

Adaptations Policy

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1. Introduction

Housing adaptations can often play an important role in enabling a disabled person to remain in the comfort and safety in their own homes, by restoring or promoting independent living or to use their home more effectively.

The link between housing and wellbeing is increasingly acknowledged. 'The right home environment is essential to health and wellbeing, throughout life.' (Association of Directors of Adult Social Care 2014 p3). A suitable, well adapted home can improve quality of life, wellbeing, enable safe access and increase independence to prevent, reduce or delay care needs. Appropriate, accessible housing is vital in addressing people's needs and enabling them to meet their chosen outcomes efficiently and cost effectively.

There is greater focus on supporting people with disabilities to consider how their housing needs can be met in the longer term. The council will look at the best use of resources by looking to keep tenants in their own home where possible, or through options to relocate to a more suitable property.

Note: The Council has the final decision on whether to accept an Occupational Therapist's (OT's) recommendations and ultimately, adapt its properties.

2. Purpose of Policy

The purpose of this policy is to provide guidance and understanding of Eastleigh Borough Council's Affordable Housing Service (the Council) approach to the provision of adaptations to support their tenants with the management of long term health issues or disability to remain living in their home. It is to set out the criteria by which the Council will assess requests for adaptations to their properties.

This policy applies to residents living in social housing properties, both adults and children who require adaptations in their homes. Private Sector housing adaptations are provided through Disabled Facilities Grants. Please refer to Eastleigh Borough Councils Disabled Adaptation Policy for more information.

<https://www.eastleigh.gov.uk/media/1958/dfg-policy-doc-april-2014-approved.pdf>

This policy refers to and only applies to disabled and older people. Under the terms of this policy, we have used the definition of disability from the Equalities Act 2010, which states a person is disabled 'if they have a physical, mental or sensory impairment that has a substantial and long-term (i.e. more than 12 months) adverse effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.' The decision, as to who qualifies, would be made by the Occupational Therapist (OT).

3. Scope of Policy

This policy applies to all tenancies. While it applies to customers holding Introductory Tenancies, the Council expect that a property would meet all the needs of an incoming tenant alternatively, that the Council would be aware at the point of offer, that adaptations to the dwelling would be required. It doesn't apply to customers who are leaseholders (including shared owners) or market rental.

4. Aims of the policy

- To ensure that all residents have access to accommodation that enables independent living, privacy, dignity and promotes the wellbeing for the individual and their families. This may include offers of alternative accommodation, Extra Care Housing or Supported Living or modifying the existing property.
- To provide a service that seeks to best meet the needs experienced and identified by the disabled person, regarding the persons own views, wishes and feelings. The disabled person will discuss options with OT, who will then decide what is the best option.
- To ensure that constraints on independent living are not imposed on disabled people by virtue of the construction, layout, or design of their homes.
- To ensure the process utilises the skills and experience of a wide range of disciplines and includes consultation and choice for the disabled person.
- The appropriateness and acceptability of the adaptation is measured by the extent to which it meets the needs of the individual.

5. Legislative Requirements

This document refers to the legal requirements and policies that must be adhered to. The Council has regard to legislation including (but not limited to) the following:

- The Care Act 2014
- The Chronically Sick and Disabled Person Act (1970 Section 2)
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Housing Act 1996
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

6. Linked Policies

- Disabled Facilities Grant Policy
- **Asset Management Strategy**
- Housing management Policy
- Tenancy Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Mobility Vehicle Policy
- Allocations
- Lettings
- Voids Policy
- Mutual Exchange Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Data Protection Policy

7. Funding for Major Adaptations

For major adaptations within the Council's homes, funding is provided within the Housing Revenue Account, rather than using Disabled Facilities Grants, which are available to people living in privately

owned, rented or Housing Association properties. However, the council follows the rules applied to Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) adaptation policy whereby a maximum limit of £30,000 is available to fund a major adaptation. In circumstances where the proposed works are above this limit, the council will discuss with the Head of Housing the options on a case by case basis. This will include options for re-housing to a more suitable property, or increasing the maximum limit.

Currently, council tenants are not subject to means testing because funding comes directly from the Housing Revenue Account and adaptations can provide long term benefits for the property as well as the tenant. However, this is subject to review should budgetary pressures require the council to reflect a more equitable distribution of funds to its services.

In order to manage this annual budget, applications for adaptations will be prioritised using the adaptation 'Prioritisation Tool' (See appendix 1) as demand often exceeds the funding available.

