

Housing Services Council House Adaptation Policy

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Version Control

Version	Description of version	Effective Date
1.1	Draft document	10 th October 2018
1.2	Revised Draft	14 th May 2019

Approvals

Approved by	Date

Associated Documentation

Description of Documentation

1.0 Introduction

1. Introduction

1.1 This Policy aims to help Council tenants who are disabled or suffer from long-term ill health to live independently and to carry out essential day-to-day activities. The Policy extends to immediate family members of the tenant and consideration will also be given to other permanent members of the household residing at the property. The Policy aims to ensure that adaptations services for Council tenants are broadly in line with those for households in the private sector.

2.0 Background

2.1 Under the “Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 section 19, Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG): owner’s and tenant’s applications”, all owner occupiers, tenants including council and registered provider tenants are eligible for a disabled facilities grant”. Although the DFG framework and mandatory aspect of the grant applies across all tenures, funding for the provision of adaptations to the council’s own housing stock is through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).

2.2 The maximum amount of a mandatory DFG is currently £30,000. With the exception of an application for a disabled child, the amount payable may also be subject to a deduction derived from a test of the financial resources of the disabled person and their partner. This maximum amount and will also be applied to adaptations in Council owned properties.

2.3 The general power under Article 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England and Wales) Order 2002 enables housing authorities to give discretionary assistance, in any form, (e.g. grant, loan or equity release) for adaptations. There is no restriction on the amount of assistance that may be given in addition, or as an alternative to, mandatory DFG. This additional provision will also be available where adaptations are provided in Council owned properties although will be subject to approval by the Housing Services Manager.

2.4 The definition of a disabled person under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 is that a person is disabled if:

- Their sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired.
- They have a mental disorder or impairment of any kind.
- They are physically substantially disabled by illness, injury, impairments that have been present since birth or otherwise.

Generally the impairment of the applicant must have lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months. The Council is committed to facilitating the provision of aids and adaptations to properties and endeavours to deal with requests for assistance as quickly, effectively and sensitively as possible.

3.0 Aims and Objectives

3.1 South Derbyshire District Council is committed to ensuring that council tenants and their immediate families who experience health problems and/or have disabilities can continue to live safely and independently within their own homes.

3.2 The objectives of the adaptations service are to:

- Provide an efficient and cost effective adaptations service making best use of the council housing stock and the available budget.
- Assist those in need of adaptations to make informed choices about their housing options.
- Facilitate transfers to more appropriate accommodation where possible.
- Ensure that vacant properties that have been previously adapted are re-allocated to those who most need them
- Ensure that appropriate arrangements are in place for the ongoing maintenance of any specialist equipment
- Ensure that appropriate partnership working is in place with other agencies to facilitate the prompt resolution of housing access issues for tenants and their families.

4. Scope of this Policy

4.1 This Policy applies to South Derbyshire District Council housing tenants, their families and other permanent members of the household residing at the property.

4.2 Definition of adaptations

4.2.1 This Policy covers minor and major adaptations including extensive adaptations. The term eligible works is taken as those for which mandatory disabled facilities grants may be given as set out in section 23(1) of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

4.2.2 Minor adaptations are works which cost £1,000 or less. Examples of minor adaptations include grab rails, hand rails and lever taps.

4.2.3 Major adaptations are works which cost more than £1,000 but do not involve substantial structural works to the property. Examples of major adaptations include level access showers, kitchen adaptations and stair lifts.

4.2.4 Extensive adaptations are works which involve substantial structural alterations to the property such as bedroom and bathroom extensions and through floor lifts or the overall cost of the proposed adaptation works exceeds £10,000.

5. Eligibility & Financial Considerations

5.1 An individual will be considered for disabled adaptations to their home if they are a South Derbyshire District Council housing tenant and have impairment as described in paragraph 2.4. No adaptation works will be carried out due to lodgers or temporary visitor's disabilities. In cases where a child is disabled and the parents are separated, adaptation work will only be completed at the property of principal residence (this is normally the residence of the parent who is in receipt of child benefit for that child).

In line with DFG guidance, the Council may not agree to carry out adaptations in the following circumstances

- That the relevant works are not considered to be necessary and/or appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, and
- That it is not reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age and condition of the property.

In deciding whether the works are necessary and appropriate the Council will consider whether there is more suitable alternative accommodation in the locality to which the applicant could transfer to. This may be the case where the applicant is under occupying a two or more bedroomed property.

In deciding whether the works are reasonable and practicable, the Council will consider the impact of the proposed works on the future use and letting of the property. It will also consider whether the structural integrity of the property will allow for the proposed adaptation to be carried out and/or whether the structure and/or safety of the building may be compromised in any way if the work is completed.

5.2 The provision of minor adaptations is based on the recommendation of an Occupational Therapist (OT) or, in the case of some minor adaptations, a self-referral from the tenant. Unless otherwise approved by the Head of Housing.

