

HOUSING SERVICE ADAPTATION POLICY

1.0 Introduction

This policy and procedure outlines Westmorland and Furness Council's approach to carrying out disabled adaptations to Council Housing assets in line with current legislation.

This policy applies to Council tenants and family members with a disability.

2.0 Our Policy

When dealing with an application to adapt a property for a disabled person the Council will:

- Ensure compliance with sections 20, 21 and 36 and Schedules 4 and 5 of the Equality Act 2010 and make reasonable adjustments to a property when requested to do so by a disabled tenant or disabled family member.
- Ensure we undertake an Options Appraisal of all Major adaptations to determine if they are "Reasonable and Practicable".
- Ensure we meet the cost of the design, installation and future maintenance of the improvement or equipment installed.
- Ensure we work in partnership with Occupational Therapist, Health and Social Care and other health professionals to promote advice and support services for disabled tenants and their families.
- Ensure we use the social model of disability and make decisions which are not based on medical diagnosis alone.
- Ensure we remove wherever possible social and physical barriers which make life harder for disabled people.
- Ensure we create equality for all disabled tenants and offer disabled people more independence, choice and control.

3.0 Scope of the Policy

This Policy deals with aids, adaptations, equipment or special fixtures and fittings, to improve access to an individual's home, improve an individual's mobility in and around their home or help with daily living.

Adaptations fall into one of two classifications:

- **Minor adaptations** - are defined as adaptations which cost less than £2,500 and include internal or external grab rails, lever taps, adjustments to electric sockets, small ramps and access rails. Minor adaptations will normally be fitted without the requirement for an Occupational Therapist and the full cost will be met by the Council.
- **Major Adaptations** – are defined as adaptations costing more than £2,500 and can include but are not limited to, stair lifts, bathroom conversions, ramps and extensions or through floor lifts. Major adaptations will normally require a referral from the Occupational Therapist and be fully funded by the Council. Specialist equipment such as bed hoists, shower hoists, bathing and showering aids will generally be funded by Health and Social Care.

When dealing with a request for an adaptation we will determine:

1. If the person is **“disabled”**
2. If the improvement is **“reasonable and practicable”**

Disabled Person

This policy adopts the legal definition of a disabled person as set out in section 6 of the 2010 Equality Act and defines a disabled person as having:

- A physical or mental impairment.
- The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities

4.0 Reasonable and Practicable

The reasonable and practicable test will consider the following aspects of each proposal:

- **Tenancy** – Review the applicant’s tenancy to determine if there are any concerns such as an on-going Right to Buy application, an on-going Notice of Seeking Possession, an on-going court application or if the tenancy is introductory.
- **Options appraisal** – Review alternative solutions and determine if there are other properties available within the borough to meet the tenants needs.
- **Feasibility** - Discuss the extent of the adaptation with the Occupational Therapist to ensure the equipment or improvement meets the current and medium term needs of the tenant (or another existing household member who is disabled and registered as living at the property). Assess adaptations considering the impact they make to the tenant’s ability to self-manage long-term health conditions in their current property.
- **Budgeting** – Review the available funding and suitability of the property for adaptation. Through the provision of an annual budget contribute the agreed amount from the Housing Revenue Account to fund the cost of all adaptations.

Periodically report expenditure on adaptations to the Housing Management Forum.

- **Maintenance** - Once adaptations are installed be responsible for the annual servicing (for example stair lifts) and any maintenance or replacement work following the 12 month warranty period.
- **Disposal** - When equipment is no longer needed either work with Occupational Therapists to recycle and utilise equipment in another property or rehouse the tenant and allocate the property to an applicant requiring the adaptation.
- **Record keeping** – Maintain accurate and up to date details of all adaptations carried out in our properties to enable effective future lettings and the information to influence future investment decisions.
- **Tenancy support** - To work with the tenant/family to find alternative accommodation if an adaptation will not be carried out. This may include payment of the tenants removal cost.
- **Community support** - Offer to install adaptations for leaseholders or non-Council tenants at the full cost of the installation including design.

5.0 We will not carry out adaptations in the following circumstances:

- Where the tenancy is an Introductory Tenancy;
- The individual is not a disabled person;
- The individual requiring the adaptation is not currently living in the property, unless the property has been specifically identified for the individual and adaptation;
- Where we are considering or in the process of taking legal action in relation to possession of the property for a breach of tenancy;
- The property is above ground floor and no lift is available except in the case of minor adaptations;
- The property is under occupied by two or more bedrooms unless rehousing would be of a serious detriment to any individual's health. We will support the tenant or family to find alternative accommodation by allocating the appropriate priority band on the Choice Based Lettings Scheme;
- Where the cost of the works is considered too high, or not reasonable or practicable and the tenant can move to a suitable property;
- Build extensions on existing properties except where suitable alternative accommodation would not or does not become available within 12 months of the recommendation;
- Where the adaptation is not structurally practicable;