8. Eligibility requirements for making an application for an adaptation

The Council will normally only consider a request for major and minor adaptations for tenants if the person:

- Is registered as a tenant of the Council, or the tenant's partner or a member of the tenant's immediate family who have been noted as living permanently with the tenant.
- Has an impairment or disability which has significant effects on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities and requires safe access to essential facilities within their home.
- Adaptations for children will be ordinarily within their principle main home, unless there is a case by case reason which will be assessed by the Occupational Therapist.
- Major Adaptations will not be carried out at a property which has an active Right to Buy application. In these circumstances the tenant will be advised about the DFG policy and will be applied once they have purchased their own home.
- Major Adaptations will not be carried out at a property where the tenant has an active Housing Application or actively seeking home-swappers via a mutual exchange.
- Adaptations will not be provided to family housing where the tenant is under occupying the property or in flats above ground floor - other than in exceptional circumstances. Tenants in these properties who require such adaptations will be helped to transfer to smaller ground floor accommodation such as a bungalow or flat where their adaptation needs can be met.

If the person is under occupying. For example, if one person was living in a three bedroom house, and there are alternatives to consider we will look to support them to move to a more suitable property and liaise with the **Under Occupation and Transfer Officer**. These requests will be considered on a case by case basis.

For the tenant to be eligible for the Under Occupation incentive they have to have rights to the property and the tenancy. If the person has succeeded the tenancy only but doesn't have rights to stay at the property they don't get any financial help.

If eligible the tenant receives £1000 cash incentive, minus any rent arrears and recharges. They also receive removal cost and disconnection and reconnection of white goods.

9. Making an application for major adaptations

Tenants can contact their **Housing Officer, Social Care Service** or apply online direct, to request an assessment by the OT of need to assess whether adaptations are necessary and appropriate. They will then decide whether to send an OT out for further information.

The Council will only consider adaptations if an Occupational Therapist (OT) has assessed the household situation and recommended that the works are both necessary and appropriate, given the nature of the disability.

In all cases, the Council and the Occupational Therapist will work together to ensure that:

- Cases are assessed fairly and equally
- Exceptional individual needs are considered
- Alternative options to meet the applicant's needs are considered
- The OT works closely and arranging joint visits where necessary with the Technical Officer, especially with complex cases to discuss all available options for the tenant.
- Regular meetings are held between the Technical Officer and the Housing OT to discuss the progress of individual cases and current working practices.

However, major adaptations that require structural changes to the building are likely to be refused as are works that are detrimental to neighbouring properties - unless no other option is available for the applicant.

Where Building Regulation consent and/or planning permission is required this must be obtained prior to any work commencing and copies of any permissions/ discharge of conditions Without the necessary consents and/or permissions we will not give permission for the work to go ahead.

Under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 the Council has wide discretionary powers to provide financial assistance for repairs, improvements and adaptations to living accommodation. This includes help with the cost of moving and adapting or improving another property where it is deemed to be a more cost effective option. It is therefore the policy of the Council to examine all the options available to the individual before immediately embarking on plans to adapt the current property where major adaptations are required.

10.Types of adaptations available

Adaptations are split into two categories – minor adaptations and major adaptations.

Minor adaptations feature prominently amongst the preventative services to maximise independence. There is a £1000 limit applicable to each minor adaptation, and minor works can include but are not limited to:

- Grab rails
- Mopstick bannister or newel rails
- Galvanised rails
- Lever taps
- Overbath showers
- Door entry systems
- Half steps
- Removal of thresholds
- Installation of specialist lighting
- Installation of flashing door bells or smoke alarms
- Window opening technology

11.Types of major adaptations available

This is works that cost over £1,000 and although not exhaustive, can include the following:

- Stairlifts
- Level Access Showers
- Ramps to access the property at the front or back
- Widening doorways
- Accessible kitchens
- Through Floor Lifts
- Widening pathways for wheelchair access
- Hard Standing

It is the Council's intention to match the same provision for those living in the private sector, who are eligible for a DFG. Therefore this policy reflects the provisions set out within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, as follows:

1. Facilitating access by the disabled occupant to and from the dwelling, the building in which the dwelling or, as the case may be, flat is situated;
2. Making the dwelling safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with him/her;
3. Facilitating access by the disabled occupant to a room used or usable as the principal family room;
4. Facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room used or usable for sleeping;
5. Facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a lavatory, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
6. Facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a bath or shower (or both), or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;

7. Facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a wash hand basin, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
8. Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant;
9. Improving any heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the disabled occupant or, if there is no existing heating system there or any such system is unsuitable for use by the disabled occupant, providing a heating system suitable to meet his needs;
10. Facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of one or more means of access to or control of that source or by providing additional means of control;
11. Facilitating access and movement by the disabled occupant around the dwelling in order to enable him to care for a person who is normally resident there and is in need of such care;
12. Such other purposes as may be specified by order of the Secretary of State.

