

Aids and Adaptations Policy



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Sign

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1.0 Scope of the Policy

1.1 This Policy sets out Warwick District Council's (the Council's) approach to assessing proposed aids and adaptations for disabled occupants living in our properties.

1.2 We will manage resources and funding efficiently to enable disabled occupants with a mental or physical impairment to live more safely and independently within their own homes where possible.

1.3 The aims of this Policy are to:

- Ensure the needs of individuals with a mental or physical disability are prioritised, subject to available funding and achieving value for money.
- Set out the criteria by which we will assess all requests for aids and adaptations.
- Comply with legal and statutory requirements in relation to the provision of aids and adaptations.
- Set out the assistance and support we can offer.

1.4 This Policy is applicable to disabled people living in homes where the Council is the Landlord.

2.0 Legislation and Related Policies

2.1 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
- The Care Act 2014

2.2 There is a range of related Council policies and procedures, the main ones being:

- Allocations Policy
- Tenancy Policy
- Safeguarding Policy and Procedure
- Management Move Procedure
- Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy/Strategy
- Data Protection, Privacy, and Confidentiality Policy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Downsizing Policy.

3.0 Equality, Diversity, and Inclusion

3.1 The aids and adaptations service is provided as an inclusive and individualised service open for all disabled people living in homes where the Council is the Landlord. The service is provided with the aim of positively advancing equality of opportunity.

3.2 The service ensures that disabled people can 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 disabled tenants.

3.3 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.

4.0 Training and Awareness

4.1 Training and awareness of this Policy will be raised with relevant staff and published on our intranet system.

4.2 We will make people aware of this Policy through our website, social media, newsletters, and information leaflets.

4.3 The external recommending Occupational Therapy (OT) service, in-house OT's and contractors involved directly in the delivery of this Policy will receive training appropriate to their role.

5.0 Monitoring and Review

5.1 We will monitor cases and performance on an ongoing basis, including the number of referrals received and the number of works successfully delivered within our timescales outlined in this Policy.

5.2 We will also collect information on rejected applications and the reasons for this.

5.3 We will ensure effective implementation of this Policy by publishing it on our website and internal systems.

5.4 We will ensure overview sessions are held for teams that will be responsible for implementing the Policy and make these sessions available for any new colleagues or refreshers.

5.5 We will monitor attendance of these sessions and colleagues who have confirmed having read the document.

5.6 The effectiveness of this Policy will be continuously monitored, and the embedding of the Policy scrutinised after 12 months.

5.7 This Policy will be reviewed every 3 years unless business need, regulation or legislation prompts an early review

6.0 Definitions

6.1 For this Policy we use the following definitions:

6.2 Aids

6.2.1 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 OT or Social Services. These are not supplied by WDC but by partner agencies.

6.3 Adaptations

6.3.1 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 including long term needs to enable disabled occupants to live independently and safely in their home.

6.3.2 **Minor adaptations** are any requested or recommended works which cost less than £1,000 (ex VAT). This includes items such as grab rails, lever taps and stair rails.

6.3.3 **Major adaptations** are any recommended works which exceed the value of £1,000 (ex VAT). This includes items such as level access showers, wet rooms, stair lifts, over bath showers and the provision of door access ramps. These works require an OT assessment.

6.4 Urgent Works

6.4.1 Urgent works will be prioritised in line with the Council's internal procedure.

6.4.2 Works classified as "Urgent" will include works for disabled occupants who:

- are being discharged from hospital *and* are at risk
- live alone *and* are at risk
- have severe cognitive dysfunction *and* are at risk
- live with a carer who is elderly or disabled
- are without heating or hot water *and* are at risk
- have a limited life expectancy
- are under the age of 16
- are in temporary accommodation.

7.0 Eligibility

7.1 We will normally only consider requests for aids and adaptations if the disabled person is the tenant or another permanent member of the household or would be if the adaptation was completed and only after discussing the household's housing options and reviewing if a move suitable property would meet their needs. Undertaking major adaptations to the physical structure of a property which will only fulfil a short-term need or where the accommodation is of a temporary nature or offers only limited security may be refused. Any requests for assistance will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

7.2 We will not consider requests if the tenant has applied under Right to Buy. In this case, the tenant should apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

7.3 Non-permanent members of the household do not qualify for any adaptations and will be signposted to Adult Social Care.

7.4 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 a leaseholder property or within the common parts. Such requests for assistance will be signposted to Adult Social Care

8.0 Funding

8.1 As a Council we are committed to provide an aids and adaptations service. Funding will be met by the Council and managed to meet our legal obligations.

9.0 Panel Decisions

9.1 We recognise that every case will be unique to each individual, and it may be necessary to engage with wider partners on developing and reaching the right solution.

9.2 Where it is felt that a case has wider complex considerations relating to the disabled occupant, 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 review the case and discuss the options available in helping the disabled occupant and their family.

9.3 The review will reflect the nature and circumstances of each case but could involve the views of OTs, Housing Services Teams, the Home Environment Assessment & Response Team (HEART), Together for Children, Adult Social Care and any other relevant organisations.

