



**South
Derbyshire**
District Council

Disabled Adaptations Policy for Council Tenants



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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.

2. 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 (the principal being that a tenant has a lesser stake than an owner in a property and the adaptation is to the property).
- 2.2 The maximum amount of a mandatory DFG is currently £30,000¹. 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.
- 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.
- 2.4 Following the Localism Act 2011, from April 2014 South Derbyshire District Council issues tenancies subject to applicants not exceeding a financial threshold. On this basis it seems unreasonable to ask a tenant to contribute to an adaptation.
- 2.5 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.
- 2.6 Generally the impairment of the applicant must have lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months.
- 2.7 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.

¹ Disabled Facilities Grant and Home Repair Assistance (Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes)(England)Order 2008

3. 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

4. Scope of this policy

4.1 Tenure

4.1.1 This policy applies to South Derbyshire District Council housing tenants 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 an impairment which has a serious long-term effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. No adaptation works will be carried out for lodgers or temporary visitors. 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).

5.2 It is South Derbyshire District Council's policy to provide disabled adaptations without charge to the tenant. The provision of minor adaptations is based on the recommendation of an Occupational Therapist (OT)² or, in the case of some minor adaptations, a self-referral from the tenant. Unless otherwise approved by the Director of Housing and Environmental Services, the maximum amount of work undertaken will be limited to the same amount of a mandatory DFG, currently £30,000.

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 relevant department. 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 Derbyshire County Council for an OT to carry out a detailed assessment of their needs. 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 a case officer to liaise with the tenant through the whole process.

² A Community Care Worker may also carry out an assessment on behalf of Social Services.

- 6.3.3 When considering requests for major adaptations the Council reserves the right to explore other alternatives to ensure that the service being provided is cost effective, and that best use is being made of the available housing stock (see 8.0).
- 6.3.4 Major 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.
- 6.3.5 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.

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 re-housing is considered to be the most appropriate option then the tenant will be offered up to £1,500 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. E.g. a person requires adaptations to facilitate discharge from 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.

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 In these cases a Housing Options Adviser will support the tenant with looking for suitable alternative accommodation.

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 £1,500.

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.

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 put on hold 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 Director of Housing and Environmental Services.

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. Tenant Satisfaction

- 9.1 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.

10.0 Appeals and Complaints

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

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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Published by South Derbyshire District Council Civic Offices, Civic Way, Swadlincote, Derbyshire, DE11 0AH

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