12. If the tenant does the work privately

Council tenants may organise their own adaptations privately and at their own expense, subject to agreement from the council. In all cases, tenants must obtain written agreement from the Council before carrying out any alterations or adaptations to their property. The Council have a right to refuse permission if the work would interfere with any maintenance on the property, may cause a potential health and safety risk or would breach any regulatory requirements, or affect other tenants. The written request will need to state what works and adaptations will need to be carried out and who will be undertaking the works. Tenants must not start any works without first gaining written permission from the Council. The Council may inspect the completed works to ensure they have been carried out satisfactorily. Tenants will be responsible for the repair and maintenance of the adaptations that they have arranged for the duration of the tenancy. The Council will not be liable for any damage or injury caused by adaptations not installed by the Council. If permission was not sought, the tenant may have to reinstate the property to its original state, i.e remove and make good any adaptations.

13. Circumstances in which work will not be carried out

This section of the policy only relates to adaptations exceeding £1000.

As in section 8, there are times an adaptation in an existing tenant's home may not be suitable. If the Council at the advice of the **Technical Officer** deems that it is not reasonable and practicable to adapt the property, applicants will be requested to consider transferring to a more suitable property, for example

- Installing a level access shower to a flat above the ground floor which cannot be accessed by an existing lift.
- Where an adaptation is not viable for a particular property or would adversely affect the council's ability to make best use of the stock and re-let the property in the future.

- Where an adaptation would place others at risk e.g. a stairlift installed in a communal stairway which could impede access for other residents.

This lists the adaptations that will not usually be funded under the adaptation process and is not exhaustive.

- Adaptations for the storage of mobility scooters – unless the person has been assessed for a powered outdoor wheelchair.
- Appliances such as ovens, hobs, fridges unless there is a specific need for a piece of equipment to meet their requirements on a case by case basis.

14. Alternative options/making best use of current stock

Other options will be considered where extensive adaptations have been requested. These include:

- Adapted council properties, which become available, will be offered in the first instance to those most in need of this type of property before consulting the general needs housing and transfer list.
- Sheltered or Extra Care Homes.

It is the Council's policy to discuss at an early stage other options available to meet the tenant's needs. This will include offering a transfer to appropriate alternative accommodation.

If available, the alternative accommodation would need to meet the following suitability conditions:

- Consideration should be given to allow the tenant to remain in or nearby to the area they currently live if this is where their support needs are fulfilled and cannot be delivered elsewhere.
- The new property must be suitable, or capable of being made so to meet the tenant's needs within the grant limit.
- Consideration should be given that this accommodation would become available within 18 months of assessment for major adaptations.

If the tenant refuses the option of more suitable alternative accommodation, landlord permission for major adaptations to adapt their property would only be given in exceptional circumstances where a move is not considered advisable by a medical practitioner. For all major adaptations, the council will discuss with the tenant the option of a transfer to alternative accommodation that better meets the needs of the disabled person.

15. Prioritisation of approved major adaptations

Demand for major adaptations is high, and therefore they have to be prioritised using the 'Prioritisation Tool' which determines their position for works to be carried out in conjunction with the date of assessment.

16. Conditions of providing major adaptations

Where a major adaptation above £1,000 has been completed at a property, the expectation is that the disabled tenant remains living at that property for a minimum of five years. However, there may be circumstances where this is not possible e.g. due to a change in need from a deterioration or new medical condition the property is no longer suitable and cannot be adapted further.

Where extensive adaptations have been carried out at a property and the disabled tenant dies, or is unable to remain at the property, the remaining household members may be encouraged and if eligible, assisted to consider alternative accommodation to allow the adapted property to be let to a disabled person.

17. Provision of hard standing and dropped kerbs

The one will not be considered without the other unless one of the above already exists.

Definition: Hard standing is a level parking area which provides safe access from the car to the property. A dropped kerb is when the existing kerb to the pavement is lowered to allow vehicular access.

