
Aids & Adaptations Policy

November 2016

Tenant Services

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Approved by: Housing Committee

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PART 1 POLICY BACKGROUND & COVERAGE

Introduction

- 1.1 We aim to support you to live comfortably and independently in your home for as long as you can. We do this to help the continuation and improvement of your health and well-being.
- 1.2 38% (1,904) of our tenanted homes have at least 1 tenant who is 65 or over (25% in general needs and 13% in sheltered housing). This compares with just 19% of residents within the Stroud District overall¹. In the next 5 years, 8% more of our current tenants will be aged over 65. In addition, the population in Gloucestershire will continue to grow with a steep increase in the number of people aged over 65².

We hold data for 94% of our tenants; of those surveyed, 34% (1,701) have said that they have a disability (26% in general needs and 8% in sheltered housing). Of those who have said they have a disability, 15% are under the age of 65 (1.5% are 16-34 and 13.5% are 35-64).

Based on this information, it is expected that a growing proportion of our tenants will need some kind of aids and adaptations support over the next 5-10 years.

Key Principles of the Aids and Adaptations Policy

2.1 The key principles of the Aids and Adaptations policy are to let you know:

- what support is available through the aids and adaptations service and how to get it
- the types of aids and adaptations we carry out
- what we can't provide as part of the service
- what our responsibilities are
- what your responsibilities are

Relevant legislation and regulatory compliance

3.1 We will ensure that we carry out our aids and adaptations service in accordance with best practice and relevant policy and legislation, including the following:

- The Equality Act 2010
 - defines who should be considered as disabled
 - imposes a duty to make reasonable adjustments for a person where they would be substantially disadvantaged
 - ❖ compared to another person who is not disabled
 - ❖ due to a physical feature
 - ❖ due to a lack of auxiliary aid
 - requires that when providing our services we pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity in respect of the nine protected characteristics.

Our Aids and Adaptations service will be tailored to meet the needs of individuals; people may be treated differently to support their access to and experience of the service. All cases will be considered on an individual basis.

- The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 sets out the adaptations work that will be considered. See Appendix A.

- The Care Act 2014 contains provisions relating to adult care, support and health.
 - Stroud District Council's Constitution.
 - Tenant Co-regulation will scrutinise service delivery against the Aids and Adaptations service standard.
 - We will comply with the expectations of our regulator, the Homes and Communities Agency (HCA).
- 3.2 If we do not comply with this policy, you have the right to complain which you can do in writing (by post or e-mail), in person or by telephone. The details of our complaints procedure can be found in our SDC complaints policy.
<http://www.stroud.gov.uk/docs/complain.asp>

Best Practice

- 4.1 Exceeding best practice, we will aim to complete major adaptations within 26 weeks³.
- 4.2 We will discuss options to meet your needs with you, including whether moving to accommodation that would be easier for you to manage. We will provide support to help you move by investigating available and suitable empty homes or directing you to the Housing Advice Service and Gloucestershire Homeseeker.
- 4.3 We will respect the fact that you may want to stay in the home that you live in now and provide a high quality service to meet your needs, subject to a reasonable and practicable assessment by one of our officers.

Eligibility

- 5.1 You are eligible to receive aids and adaptation work if:
- you live in a Stroud District Council home
 - you have been assessed by an Occupational Therapist as in need of an adaptation
 - your home has been assessed by a Stroud District Council Officer as possible to adapt

Restrictions

- 6.1 If it is not reasonable and practicable to carry out adaptation works, in our opinion, we will refuse your application. This test refers to the following four areas³:
- Architectural and structural characteristics which make adaptation inappropriate
 - The practicalities of adapting properties with very narrow doorways, halls, stairways and passages or properties with very steep flights of stairs either internal or external
 - Conservation considerations and planning constraints which would prevent these works
 - The impact on other people in the property where works would reduce or limit existing facilities or amenities
- 6.2 We reserve the right to refuse to adapt a property which you have chosen to move to which did not meet your needs at the time that you moved. You will need to sign a form when you move in to confirm that you accept this condition of your move.

