

Aids and Adaptations Policy

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1. Our purpose

We're proud to be able to support tens of thousands of people across England by providing affordable housing and care to help people live independently.

Everything starts at home, and we are privileged to be able to do work which makes a real difference to the lives of people in our communities. Everything we do is about people – whether that's providing a good quality, safe home or providing care which helps someone to live an independent life.

We live and breathe this social purpose.

2. Overview

In 2022, the social housing sector made up only 17% of all homes but housed 27% of all disabled people and 34% of wheelchair users. This policy sets out how we will manage your requests, or requests from your advocates - including Local Authority (LA) Occupational Therapy departments, to carry out adaptations to your home. It provides guidance on what adaptations we will carry out, our approach to working with the LA, and how we will proceed if the existing property cannot be adapted to suit your needs.

3. Aims and Objectives

For our customers and future customers

We recognise that your requirements and those of your families can change, and we are committed to assist in making reasonable adjustments whenever it is practical to do so. Our aim is to deal in a fair, reasonable and transparent way with any requests we receive, and to consider and prioritise every request for an adaptation with an understanding of your individual needs.

For our communities

Assisting you to remain in your home supports our wider aim to create sustainable communities. We also aim to ensure that we are using our social housing assets as effectively as possible, reusing adapted properties where it is possible to do so without adversely impacting on our commitment to ensure empty properties are re-let as quickly as possible.

For our colleagues

This policy aims to clearly define our role and the role of the relevant LA to ensure our colleagues have clear guidelines around facilitating adaptation requirements.

For our stakeholders

This policy is intended to assure our stakeholders that any adaptations which are made to your home are completed to an appropriate standard, meet all safety regulations and requirements, and any future maintenance or safety issues are taken into consideration. We will take a practical and prudent approach, with an awareness that we need to manage our resources as effectively and fairly as possible, prioritising your requests based on need.

4. Scope of Policy and Exclusions

- This policy applies if you have a Secure, Assured, or Assured Shorthold Tenancy Agreement with us.
- This policy applies if your home is owned by us and managed by a third party (dependent on the individual terms of the management contract or lease).

Exclusions

- This policy does not apply if you are a Shared Owner or Leaseholder.
- This policy does not usually apply if you are in the process of purchasing your property through the 'right to buy' or 'right to acquire' schemes, however we will consider minor adaptations on a case-by-case basis.
- Sometimes property adjustments may not be technically feasible as they will require removal or change of physical features or could have a detrimental impact on shared/communal areas. The Equality Act allows social landlords to determine what is a 'reasonable' adjustment.

- It may not be practical to carry out certain major adaptations if you live in an upper floor flat which is not served by a passenger lift, as the property may not be suitable for your needs in the longer term. However, these applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- We will not carry out adaptations that would compromise the health and safety of you or your neighbours (e.g. anything that could obstruct safe entry and exit from the property).
- More detailed information is provided in the Aids and Adaptations Procedure.

5. Roles, Responsibilities and Duties

Executive Board

- Oversees the delivery of the corporate strategy and approves all major (material or substantive) changes to policies as specified within the approved policy schedule and Policy Approval Matrix.

Departmental Director and Head of Service

- Responsible for the regular review and monitoring of this policy and for ensuring that appropriate levels of resources are allocated to deliver this policy.
- Responsible for operational delivery of this policy, and implementation of the related procedures.
- Responsible for managing and monitoring the Aids and Adaptations budget.
- Responsible for ensuring that detailed records are kept on all adaptation requests and works delivered, including those undertaken by the LA.

Operational Colleagues

- Deliver a customer-led service, including suggesting ways to improve and enhance the customer experience.
- Maintain contact, provide support and liaise with you throughout the process.
- Determine whether adaptation requests should be undertaken by us, or you should be signposted to the LA for an Occupational Therapy assessment.
- Signpost you to additional support as required, including applying for alternative funding e.g., Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) for major works.
- The Contact Centre will raise orders for minor adaptation works (less than £1000); these will be raised on a routine response of 28 days.
- The Surveying Team will ensure that post-work inspections are carried out on all major adaptations, appropriate maintenance arrangements put in place where necessary, and accurate records are kept.
- Respond quickly and effectively to complaints and concerns.

6. Impact Assessments and Key Considerations

Equality Impact Assessment

An assessment has been completed and the outcome of the evaluation is that this policy has no significant negative impact on any group of customers who have a protected characteristic. This will be continually reassessed as part of the policy's scheduled reviews.

□ Customer engagement

Ensuring that all your requests, suggestions and comments are responded to equally and fairly is essential to this policy. Learning from these will also help to shape and tailor services that better meet the needs of all our customers.

We will ensure any customer facing information is available in a range of formats to suit everyone’s needs and ensure it is truly accessible to all.

7. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions will apply:

- **Adaptation:** A modification to an environment or structure in order to restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for you and your family.
- **Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG):** Grants provided by an LA to help meet the cost of adapting a property for the needs of a disabled person.
- **Disabled Person:** Under the Equality Act 2010, you are ‘disabled’ if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.
- **Local Authority (LA):** Local district, borough or county councils. They are officially responsible for all the public services and facilities in a particular area, including responsibility for social care. They organise and fund support and care for those with moderate or high needs who are unable to fund it themselves. They can also organise care services for self-funding individuals who may require assistance to do so.
- **Minor and Major Adaptations:** These distinctions are based on the nature of the work required to implement the adaptation. Examples are set out in table 1 below – these are not exhaustive, and each application will be considered on an individual basis:

Minor Adaptations (Costing under £1,000 and funded by GSA)	Major Adaptations (Over £1,000 and funded by the LA through a DFG.)
Lever taps Grab Rails or Handrails Half Steps Key safes Changing the height of electrical sockets Flashing doorbells or smoke alarms for the hearing impaired	Straight stair lifts / through floor lifts Overbath or level access showers / wet rooms Specialist baths Closomat toilets Electronic door openings Ramps Hoists

Occupational Therapist (OT): OT’s help people who have difficulties carrying out day-to-day activities because of a disability, illness, ageing, and a range of long-term conditions. They carry out an assessment to identify ways to help the individual achieve or maintain their maximum level of independence.

8. Our Policy

8.1. Policy Statement

- We will work with you and with the LA to ensure your needs are met regarding adaptations, prioritising those applications that will be resourced by GSA based on individual needs.
- We will ensure there are clear channels of communication with you, and establish joint working practices with the relevant LA on a case-by-case basis.
- We can offer you help and assistance, if required, to navigate your way through the DFG process.
- We will comply with legal and statutory requirements in relation to the provision of disabled adaptations, and with good practice guidance.
- We will ensure there is budgetary provision to support minor adaptations. This will be set and reviewed annually.

8.2. Policy Outline

- Local Authorities have a statutory duty to aid with major adaptations and do so through the provision of DFG's. We are committed to supporting the provision of adaptations through DFG's to enable you to maintain independence in your home.
- We will carry out minor adaptations that you request, managing our resources as effectively as possible by prioritising works based on need. We may encourage you to obtain an OT referral for minor adaptations if the requested adaptation seems unlikely to fulfil your needs, or if there are likely to be further works required to ensure you remain safe in your home.
- Major Adaptations will only be carried out following an assessment by an OT and will be funded by the LA. This ensures that you have access to the expertise that will identify the best solutions to meet your needs now, and into the future. If you do not have an OT, you will be advised to contact your LA. The OT's assessment will establish a specification that meets your specific needs, and they will determine the urgency of the work required.

8.3. Policy Requirements

MINOR ADAPTATIONS (under £1000)

- We will allocate budgets each financial year for carrying out minor adaptation works (examples of which are provided in table 1). You can request adaptations via telephone, email or through the Customer Portal on our website.
- We will 'make good' following minor adaptations but will not usually be able to carry out significant redecoration. This is because we need to make sure we are using our adaptation budget to benefit as many customers as possible.
- Portable equipment including e.g., WC seats, walking/toileting aids, shower seats, induction loops, portable heating or lighting etc are not provided by GSA; these items are provided by the LA who will be able to advise on timescales for provision.

MAJOR ADAPTATIONS (Works with an estimated cost of more than £1,000).

- Following the OT assessment, we will support you throughout the application process with your application for DFG's from the relevant LA. Depending on the LA, the success of the application and the grant amount will vary.
- Whether you can fund the adaptation yourself, or apply via a DFG, we ask that you let us know about your plans so we can ensure the work is technically possible. We may also refer to the Home Alteration Policy for larger works (e.g., extensions). Works will only be refused in exceptional circumstances.

ONGOING MAINTENANCE AND REMOVAL

- Ongoing servicing and maintenance of major adaptations, will usually be undertaken and funded by you and/or the LA unless the item was originally installed by us. In any event, we will be clear with you about whose responsibility it is to service and maintain these items on an individual basis.
- We will not undertake removal of adaptations from properties unless requested by an OT following an individual assessment.

NEW AND TRANSFERRING CUSTOMERS

- If you are a new or transferring customer with adaptation needs moving into an adapted property, an OT's assessment will be carried out to ensure the existing adaptations meet your specific needs. This is to ensure your continued health, safety and wellbeing.
- If you require a major adaptation and it is not practical to deliver in your existing home (due to the size or type of the home, construction, location or the amount of works required), you may be encouraged to transfer to a more suitable property which better meets your needs (due to an existing adaptation) or is more easily adapted. This approach may also be taken if it is considered likely that you will need to, or wish to, move to other accommodation within the foreseeable future to meet your longer-term housing needs, or if you are underoccupying your current home. We will support you to find a suitable alternative property in these circumstances. If you are not willing or able to move, you will be further assessed in conjunction with the OT for adaptations to enable you to continue to live in your existing property. When you agree to a transfer as the best option, we will define an agreed period of time for a suitable property to be found.