10.0 Types of Aids and Adaptations

10.1 There are many varied reasons why aids and adaptations are required including (but not limited to):

- Making the property safer - there is a need to make the home safer for the disabled occupant and other people living with them.
- Access to the principal family room or bedroom - the disabled occupant is unable to access a room suitable for use as a living room or gain access to a room usable for sleeping. Or where the disabled occupant shares a bedroom with another person, they cannot access a room of sufficient size so that the normal sleeping arrangements can be maintained.
- Access to a toilet - the disabled occupant cannot access a room with a toilet or cannot use the existing toilet.
- Access to a bath or shower - the disabled occupant cannot access a room with a bath and/or a shower or cannot use the existing bath and/or shower. In cases where the disabled occupant needs access to a bath and a shower, they would need to demonstrate a medical need for both.
- Access to a wash hand basin - the disabled occupant cannot access a room with a wash hand basin or cannot use the existing wash hand basin.
- Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food - the disabled occupant cannot access or does not have suitable facilities to prepare and cook food for themselves and others living with them.
- Better heating - people with limited mobility who remain in one room for long periods usually need a warmer home than able-bodied people.
- Control of power, light, and heat - the disabled occupant cannot operate the controls for power, light, or heating in their home.

- Caring for others - the disabled occupant cannot move around the home to care for another person who normally lives there, whether they are related to the disabled person. This may include a spouse, partner or family member, another disabled person, or a child. Importantly the dependent being cared for need not be disabled.

10.2 Minor Adaptations and Minor Alterations

10.2.1 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 the date of referral to our Assets Team and will be completed on a date and time to suit the disabled occupant and their family.

10.2.2 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 OT assessment through our Responsive Repairs Teams.

10.2.3 We will consider minor adaptations based on an OT and HEART referral. An OT must complete a referral and submit a written recommendation for work to the Council to consider any adaptation.

10.2.4 Minor adaptations can include (but are not limited to):

- Ramps (where straightforward)
- Handrails
- Grab rail
- Over-bath shower
- Lever taps

10.2.5 If the total cost of minor adaptations is more than £1,000, they will then be classified as major adaptations.

10.2.6 We will aim to complete minor adaptation works within 20 working days following approval.

10.3 Major Adaptations (£1,000 and above)

10.3.1 We will consider requests for major adaptations based on the referral from the OT and, if required, our site visit. Where a site visit is required, this will be carried out within 30 working days from the date of the referral to the Assets Team. Prior to consideration to authorising major works, re-housing options will be considered. If alternative accommodation exists that meets the needs of the household, then tenants will be supported to move home, rather than works carried out to their current address.

10.3.2 Major adaptations can include (but are not limited to):

- The installation of stair lifts and level access showers
- Bathroom and kitchen conversions
- Through floor lifts
- Extensions and access alterations

11.0 Approval

11.1 In order to approve an application we need to be satisfied that:

- the relevant works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, and
- it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age and type of property.
- That alternative accommodation does not exist that would better suit the needs of the household through re-housing.

11.2 Necessary and Appropriate

11.2.1 Adaptations are designed to give disabled people a degree of independence in the home and should aim to meet current and anticipated future needs. If the disabled occupant has care needs, the impact of adaptations on the level of this care should be considered including whether tasks will be reduced or eased. Adaptation works will not achieve their objective if the disabled occupant does not gain an acceptable degree of independence, or where the disabled occupant remains dependent upon the care of others and the adaptation does not significantly ease the burden of the carer.

11.3 Reasonable and practicable

11.3.1 Where the relevant works have been judged to be necessary and appropriate, the Council then must consider whether it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the works having regard to the age and condition of the property, to fully assess these cases members of Assets and Housing should meet on a monthly basis to undertake suitability studies. The reason for this is that it may not be a good use of resources to adapt certain types of property or an older property.

11.3.2 Major adaptations are not likely to be carried out where it is more feasible to move the household to a property that better meets their needs.

11.3.3 If no alternative accommodation is available that better meets the needs of the household, but the current property is not suitable for major adaptations to be undertaken, it may be more appropriate for us to undertake a feasibility review. The purpose of this will be to see if there are any alternative properties, that can be adapted more easily than the current home and if moving the household to said accommodation is a more appropriate way of offering support.

11.4 Refusing Works

11.4.1 We may refuse to carry out works under the following circumstances:

- The adaptations are not deemed to be necessary and appropriate (see point 11.2)
- The work is inappropriate to the type or age of the property and is therefore not reasonable or practicable. (e.g. level access showers above ground floor level where no mechanical form of reaching that floor is in place).
- Through floor lifts, in properties with restricted space.
- Properties are under 12months old and are still within the defect's liability period

- Alternative accommodation provision exists that meets the needs of the household. In these circumstances we will support the residents to move.
- The work would adversely affect communal areas.
- Where request is made for vehicle parking, we would only look to provide 1 space per property, to enable disabled customers easy access to their property from their vehicle
- The tenant has applied under Right to Buy. In this case, the tenant should apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

In these circumstances we will work with the disabled occupant to provide an alternative solution.

