• Widening doorways• Specialist bathing equipment• Lever door handles• Vibrating smoke alarms	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Stair rails• Shower over the bath• Ramped access• Specialist kitchens• Vertical lifts• Flashing doorbells• Lever taps• Accessible sockets
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- 2.5 The Association makes a distinction between ‘Major’ and ‘Minor’ Adaptations on the basis of their cost. All adaptations over £500 will be treated as ‘Major’ adaptations, and those costing less than £500 will be considered to be ‘minor’.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

- 2.6 The legislative framework, although complicated, is quite clear. Whilst there are duties upon RSLs to consider housing conditions and provision within their area, there is no legal obligation upon RSLs to undertake adaptations to its properties.
- 2.7 A plethora of legislation and regulations surround the provision of Adaptations more generally. The principle ones may be outlined as follows:

Legislation	Duty	Other Points
Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970	On request, disabled persons are entitled to an assessment of their need for services. If the assessment identifies a need for services then the council has a duty to arrange for those needs to be met.	There is also a general responsibility in the Housing Act 1985 for housing authorities to assess the housing needs of their area, particularly the needs of disabled people. This would include RSLs within this definition.
NHS & Community Care Act 1990	Needs assessment must be carried out where it appears to the local authority that any person for whom they may arrange or provide services may be in need of such services.	The 1990 Act also provides that where health or housing needs are identified, the local authority should advise those authorities, and invite their assistance. Ultimately however, where there has been a needs assessment, the local authority should decide whether services should be provided. Circular LAC (2002) 13 provided guidance to Social Services departments on achieving fair access to care services. Criteria based on this guidance should have come into use on 7 th April 2003.
Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996	Defines a specific duty to provide Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to eligible applicants to meet the needs of providing fixed equipment and adaptations to dwellings to meet the needs of disabled people.	This grant is subject to a maximum of £25,000. The applicant is means tested and may be required to make a contribution to the cost of works.
Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002	Local housing authorities have discretionary powers to provide financial assistance for repairs, improvement and adaptations of living accommodation. This power can also help with the cost of moving and adapting or improving another property where this is deemed to be a more cost effective option.	Local authorities cannot use these powers unless they have published a policy setting out how they intend to use them. The policy also must set out what provision is needed to support the local adaptations policies.

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- 2.8 Although no specific obligations exist upon RSLs in this domain, it is accepted good practice for responsible social landlords to respond to the needs of its disabled residents.

Policy Principles

- 2.9 All AST will be responsible for co-ordinating all requests for Adaptations.
- 2.10 Adaptation requests will be banded according to their anticipated costs. The bandings will be as follows:

Minor – Adaptations that cost less than £500, and which will be funded from the Association’s responsive repair budget.

Major – All adaptations that cost more than £500. Due to the Housing Corporation’s current capital financing rules which stipulate that all their funding must be 50% match funded, funding from the Housing Corporation will initially be requested for all Major adaptations in order to maximise the use of available funds.

- 2.11 Each request for Adaptations will be categorised on the waiting list by need and date order, and dealt with accordingly.
- 2.12 The management of the Adaptations waiting list will be undertaken by the AST.
- 2.13 All requests for adaptations, in principle, must normally be accompanied by a Community or Hospital Occupational Therapist’s recommendations following an assessment of their needs.
- 2.14 There are exceptions to the need for an Occupational Therapists report. Although not exhaustive, these would include the following:
- Fitting lever handles to doors
 - Fitting lever operated taps
 - Community alarm system
 - Silent alert pager
 - Warning systems for hard of hearing (flashing lights, etc.)
 - Intercom and door locking systems

All other adaptations that were to be undertaken without an Occupational Therapist’s recommendations require the specific authorisation of the Director of Housing.