MAXIMISING THE VALUE OF INVESTMENT IN ADAPTATIONS

- We will aim to ensure, wherever possible, that adaptations are re-utilised when reletting an adapted property. If you are in need of an adapted property you will be given, where possible, priority for the allocation of housing with suitable adaptations that meet your needs.
- Our records will be updated following the installation or removal of adaptations, so we have a comprehensive and up-to-date record of adapted properties.
- Where significant adaptations have been carried out to a property, a direct letting in partnership with the LA may be made to match the property to an applicant in greatest need.

9. Monitoring and Reporting

Data Recording

The fundamental principle of data quality and recording is that data should be right first time, which means that the responsibility is held at the point at which it is collected and recorded. All colleagues are responsible and accountable for the quality of data they collate and record. In the case of adaptations, our Surveyors lead on DFG requests, and completed adaptations are recorded against the property on our Asset Database.

We are committed to ensuring that the information we keep relating to home adaptation information is complete, accurate and accessible, and proactively used when properties become empty to maximise our ability to re-use major adaptations.

Monitoring Effectiveness

Monthly monitoring and reporting will be undertaken to ensure adaptations are delivered on a timely basis and to keep track of expenditure against budget.

10. Quality Assurance

In order to monitor the quality of the overall service, if you have used the aids and adaptations service we will ask you to complete a satisfaction survey. Customer satisfaction information will be obtained on 100% of major adaptations works and a minimum of 10% of all minor adaptations.

11. Communication, Training and Implementation

Customers

- We recognise that an adaptation can have a significant impact on the lives of you and your family, so it is essential to involve and support you at each stage of the process.
- You will be provided with the name and contact details of the officer who will be supporting you.
- You will be contacted initially by telephone followed by written correspondence confirming the discussions and providing details of the process to be followed, and contact will be maintained throughout using your preferred method of communication.
- We will conduct a Customer Feedback / Satisfaction survey with all customers who require Major Adaptations. We will use this information to continually review the service.
- This policy will be available to colleagues on the intranet, and to customers via our website. The website also contains a [specific webpage for Aids and Adaptations](#).

Colleagues

- Line Managers will ensure that colleagues receive appropriate training in the use of policies, documentation, systems and records required as part of their role. Induction, supervision and appraisal processes may be used to monitor colleague's understanding and compliance with expectations.
- Line managers will ensure that this policy and associated responsibilities are communicated to colleagues in meetings and performance reviews, and appropriately covered within departmental business plans, standard operating procedures, contingency plans and strategies.

12. Legal and regulatory framework

The main areas of law relevant to this policy are:

- Equality Act 2010 gives tenants the right to request 'reasonable adjustments' to be made to their homes to accommodate any needs because of their disability. 'Reasonable adjustments' can be changes to policies, practices or terms of your agreement. They can also mean providing extra equipment or support known as 'auxiliary aids'. Schedule 4, section 8 of the Equality Act 2010 provides that it is never reasonable for a landlord to have to take a step which would involve the removal or alteration of a physical feature.
- Regulatory framework for social housing in England
 - Homes Standard: Registered providers shall co-operate with relevant organisations to provide an adaptations service that meets tenants' need.
 - Tenancy Standard: Registered providers shall publish clear and accessible policies which outline their approach to tenancy management. This includes their policy on taking into account the needs of those households who are vulnerable by reason of age, disability or illness, and households with children, including through the provision of tenancies which provide a reasonable degree of stability.
 - Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard: Section 1.3.1b): Registered providers shall demonstrate that they understand the different needs of their tenants, including in relation to the equality strands and tenants with additional support needs.
- The Care Act 2014: Gives social care statutory duties relating to the assessment of and response to the care and support needs of adults and their carers, which includes the adaptation of properties. It also includes the statutory entitlement to community equipment and minor adaptations.
- Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Introduced the DFG in its current form - the DFG remains the only mandatory grant which a local housing authority must give.
- Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002: Gave local authorities the power to use their allocation of DFG funding in alternative ways through the publication and implementation of an appropriate policy, often called a Housing Assistance Policy. In recent years there has been a significant increase in local authorities using these flexible powers to support disabled people to remain at home.

- Guidance on landlord applications 1996: Allows for an application for a DFG to come either from a tenant or a landlord. Most applications currently come from the tenant, but a grant cannot be awarded without the landlord's permission to carry out the works.

13. Information Sharing and Confidentiality

We will provide information as required in line with relevant law and regulation.

We collect information (personal data) to enable us to:

- manage and support our relationship with you to comply with legal obligations
- improve our services
- achieve our legitimate business aims

We are committed to complying with data protection legislation when handling your data.

You have rights including access to your data and to object to the way it is processed. For more information on how and why we process your data and how you can exercise your rights please view our full Privacy Policy on our website at [Privacy notice – GreenSquareAccord](#).

14. Appeals

Customers can appeal against a decision made under this policy. Appeals must be made within 28 days of the date they are advised of the decision. Any additional evidence the customer wishes to be considered must be received with the appeal request. We will not consider appeal requests or evidence received after 28 days unless there are mitigating circumstances which will be assessed on a case by case basis. The appeal will be reviewed by a colleague more senior than the one who made the original decision, and an outcome will be provided within 14 days. If a customer feels there has been a service failure in respect of the appeal process they will be able to make a complaint in line with the Complaints Policy