5.3 Referrals or requests for adaptations can be made by the tenant, their family or any agency acting on their behalf. This may include other Council staff, or other colleagues from Health and Social Care agencies.

6. Process

6.1 Minor adaptations – fast track

6.1.1 The timely provision of minor adaptations can often sustain the independence of individuals and postpone the need for more substantial adaptations. The provision of minor adaptations is therefore seen as an important preventative service to tenants

6.1.2 In recognition of this the Council operates a self-referral 'fast track' system for certain types of minor adaptations. This includes;

- Handrails to stairs
- Grab rails
- Lever taps
- Key safes

The aim of this is to reduce delays by eliminating the need for a referral from an OT.

6.1.3 The fast track referral system is accessed by contacting the Council's Customer Services. The Customer Services staff will obtain the relevant details from the customer and a request is then generated and sent to the Housing Repairs and Improvements Team, a contractor is then appointed (subject to funding approval) to carry out the works.

6.2 Minor adaptations - other

6.2.1 For adaptation works which cost less than £1,000 but are not covered by the 'fast track' process, the tenant should contact Derbyshire County Council for an OT to carry out a detailed assessment of their needs.

6.2.2 Following their assessment, the OT will then make a referral to the Council detailing the adaptations required. A contractor will then be appointed (subject to funding approval) to carry out the works.

6.3 Major adaptations

6.3.1 In the case of major adaptations, the tenant should contact the Council's Housing Services. A case officer will then be appointed to liaise with the tenant and their family. The role of this officer will be to work with the tenant to identify the most appropriate solution to their accessibility needs. This may include:

- Arranging a transfer to alternative more suitable accommodation,
- Arranging a transfer that already has similar adaptations in situ
- Arranging for Derbyshire County Council for an OT to carry out a detailed assessment of their needs.
- Give appropriate advice with regard to other Council and partner agencies services that may be of use to the tenant, including Careline services.

Where the Council agrees that adaptation works will be completed this will be confirmed in writing to the tenant and a visit from the OT service will be arranged. The Council will also provide an estimate of the total cost to be paid, the Council's contribution and that required by the tenant.

Following their visit, the OT will produce a written referral which details the assessment of the individual's needs and makes recommendations for any necessary adaptations. These recommendations will normally form the basis of any scheme of works.

6.3.2 The OT will then forward the written referral to the Council who will then nominate an appropriate contractor. A Community Care Worker may also carry out an assessment on behalf of Adult Social Care.

6.3.3 Major and extensive adaptations normally involve a visit to the property by an Architectural Officer in order to produce a plan and schedule of works for the proposed adaptations.

6.3.4 Once the plans have been agreed with the tenant and OT, the costs of the works will be determined and a contractor appointed (subject to funding approval) to carry out the works. The Council will also confirm the total to be paid

6.4 Extensive adaptations

6.4.1 A request for extensive adaptations is normally made in the same way as requests for major adaptations, following an assessment of the individual's needs by the OT.

6.4.2 Where a need for extensive adaptations has been identified, a meeting will be convened with the Occupational Therapist and relevant council staff such as a Housing Options Adviser/ Case Officer.

6.4.3 In these cases the group will consider whether the work should go ahead or whether an alternative solution can be found. Consideration will be given to whether any proposed extensive adaptation makes the best use of the current housing stock, whether it would negatively affect the future letting of the property or would prove to be prohibitively expensive

6.4.4 Before any extensive adaptations are carried out all other housing options will be considered. These options will include the possibility of better use of the existing space within the property and the potential for re-housing as an alternative. If rehousing is considered to be the most appropriate option then the tenant will be offered up to £2,500 towards the cost of relocating to contribute towards the cost of new carpets/curtains and removal expenses.

6.4.5 As with the major adaptations, extensive adaptations will involve a visit from an Architectural Officer and the production of a plan and specification for approval by the tenant and the OT.

6.4.6 Following agreement, a contractor will be appointed (subject to funding approval) to carry out the works

7. Prioritising adaptations

7.1 Where a need for major or extensive adaptations has been identified, an assessment is made by the OT as to whether the adaptation is urgent or non-urgent. Where the OT considers the case to be urgent the case will be prioritised ahead of non-urgent cases, for example, if a person requires adaptations to facilitate discharge from hospital, or to prevent an admission to hospital.

7.2 Where a tenant is in need of major or extensive adaptations and has been offered and accepted a vacant Council property on the basis that the works will be carried out before they move in, then the case will be prioritised ahead of non-urgent cases in order to minimise void times. However, the tenant will be expected to take up the tenancy as soon as is practical; i.e. if it is possible for the tenant to live in the property whilst waiting for the adaptation work to be completed they will be

expected to do so. Where possible the Council will offer suitable temporary accommodation until the works to the tenant's home are complete.

7.3 Where a need for major works to adapt a bathroom and/or kitchen has been identified and the Council is planning to carry kitchen/bathroom improvements to the relevant property, the case shall be prioritised to enable the works to be carried out simultaneously, thereby reducing disruption to the tenant.