- 2.15 Other occasions where assessments from other professionals may be accepted due to their specialist expertise and often in-depth knowledge of the customers who are requesting the adaptations would include:
- Royal National Institute for the Blind/Deaf
 - HIV/AIDS specialists
 - Age Concern

- 2.16 Except in exceptional circumstances, heating related requests for adaptations would not normally be considered under this policy, but would form part of a planned maintenance programme. In all such cases, information about 'Keep Warm' initiatives will be supplied.
- 2.17 The AST will prioritise requests for Adaptations on the basis of need where liaison with specialists, usually Occupational Therapists, has taken place.
- 2.18 After agreeing that an adaptation should be carried out the AST will not make medical judgments and prioritizing of requests will closely follow advice of specialists.
- 2.19 Where the cost of carrying out adaptations to a property exceeds £10,000, or where works cannot technically be carried out in a property, requests will be denied. In these circumstances, the Association will pursue other options on behalf of the customer. This may include identifying other sources of funding or re-housing.
- 2.20 To make best use of resources, where adaptations are no longer required by individuals, the Association will arrange to remove the equipment to where it is most needed where this represents Value for Money. Smaller adaptations will be left in situ.
- 2.21 The Association will also liaise regularly with adaptations agencies such as ACCESS in Liverpool, who maintain a directory of adapted properties across the region. The Association will refer any vacant adapted properties in the Liverpool area to ACCESS to make a referral.

Resources

- 2.22 A dedicated budget will be available for funding adaptations.
- 2.23 The Adaptations budget will be set on an annual basis. It will be set on the basis of affordability, with consideration given to demand for Adaptations in previous years and the size of the current waiting list.
- 2.24 The Adaptations budget will be managed by the AST.
- 2.25 A ceiling of £10,000 has been placed on the cost of adaptation works. With limited resources, it would not normally be cost effective for the Association to carry out adaptations exceeding this ceiling and alternative funding or re-location options would be explored. This would need to be addressed on a case by case basis.
- 2.26 In exceptional circumstances, where alternative housing can be located but a move may cause hardship, consideration will be given to an 'Incentive Payment Option' to the value of £500 to assist with the move. This would be made available from the Adaptations budget, and will require prior approval of the Director of Housing.
- 2.27 The Incentive Payment Option would not be available to tenants that instigate a transfer.
- 2.28 Where a suitable letting cannot be found for a property with adaptations, the Association will either store the equipment or let the property 'as is'.

- 2.29 The Association has a good track-record of attracting Housing Corporation funding for its Adaptations programme. Due to the Housing Corporation's current capital financing rules which stipulate that all their funding must be 50% match funded, funding from the Housing Corporation will initially be requested for all Major adaptations in order to maximise the use of available funds. There is now no minimum allocation levels and this is reflected in this policy.
- 2.30 It is the responsibility of the Development Team to access and make bids for Housing Corporation funding. The AST will be required to identify customer requests for Adaptations from the waiting list, and liaise with the Development Team, who will submit bids for funding in accordance with Housing Corporation Capital Funding requirements.
- 2.31 Where Housing Corporation funding cannot be secured, and there are no funds remaining within the Association's Adaptations budget, alternative forms of funding will be explored. These are largely paid to the individuals requiring adaptations, but assistance will be provided to customers by the AST to access these, which include the following:
- **Disabled Facilities Grants** - Under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, there is a specific duty upon the local authority to provide Disabled Facilities Grant (DFGs) to eligible applicants to meet the cost of fixed equipment and adaptations to dwellings to meet a disabled person's needs. Available on a tenure-neutral basis, the Mandatory element of DFG is subject to a maximum grant of £25,000, and is dependant upon a means test of the applicant's resources. This may result in the applicant being required to make a contribution towards the cost.
 - **SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association)** – These offer financial assistance with adaptations or special equipment to families who have relatives who have been in the forces for at least 18 months at any time.
 - **WPWS (War Pensioners' Welfare Service)** – provides War Disablement Pensioners, War Widows and War Widowers with assistance obtaining adaptations.
 - **Royal British Legion; RAF; Royal National Benevolent Association** – Offer advice and assistance on aids and adaptations.
 - **British Red Cross** – Medical Loans Service provides equipment to disabled persons, often available free of charge.