- 6.3 If you choose to give up a home which met, or had been adapted to meet, your needs, we will not provide support for you to move, or adapt a property that you have chosen to move to, without reasonable justification.
- 6.4 Adaptations will only be provided at the main place of residence of the service user i.e. this may affect students living away from home and children who stay at another property with a non-resident parent. Subsequent applications for works at separate addresses will not be agreed.
- 6.5 In the event of your death we reserve the right to move your successor to another property, if more than £5,000 has been spent adapting your property. This will be subject to our Housing Allocation policy and only apply if your successor is eligible for Council housing and they do not have an adaptation need.
- 6.6 You may be required to pay some money towards the cost of your adaptation work. (See section 6.)
- 6.7 We reserve the right to decline requests for alterations where you accepted an adapted property on an 'as seen' basis. Special consideration may be given to family homes where there is a medical need to bathe supported by an Occupational Therapists referral and doctors letter.

¹Inform, *Gloucestershire Research and Intelligence, Census 2011*

²Inform, *Gloucestershire Research and Intelligence, Understanding Gloucestershire*

³Department for Communities and Local Government, *Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People: A Good Practice Guide*

PART 2 CONSULTATION

- 1.1 All policies have been developed jointly by Councillors, tenants, tenant groups and members of staff. The Occupational Therapists' team based within the Stroud District were also consulted as part of the development of this policy. Best practice has also been sought from other organisations responsible for delivering an Aids and Adaptations service.

PART 3 AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY

- 1.1 We will not carry out a reasonable and practicable assessment or any adaptations work without an Occupational Therapist's assessment confirming that you are registerable as disabled and require an adaptation due to a medical condition and/or need.
- 1.2 We are not responsible for any adaptations work or equipment which is not fixed or secured to the property i.e. screwed or bolted down. Community Health and Social Care carry out the installation of any aids like this i.e. to furniture.
- 1.3 We will provide an adaptations service in line with Government best practice, this will meet the same standards as set out in the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Framework - See Appendix A for a list of adaptations that we will carry out.
- 1.4 Under this policy, the Council may choose to provide additional non statutory services. This could include the provision, maintenance and servicing of hoists and

stairlifts (including any motors or moving parts) or the funding of minor adaptations up to a specified amount. However, as discretionary services the Council reserves the right to withdraw these at any time.

PART 4 TRAINING

- 1.1 We will work with our staff and contractors to raise awareness of this policy and the Aids and Adaptations Service Standard. All relevant staff and contractors will be provided with a copy of this policy.
- 1.2 We will work with our staff and contractors to raise awareness of different people's needs and ways in which they may need to adapt the services provided to ensure that all people get a fair, equitable and accessible service.

PART 5 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- 1.1 There are two parts to the assessment:
 - An occupational therapy assessment to determine whether your ability to carry out basic human functions such as washing or feeding yourself is critically or substantially affected by your disability.
 - An assessment by an SDC officer of your home, to look at whether it is reasonable and practicable to make the changes that the Occupational Therapist has recommended i.e. can the property be satisfactorily adapted to meet your needs (see Section 1, 5.1)

Occupational Therapist's Assessment

- 1.2 As part of this assessment the Occupational Therapist will look at the following:
 - Risk to you if the adaptation is not done
 - How often you need to do the activity that requires the adaptation
 - Whether the adaptation will enable you to manage independently or in conjunction with a care package

As a guide, your disability must be significantly affecting your ability to carry out at least one of the following essential daily activities:

- Getting in and out of your home
- Accessing essential facilities within the home
- Using the toilet
- Maintaining personal hygiene
- Preparing hot drinks and essential food
- Getting in and out of a bed or chair

Stroud District Council's Assessment

- 1.3 As part of the assessment Stroud District Council's Officer will look at the following, with consideration for building regulations and Occupational Therapy best practice:
 - Property type
 - Installation of ramp possible
 - Current hard standing or room for one

- Presence of dropped curb
- Width of primary door to property
- Access for wheelchair within property
- Width and style of stairs
- Bathroom location
- Structural issues
- Room dimensions

We will consider each case individually and, if a case for a future cost saving can be made, consideration will be given to an enhanced solution or adaptation.