Criteria:

- The service user (driver or passenger) is unable to reach their car parked on the road safely.
- Parking near to the address cannot be found for a major portion of the day, for most days.
- The existing drive is too narrow to carry out a safe transfer for a wheelchair user without risk to the service user and/or the carer.
- The service user is an adult or child who has a physical disability or learning or behavioural difficulties and cannot safely transfer in/out of the car on the road e.g. narrow road, dangerous bend or challenging behaviour.
- The service user's prognosis does not indicate the likelihood of significant improvement in their mobility
- The driver is a Blue Badge holder who is only able to walk or propel a wheelchair for short distances outside the home and has a permanent disability.
- The passenger is a Blue Badge holder, and the driver is unable to park in the road to allow the disabled person out or cannot push a wheelchair from the nearest available parking area, which is an unreasonable distance away.
- Passengers will not normally qualify as it is not unreasonable to expect that an able-bodied driver should "double park" if necessary to set down the disabled passenger and remove the vehicle afterwards. Although this may entail short-term obstruction of the highway, as it is not either "unnecessary" or "wilful", it is unlikely to be considered to constitute an offence.
- Exceptions may be made where the passenger requires constant attendance, or where the driver is of advanced age or frailty and has to lift equipment such as a

wheelchair into the car, or hoist to transfer the passenger into and out of the car.

- Hard standing will not be provided to prevent car vandalism alone.
- Hard standing will not be provided solely for wheelchair and scooter access. The service user needs to have a car.
- Work can only be considered within the boundary of the property i.e. we are unable to provide further hard standing or access across public/communal land such as a wide grass verge

Factors to be considered:

- Permission to drop the kerb needs to be granted by Highways. If this is not granted the adaptation cannot proceed.
- Would a marked disabled bay meet the need? If so, the resident applies directly to Highways without the involvement of Social Care. NB – if granted the disabled bay can be used by any Blue Badge holder.
- Hard standing should only be laid in a semi permeable material. Government Guidance issued in 2008 following the serious flooding in July 2007.
- The maximum area for hard standing is 3.6metres wide x 6.00m long. (The size of a standard disabled parking bay). More space can sometimes be achieved by abutting the hard standing to the existing front garden path.
- It is not the purpose of the adaptation to provide hard standing to the whole or front garden to make the front garden low maintenance for the resident.
- Is a dropped kerb needed for wheelchair access only? This cannot proceed without permission with Highways. There are occasions when they will allow a half width dropped kerb which will only allow wheelchair or pedestrian use but the request must be justified by Day Care attendance or frequent hospital visits on a regular basis. Highways would expect there to be a dropped kerb opposite so that the user can cross the road.
- Although a service user/carer may meet the criteria, it may not be possible for the provision to be made due to local planning or traffic considerations.

18. Appeals, suggestions, compliments and complaints

The council is committed to supporting people in providing suitable housing for its tenants. The council welcomes feedback that enables it to improve services. The council has an established corporate complaints procedure for dealing with appeals and complaints. All council officers have copies of the leaflet explaining how to make a complaint.

A complaint should be linked to the council's systems and procedures and may be about a delay, lack of response, discourtesy or any item that leaves cause for dissatisfaction with the council's conduct. Where tenants remain unhappy with the outcome of the formal complaint, they may wish to contact the Housing Ombudsman.

19. Data Protection

The Council are committed to protecting and respecting the privacy of personal data. As a registered Data Controller (Reg. no. Z7118863) it complies with the General Data Protection Regulations 2018 (GDPR).

More information on how the Council collects, uses and keeps your personal information, and how it protects privacy can be found in our [Record of Processing Activity](#) (ROPA). The corporate privacy notice provides general information about the council's personal data processing activities overall. As the range of services the council provides is so varied, it has also produced individual [privacy notices for each service area](#), to explain specifically how data will be used within each service.

20. Equality & Diversity

20.1 Equality and diversity are of fundamental importance to services provided regardless of a person's protected characteristics under the Equality Act 2010 (age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, religion pregnancy and maternity, race, belief, or sex). All must be treated with respect. The Council treats everyone it houses, serves, and employs, fairly, and encourages others to do the same.

20.2 The Council provides information that is clear, accessible, and in an appropriate format (such as translated into another language, or in large print on request). Where appropriate, Council Officers will assist residents, by, for example, helping to complete paperwork. These policies ensure residents are treated in a fair and efficient manner.

21. Monitoring and Review

21.1 This policy will be reviewed regularly, to incorporate legislative and regulatory amendments and changes, best practice developments, or to address any operational issues with the procedure. Input will be sought from our residents (via the [Residents Committee or similar](#)) prior to making any substantive changes. This is in line with our Corporate Values and is intended to ensure our policy continues to meet the needs and aspirations of our residents.

22. Document History and Approval

Identity and Version Control

This document is the final approved version and will be a controlled document with an individual assigned to version review/amendment.