11.4.2 We will inform tenants about any wider implications of the works before they commence and will ask tenants to sign an agreement to this effect where they have accepted any wider implications because of the works, and that they approve the works to commence. This could include increased financial costs (such as insurance, benefits, energy bills etc) for the tenant, and we will inform the tenant of these increases prior to signing the form and commencement of works. Failure to sign the agreement will lead to the application being rejected.

11.4.3 Where a property has a major adaptation, making the property substantially different from our other homes and suitable for occupation by disabled tenants, it will no longer qualify to be purchased under the Right to Buy under schedule 5 of the Housing Act 1985. This will apply for the current tenant and for any future tenants following the property being re-let.

11.4.4 Where a property has had a major adaptation, making the property substantially different from its previous configuration then the Council retain the right to review the rent charged and if necessary, increase this with change of tenancy so that it then matches other properties that have a similar configuration .

11.4.5 The disabled occupant or their appointed representative will be notified in writing if the application is refused.

11.4.6 Disabled occupants or their appointed representative may request an appeal to review an adverse decision. The appeal must be made within six weeks of our decision, and we will undertake the review within 20 working days of receipt of the appeal.

11.4.7 If we have already made adaptations to a property, we will take these into consideration when assessing proposals for further adaptations.

11.5 Major Adaptations

11.5.1 For major adaptations the OT will advise the disabled occupant at the assessment stage that no recommendation can be agreed before being approved by the Housing/Assets Team. The OT will submit their recommendations to the Housing / Assets Team who will confirm this in writing to the disabled occupant receiving the works or their appointed representative.

11.5.2 Where appropriate, for major adaptations, other alternatives will be explored and discussed with the disabled occupant or their appointed representative including alternative housing.

12.0 Repair and Maintenance Costs

12.1 Where repair and maintenance costs are incurred for the adaptation the Council will pay these during the warranty period. Once the warranty period has expired the disabled occupant will be expected to pay for any future repairs and maintenance (via service charges). At the point of installation, we will explain this to the disabled occupant or their appointed representative and confirm this in writing.

12.2 If the disabled occupant is unable to afford any future repair and maintenance costs, then the Council may arrange to carry out an affordability assessment. Where there is financial hardship, the Council may fund the cost of the repairs and maintenance in full. Depending on the disabled occupant's financial situation, the Council may make arrangements for the disabled occupant to pay any incurred costs back to the Council on a recharge basis which is more affordable to them,

13.0 Alternative Solutions

13.1 Where a decision is made not to authorise adaptations, the Housing Team will work with the disabled occupant or their representative to look for alternative solutions to meet their needs. These options could include rehousing or alternative adaptations. Tenants may also have the option to request permission to make alterations themselves (secure tenants only).

13.2 We will consider an OT recommendation for the provision of rented **straight track stair lifts** (not curved) on a temporary basis for those waiting for suitable rehousing or with a terminal condition or receiving palliative care:

- Terminal conditions are where the individual has a progressive disease and as a consequence of that disease is expected to die within 12 months.
- Palliative care is a holistic approach to management of pain and symptoms as well as psychological support that seeks to manage a condition where there is no expected cure.

13.3 The provision will be for a period of up to 12 months after which time the situation will be reassessed by the recommending OT. Each case will be considered on an individual basis with supporting medical evidence. Disabled occupants or tenants who wish to install their own rental stairlifts will need to seek permission from the council and a decision will be made on a case-by-case basis, it should be noted that the customer would be expected to undertake regular servicing of such equipment and must provide the Council with copies of all necessary certificates in respect of install and servicing.

14.0 Service Standards

14.1 We will ensure that our contractors comply with the following:

- Give at least seven calendar days written notice to the disabled occupant and/or their appointed representative before they commence major adaptation work in their home.
- Protect the property and all the disabled occupant's possessions during the installation works.

- Ensure all services are functional at the end of each working day.
- Ensure the installations are completed to the agreed timescales. Should unforeseen delays arise the contractor will keep the disabled occupant and/or their appointed representative informed.
- Show the disabled occupant, their appointed representative, and carers how to use and maintain any new fittings and fixtures.

15.0 Value for Money

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

15.2 Through partnership working we will:

- Carry out joint feasibility visits with the relevant OT where these are deemed necessary and appropriate.
- Facilitate as necessary Panel Reviews to relevant major adaptations.
- Provide minor adaptations to facilitate hospital and care home discharge to help alleviate 'bed blocking.'
- Manage performance with the contractor
- Share good practice and look for innovative solutions.
- Ensure, as far as practicably possible, the needs of the disabled occupant are met

16.0 Recycling Adaptations

16.1 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.

17.0 Appeals

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

17.2 A Panel Review will be held where the views of the disabled occupant and/or their representative alongside the reasons for the decision not to proceed will be considered.

17.3 The Panel, 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 disabled occupant and/or their representative in writing, or decide that the works will proceed.