Eligibility

- 2.32 Applicants for adaptations would normally be eligible to receive such circumstances where they comply with the following criteria:
- Occupants of a household that are permanent members of the household
 - Occupants with a proven permanent or substantial disability

- Occupants whose adaptation requests do not exceed £10,000
 - Occupants requesting adaptations that can reasonably be installed/fitted at the property in which they reside. Where this is not possible due to the structure of the building, suitable alternative housing options must be sought
- 2.33 In addition to customers that would not comply with the above criterion, there are also some additional criteria that would render customers ineligible for adaptations. They are as follows:
- Occupants who have requested a move.
 - Occupants living in purpose build supported housing schemes where alternative arrangements are already provided, e.g. assisted bathing facilities.

Voids

- 2.34 All void properties with an adaptation already in place should be referred to the AST so that the existing waiting list may be checked and referrals made to ACCESS where necessary.
- 2.35 Allocation of vacant adapted stock using the 'matching' process is likely to take longer than letting general needs stock. However a balance must be achieved between making best use of existing resources and minimizing void times.
- 2.36 In properties where the cost of adaptations exceeds £2,000 it is reasonable to expect an extended void period to facilitate a suitable match.

Equipment Removal

- 2.37 In some circumstances it will be cost effective to remove adaptations from the property if there is a demand for such equipment elsewhere. Removal of adaptations must be arranged before the outgoing tenant vacates the property.
- 2.38 The AST should record on a database details of any adaptations removed.
- 2.39 Equipment removed should be stored, and recycled before new equipment is purchased. This provides for an efficient use of resources.
- 2.40 Where a tenant is moving from an Association property to a non-Association property, the tenant should not be permitted to remove any equipment.
- 2.41 Removal of equipment will be carried out with as little disruption as possible to the household.

- 2.42 In cases where an occupant has died, the AST may wait up to six months before contact is made depending on individual circumstances
- 2.43 Where a partner remains who is particularly vulnerable or where remaining occupants may benefit from the adaptation in the future, the AST may decide that the equipment should remain in situ. Each situation will be considered on its own merits.

Priority

- 2.44 In order to prioritise adaptation work, the Association will require an Occupational Therapist's assessment to categorise the need for work. The association will write to all residents on the Adaptation waiting list every 12 months for the date they accessed the list to ensure their assessment is still current, and no further work is required. Should no further work be required the resident will move up 1 category. If an Occupational Therapist report indicates further adaptation work is required, the Association will re-assess the resident's position on the list to reflect their current level of need. Within each priority group, residents will be prioritised by the date they were accepted into that category.

- Priority 1 Resident is at immediate risk of injury
- Priority 2 Resident will possibly require admission to care if adaptation is not carried out
- Priority 3 Safety and well-being of resident potentially at risk in normal daily activity
- Priority 4 Adaptation would result in an increased quality of life

3 IMPLEMENTATION

- 3.1 The AST will maintain appropriate records relating to Adaptations.
- 3.2 A database of adaptations and a register of people requesting adaptations will be maintained by the AST.
- 3.3 All adapted stock will be passed to the AST to allocate and wherever possible a matching process will be applied. The system will run in parallel to the ACCESS service.
- 3.4 All enquiries relating to AST should be referred and initially dealt with by the AST.
- 3.5 All tenants will be advised to obtain an assessment of their needs from an Occupational Therapist prior to be placed on the Association's Adaptations waiting list. Assistance on how to access an Occupational Therapist will also be provided where required.