- 1.4 If it is not reasonable and practicable to adapt your home we will provide support to help you move by investigating available and suitable empty homes or directing you to the Housing Advice Service and Gloucestershire Homeseeker.

PART 6 FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

- 1.1 The value of the adaptation and your personal circumstances depends on who takes financial responsibility for the work. Please see the table below for information:

£0-£1,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stroud District Council Housing Revenue Account (Subject to Part 3, 1.4 - Funding would be provided by Community Health and Social Care if we withdraw money for this service)
£1,000-£30,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tenant Means Test • Stroud District Council Housing Revenue Account, in line with DFG limits
Over £30,000	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for adaptations costing in excess of this amount would need to be sought from another source

- 1.2 We own the adaptations equipment in your home. If you are assessed as having to make a contribution to the adaptation work, this will not be repaid if you die or move to another property. This means that we are responsible for all servicing, maintenance and repair for the adaptation.

Means Testing

- 2.1 An officer will provide assistance with the completion of means testing forms as well as early information on the likely level of contribution.
- 2.2 If you get a qualifying benefit a means test is not required. These are subject to change in accordance with DFG legislation and the Welfare Reform Act. Stroud District Council's officer will let you know which benefits qualify at the time of your application.
- 2.3 The amount of contribution is usually based on a financial assessment - a 'means test' – of average weekly income in relation to outgoings. There is no means testing for families of disabled children under 19. If you have a partner, your combined average weekly income will be assessed jointly.

Means testing will take into account savings although the first £6,000 of savings is disregarded.

A range of premiums and allowances is used for all essential outgoings, for example, rent and personal expenditure. Actual outgoings are not taken into consideration.

Depending on the outcome of this assessment the amount of contribution required from the tenant can vary from 0 to the full cost of the adaptation.

- 2.1 If your income is less than your assessed needs you will not normally need to contribute to the cost of the works.
- 2.2 If your income is more than your assessed needs, a proportion of your income will be used to calculate how much you could contribute towards the cost of the works.
- 2.3 If you need to make a contribution towards the cost of the adaptation, we will arrange with you for you to make this payment before work begins.

PART 7 VALUE FOR MONEY

- 1.1 In line with best practice, if you have been assessed as needing adaptations to your current home which exceed £5,000, we will consider an application to move to a property which is more manageable for your needs.

If your application is agreed based on the Gloucester Homeseeker Policy, we will give you help to move⁴. (See Appendix B)

- 1.2 Where more than £5000 is spent on adaptations for you, we will ask you to sign a certificate of future occupation where you will confirm that you will stay in your home for at least a period of 10 years except where health or other relevant circumstances do not permit this. Consideration will be given to cases where a move results from the impact of changes made under the Welfare Reform Act.
- 1.3 If you move during the time covered by the future occupation certificate, you will be expected to repay some of the cost of adapting your home as follows:

Up to £1,000	You will not be asked to repay any money.
Between £1,000-£30,000	You will be asked to repay the cost of works. The percentage of costs that you will be asked to pay will reduce depending on how many years it has been since the adaptation work was done.

- 1.4 To maintain best value for money, we will follow our procurement and financial regulations when awarding aids and adaptations work.
- 1.5 We will endeavour to make savings through economies of scale.
- 1.6 Where tenants take advantage of the support offered to help them move to a property which meets their needs, savings will be made as adaptations to their original property will not be needed. Better use can also be made of the housing stock by having the right people in the right homes.

⁴Housemark Knowledge Base, *Your Homes Newcastle and Wolverhampton Homes*

PART 8 REVIEW OF THE AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS POLICY

- 1.1 We will review this policy annually unless there is a change in legislation or regulation.

- 1.2 Where there is a change in legislation that has an impact on the policy, the policy will be reviewed within 3 months of the legislation or regulation coming into effect.

