

Aids and Adaptation Policy

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1. Policy Statement

The purpose of this policy is to establish the aims and objectives that will be pursued and the principles, values and constraints that will be applied in relation to the provision of aids and adaptations to the tenants of the WM Housing Group.

WM Housing Group will do all that we reasonably can to facilitate the effective planning, consultation and delivery of aids and adaptations. We take a proactive approach by way of promoting equality and preventing discrimination and disadvantage.

Whilst the WM Housing Group has no legal obligation to provide aids and adaptations, we will work in partnership with Local Authorities to meet their statutory duties to facilitate their provision. This will enable our more vulnerable customers to have access and use of their home enabling them to live in a safe environment, preserving their independence and dignity.

We will aim to make efficient use of resources available to fund adaptations ensuring value for money and good practice, and to comply with regulatory legislation ensuring equal opportunity.

2. Definitions

2.1 Adaptation

For the purpose of this policy an aid or adaptation is the provision of fixed equipment and /or modification to the property or associated land where there has been an identified need to enable customers to live safely and independently in their home. Portable equipment, for example, raised toilet or bath seats are typically supplied by the local health authority or social services and will not be provided by the Group.

2.2 Minor Adaptation

Works that typically cost less than £1000 (see section 4.1) and include items such as grab rails, lever taps and additional handrail to stairs will be provided following a valid request and free of charge to tenants but subject to available funding from the local Housing Association's budget.

2.3 Major Adaptation

Works that typically cost more than £1000 (see section 4.2) and include items such as level access showers, alterations to doorways and provision of ramps are subject to a referral from an Occupational Therapist who has assessed for level of need.

3. Policy Purpose and Aims

This policy provides a framework within which our partner Associations (Harden Housing Association, Kemble Housing Limited, Nexus Housing and Whitefriars Housing) will implement, operate and monitor procedures for providing aids & adaptations.

The policy seeks to enable customers to remain in their home and retain their independence, to enjoy a good quality of life through the provision of aids and adaptations to maximise customer satisfaction.

WM Housing Group has four core values. This policy provides a framework for the delivery of these via our lettings services. Our staff will work within the policy framework and our values when completing their work.

Our core values are:

- Providing excellent services
- Acting with integrity
- Delivering creative solutions
- Valuing People

4. Our Policy

This section will detail:

- Budgets
- Request for Minor works
- Request for Major works
- Re-housing as an alternative
- Rent and Service charge implications
- Adapted property register
- Customer Satisfaction
- Monitoring

Budgets

Each partner association will set an annual budget including adaptation works and will aim to spend up to a maximum authorised budget each financial year. Spend against budget will be monitored and the budget reviewed as necessary.

4.2 Request for Minor Works

Each Partner Association may have local arrangements in place with local authorities in the area they work, detailing the aims and constraints for delivery of minor works. Where there are no existing local arrangements or protocols each Partner Association should set a financial limit

within their procedures for works that will be considered as Minor which would be funded from the local Housing Association budget. Partner Associations will take note of the College of Occupational Thereapy's guidance "Minor Adaptations without delay" (2006) regarding adaptations that do not require an Occupational Thereapist's assessment but are subject to local Housing Association maintenance team approval. This is a guide and each Housing Association will determine the limit set before an OT referral is requested.

Requests made for minor works will be subject to local Housing Association available funding, criteria for approval of an aids and adaptation request is shown in the local Housing Associations procedure guidance. Where the budget for a financial year has been expended the customers' application will be recorded on a waiting list. The Housing Association must be satisfied that the adaptation requested is likely to meet the need of the customer. Where possible adaptations such as the fitting of lever taps and other relevant minor works may be carried out as part of the local Housing Associations planned maintenance works.

If the Housing Association deems minor work inappropriate a referral will be made to the Occupational Therapist requesting a needs assessment.

4.3 Request for Major Works

Major works are works costing over £1000 and will require an Assessment from an Occupational Therapist and local protocols with the Local Authority will take precedence for funding arrangements. Recommendations will be made according to assessed level of need.

If a customer wishes to access a Private Occupational Therapist and fund the adaptations recommended themselves or choose to apply directly to the Local Authority for a disabled facilities grant, permission will be required from the Housing Association to carry out any alterations to the property.

Where a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) had been approved, the Occupational Therapist will make a referral to the local Housing Association on the customer's behalf with the recommendations needed for the adaptation. All major adaptation requests are subject to a prioritisation of need and approval by the local Housing Association in partnership with the Local Authority.

The Housing Association may give assistance with applications for DFG and act as an agent on the customer's behalf. Funding from Local Authorities for a DFG may be limited and in some areas a waiting list may be in place.