- 3.6 Where an Adaptation request is made with support of an Occupational Therapist, an acknowledgment letter should be sent to the customer within 10 working days, informing them of receipt of the request, an explanation of the process, and anticipated waiting time for adaptations to be undertaken.
- 3.7 Where an Adaptation request is made that does not fall within the Association's eligibility criteria, the customer should be responded to by the AST in writing, within 10 working days informing them of this position and details of alternative options provided.
- 3.8 The AST will maintain and regularly review the Adaptations waiting list, at least annually. This will involve contacting the tenants directly to ascertain if their circumstances have changed and they still require the adaptations as recommended by the Occupational Therapist.
- 3.9 The AST will be responsible for the co-ordination of Adaptation works. This will involve liaising with the Property Services team regarding the undertaking of minor works, and the Development Team regarding access to Housing Corporation funding. All works must be done in full compliance of the Association's Procurement guidelines, Financial Regulations and any other Housing Corporation guidelines as applicable.
- 3.10 Major adaptation works will be procured in contract form and managed by the Property team. Liaison will also be required with the Development Team as appropriate.
- 3.11 Minor adaptations will be co-ordinated by the AST, and undertaken through the Association's routine maintenance procedures.
- 3.12 On completion of the Adaptations, the AST will conduct customer satisfaction surveys with its customers. Feedback will be considered on an on-going basis, but formally used to review existing policy and practice on an annual basis.
- 3.13 The AST, Property Services and Development Services teams will meet at least quarterly to monitor progress and compliance to the association's policy and procedure and discuss on-going operational issues.
- 3.14 The Association's Adaptations policy will be advertised via the Tenants Handbook, Information leaflets and the Association's magazine Threshold.
- 3.15 Future Property Stock Condition Surveys will include questions on adaptation needs.
- 3.16 The following service standards and performance targets will be followed when delivering Adaptations:

ACTIVITY	VALUE	TARGET	MONITORING
• Response to Adaptations request	n/a	10 working days	Allocations & Support Co-ordinator weekly monitoring
• Minor Adaptations	<£500	28 days	Monthly management reports Annual report to Board of Management
• Major Adaptations	£500 - £10,000	Contingent on HC funding programme	Monthly management reports Annual report to Board of Management

4 RESPONSIBILITY

- 4.1 Overall responsibility for implementation of this policy lies with the Director of Housing.
- 4.2 The Allocation and Support Co-ordinator is responsible for the day-to-day management and implementation of the Adaptations Policy, for the application of the policy and procedures, monitoring and reviewing performance, managing the budget, and making recommendations for improvements.
- 4.3 All staff across the Association have a responsibility for the delivery of the Adaptations Policy and to be familiar with its content.

5 CONSULTATION

- 5.1 The Association will consult on an annual basis with the staff, outside agencies and benchmarking groups to promote continuous improvement and develop good practice in this policy.
- 5.2 Prior to making any changes to this policy the Association will consent and consider the view of:
- All relevant staff
 - Senior Management Team
 - The Tenants' Forum
 - The Repairs Review Team
 - Board of Management
 - Residents, Tenants Groups, individual interested tenants
 - All relevant outside agencies

6 REVIEW

- 6.1 The Association will formally review its Adaptation Policy on a 3 yearly basis, unless changes in legislation or regulation require an earlier review.
- 6.2 Findings and recommendations will be presented to the Association's Board of Management after the views of the Forum have been considered. A review team will carry out each review.
- 6.3 Progress reports will be made to the Board of Management and Forum, to enable monitoring against strategic aims and objectives and agreed performance indicators. Performance data will be included in the annual report to tenants

7 TRAINING

- 7.1 The Association will provide all staff responsible for implementing this policy with comprehensive training.
- 7.2 Training will be given to:
 - New staff
 - Existing staff on an annual basis as a refresher/update
 - All relevant staff after change to policy/legislation
 - To relevant outside agencies
 - Any other times as identified by the Director of Housing Services, Team Leaders or Group Policy and Performance Manager

8 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS

- 8.1 The Association has the following relevant documents:
 - Equality and Diversity Strategy
 - Complaints policy and procedures
 - Vulnerable Tenants Policy
 - Allocations & Lettings Policies and Procedures
 - Voids Policy and Procedures

9 POLICY REVIEW SUMMARY

Policy Title	Adaptations Policy
Dated Created	18 June 2004
Review Period	3 Yearly
Review Committee	Board of Management
Version	2.0
Date last amended	4 th April 2006
Authorised by	Board of Management
Date of last review	April 2006
Date of next review	April 2009