7.4 All other cases are dealt with in referral date order.

7.5 All adaptations are subject to the availability of funds.

8. Making Best Use of Available Stock

8.1 Re-housing as an alternative

8.1.1 In certain cases re-housing will be identified as an alternative to carrying out major or extensive adaptations to a property. This could be to another Council property or to a property owned by a registered provider of social housing.

8.1.2 Examples of why this decision may be made include:

- A vacant property can be identified that is already suitably adapted to meet the essential needs of the customer.
- A vacant property can be identified that is considered more suitable to be adapted to meet the essential needs of the customer.
- Extensive major adaptations can be avoided by a move to a more suitable property.
- The adaptation required at the property may reduce the potential to let it in the future.
- The property is under or over occupied as defined by the Council's Tenancy Policy.
- The property is above ground floor level and has no lift.
- The layout and /or location of the current property make it unsuitable to adapt.
- It is not feasible to adapt the current property.

8.1.3 Where it is agreed that a transfer to more suitable accommodation is the most appropriate option then the tenants will be assisted in completing a housing application. This application will be given the highest priority under the Allocations Policy, but will not be granted "Emergency" priority unless agreed by the Head of Housing. The case officer responsible for managing the adaptation request will ensure that suitable available properties are offered to the applicant as a 'direct let' under the Allocations Policy.

8.1.4 Customers who take up the option to be re-housed may receive financial assistance to cover relocation expenses such as removal costs, disconnection and reconnection of appliances and refitting of carpets up the value of £2,500.

8.1.5 The Council considers "suitable alternative accommodation" means the following unless otherwise agreed with the tenant:

- Where a tenant has children attending a local school the accommodation is within the catchment area of that school.
- The accommodation meets the decent homes standard and the household will not over-occupy the property.
- Where the tenant or a member of the household is a nominated carer of a relative who does not live with the carer that the accommodation is within a reasonable distance to ensure continuity of care. This includes ensuring that appropriate public transport is available if this is the current mode of transport used by the carer to visit the relative.

Should the applicant refuse three offers of suitable accommodation then the case officer will conduct a review of the case and recommend further action.

8.2 Circumstances when a request for a major adaption will be refused

8.2.1 Major and extensive adaptations will not be carried out:

- Whereby the tenant has submitted a Right to Buy application to the Council.
- The tenant is in rent arrears and the Council has commenced court action seeking possession of the property. In these circumstances, the works will be deferred pending the outcome of the court case or repayment of the debt.

8.3 Use of the adapted property

8.3.1 Once major or extensive adaptations have been completed at a property it is expected that the customer requiring the adaptation will continue to live at the property unless circumstances do not allow this (for example, a deteriorating medical condition means that the property is no longer suitable)

8.3.2 If the tenant then applies to be re-housed, unless their circumstances have significantly changed they would normally be considered to be adequately housed and would not have a priority on the housing register.

8.3.3 Where significant work has taken place at the property and the person for whom the adaptations were intended dies or is unable to remain at the property, the remaining family members may be asked to move to alternative accommodation.

8.4 Removal of adaptations

8.4.1 Adaptations to properties will only be removed in exceptional circumstances following approval by the Head of Housing.

8.4.2 Adaptations to void properties will not be removed unless:

- There are no suitable applicants requiring such adaptations.
- They are not fit for purpose and/or beyond economical repair.

9 Rent and service charges

The Council has the right to levy a service charge to cover the costs of annual servicing, testing and maintenance of large scale and major adaptations. Such charges will only be introduced through an amendment to this Policy.

Rent increases will be applied where the structure of the building is increased in size to accommodate an adaptation or internal modifications e.g. an additional room.

Adaptations subject to weekly rent increase

- Bedroom/living room extension
- Bathroom extension
- Loft or garage conversion

10. Tenant Satisfaction

10.1 Each tenant is invited to complete a satisfaction survey following the completion of their adaptation works. The results of these surveys are monitored by the Council and any specific problems are dealt with accordingly.

11. Adaptations data

11.1 Where adaptations are completed the information will be added to the Council housing or asset management database

11.2 Orders for adaptations work will be issued wherever possible through the Housing Management /Repairs system.

12. Appeals and Complaints

12.1 The Council has an established corporate complaints procedure. This procedure is available on request at the Council Offices or online at www.southderbys.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/complaints/comment_compliment_complaint/default.asp.

[gov.uk/council_and_democracy/complaints/comment_compliment_complaint/default.asp](http://www.southderbys.gov.uk/council_and_democracy/complaints/comment_compliment_complaint/default.asp)

Appendix 1

Key Performance Targets

Subject to the availability of funds the Council aims to meet the following targets for delivering adaptations to Council tenants:

Minor Works-20 working days from approval of the works to completion on site.

Major Works - Basic Level Access Showers and Stair lifts-8 weeks from approval of the works to completion on site.

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