In exceptional cases, where DFG won't fund major adaptations, the Group may consider funding with the Executive Director of Housing's approval.

Consideration can be given locally to installing level access showers rather than baths where appropriate and subject to available budget as part of a planned programme of works.

Some adaptations may be subject to a service /maintenance charge (see section 4.4).

4.4 Re-housing as an Alternative

If the customer request for an adaptation can be reasonably satisfied through transferring to a property that is already adapted or is more suitable for adaptation, this option should be offered and discussed with the customer.

Assistance with the transfer process will be offered to the customer whose current home is unsuitable for major adaptations and where the circumstances may threaten the safety of the customer to remain in the property. This is in accordance with the Lettings Management Policy.

Adaptations will not be carried out in any property, which:

- Has a Right to Buy where an application has been made
- Has a Right to Acquire Application with a live status,
- Is a property managed for others (unless the funding is through a DFG and the property owners approval has been obtained)
- Is a Short life leased property

Or where the tenure is

- leaseholders,
- Shared owners
- Outright sale

4.5 Rent and Service Charge Implications

The rent of a property may be reviewed following an adaptation, if the works completed have resulted in an additional bedroom at the property.

A service charge may be introduced where adaptations require a maintenance contract to be taken out to maintain/service equipment installed. Customers should be made aware of this and their written consent to meet the service charge is obtained prior to installation.

4.6 Adapted property Register

WM Housing Group is committed to make best possible use of existing housing stock, including adapted properties.

Following installation or removal of adaptations, the Housing Management system will be updated in order to keep an electronic record of adapted properties within the local Housing Association.

Properties available for allocation will be placed on the choice based lettings bidding cycle, wherever possible, this will include adapted properties to ensure the process is open and transparent. There may be individual cases where significant adaptations have been carried out where a direct letting may be made to match the property to the applicant most in need of the property.

WM Housing Group will capture profiling information from our customers, to enable us to identify trends measuring profile demographics against stock profiles and will inform us about potential future demands for aids and adaptations.

4.7 Customer Satisfaction

WM Housing Group aims to acknowledge receipt of all requests for adaptations within seven working days, in order to prevent unnecessary delays and safeguard the safety of all customers and preserve their independence.

If a customer is unhappy with the decision that has been made regarding their request for an adaptation, they will need to follow the procedure as set out in the WM Housing Group Policy on Compliments, Comments and Complaints.

5. Equality Impact Assessment

We will ensure that our services reflect the diverse communities that we work with and are in line with our policies on equality and diversity.

WM Housing Group carry out Equality Impact Assessments to understand the impact that our policies may have on groups of people or individuals. These impacts may be positive or negative. We have reviewed our policy with partner and employees from within this area of the business and also with our Disability Equality Group and found that the impact on services should not change (positively or negatively) with the adoption of this policy. This is mainly due to the fact that there are no new commitments in this new policy than there were in previous practice.

6. Performance Measures and Targets

We will set targets and provide an annual report to the Group Board.

Reports will include:

- How customers can access the aids and adaptation service
- The performance against service standards and performance targets
- The cost of works carried out
- Customer satisfaction and level of complaints, reviews and appeals
- Size of waiting list?

7. Monitoring and Review

This policy will be reviewed where:

- There are significant changes to legislation;
- There are found to be deficiencies or failures in this policy, as a result of complaints or findings from any independent organisations

At which point the lead officer will initiate and immediate review.

In any event this policy will be reviewed no later than five years from the effective date of this

version, no later than March 2015.

8. Responsibility

The effective implementation of this policy is the responsibility of the Executive Director of Housing

9. Legislation

WM Housing Group will abide by existing regulatory requirements and legislation to ensure that fair and equitable services are available to all customers regardless of age, disability, race, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief or sexual identity as listed in:

The Human Rights Act (1998)

The Disability Discrimination Act (2005)

The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act (1996) as amended by the Regulatory Reform Order (2002)

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (1970)

Housing Act (1980) & (1985)

The Community Care (Delayed Discharges etc.) Act. (Qualifying Services) England Regulations 2003. Social Services England 2003 No.1196 Interpretation of aids and adaptations as set out by the Secretary of State for Health 2003

Guidance Documents to accompany this legislation:

Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People: A Good Practice Guide (2006)

Minor Adaptations without Delay: A Practical Guide and Technical Specifications for Housing Associations (2006)

10. Associated WM Housing Group Policies

Access to Accommodation – People with Special Needs

Equality & Diversity Inc. Equal Opportunities

Asset management Strategy

Disability Equality Scheme

Sustainable Tenancies – Special Needs policy

Lettings Management Policy