Date for review of the policy:

November 2016

1.1 Based on the Disabled Facilities Grant Framework, we will:

FACILITATE ACCESS BY THE DISABLED OCCUPANT

- to and from the dwelling
- to a room used or usable as the principal family room
- to a room used for or usable for sleeping
- to a room in which there is a lavatory
- to a room in which there is a bath or shower
- to a room with a wash hand basin

Such works may include:

- Ramping and/or handrails to the main external door. This could be a rear door instead in the case of a rear access. Only one access point will be allowed for each dwelling.
- Widening the main entrance door and the doorways to the bedroom, bathroom and living room to facilitate wheelchair access. Access to other rooms may be considered where the disabled person is a carer.
- Stair-lifts or vertical lifts in some cases, where this is necessary to allow access to the living room, bathroom and disabled person's bedroom.
- Where the disabled person is in a wheelchair and has difficulty walking to the house, and where existing on-street parking is considered unsatisfactory and a marked disabled parking bay is not possible, a hard-standing (3.6 x 4.8 max) and associated crossover for vehicle access will be considered. A hard-standing will only be given where it affords a more economic solution than providing additional paths/ramping from roadside parking. NOTE being a holder of a blue badge is not the eligibility criteria for this item.

The following works will not be considered

- Portable Ramping except in very exceptional circumstances
- External stair-lifts
- Automatic door opening mechanism to a main entrance door – unless the person is able to independently leave the building otherwise, but unable to push or pull the door open, in which case it may be considered.
- Door entry systems (that unlock the door remotely) - unless the person is able to independently leave the building otherwise but is unable to unlock the door which is their only means of accessing their home, in which case it may be considered. NOTE it is expected that other options such as a keysafe will suffice for carers, and door entry systems will not be considered for the housebound.
- Walkways to and from garages or scooter storage areas
- Drop kerbs, hard standings and ramps for non- wheelchair users/non-drivers.
- Ramps for scooters

FACILITATE THE USE OF WASHING FACILITIES

- Adapting the bathroom and/or toilet facilities to suit the disabled person's needs.

Such works may include:

- Over bath or level access showers (or shower trays on the first floor)
- Lever taps,
- Specialist WCs, (Closomat or Gerbit etc.) provided there is a proven clinical need.
- Height adjustable wash hand basin- if the only basin is in the main bathroom and shared by other family members

The following works will not be considered

- Provision for height adjustable bath or hand basin if the client receives access to their own bathroom as part of the adaptation process
- Height adjustable baths will not be provided to meet carers needs
- Sockets for Shaver/Electric Toothbrush
- Additional adaptations for private w/c, to suit oversize wheelchairs – adaptations will be to suit standard size NHS wheelchairs only.
- The adaptation or provision of more than one bathroom to a house e.g. additional ground floor w.c., separate wet room and family bathroom, will not normally be considered unless evidenced by functional need.

FACILITATE THE PREPARATION AND COOKING OF FOOD

- Preparing hot drinks and essential food

Such works may include:

- Lever taps
- If the disabled person is the principal food preparer in the household, then the kitchen will be made wheelchair accessible, with worktops and sink at a fixed height plus oven-housing unit if necessary and food storage in an accessible position, lowered light switches and accessible power points.
- Where the disabled person is NOT the principal food preparer in the household it may be possible to carry out minor adaptations to allow them to prepare light meals or hot drinks. Typically this could include a short length of low-level worktop with power points for a kettle/microwave.

The following works will not be considered

- Height Adjustable Accessible Kitchen work Surface
- Provision of White Goods.
- Major adaptation to the kitchen where someone other than the disabled person does and will continue to do the cooking and preparation of meals.

- Extensions or enlargement to kitchens unless necessary to provide turning space for a wheelchair and suitable space cannot be achieved by rearrangement of the existing facilities.

FACILITATE ACCESS TO THE GARDEN

- providing immediate access to the garden

Such works may include:

- Only one access will be provided to a garden area.
- Generally one access will be sufficient to access both the house and the garden
- Making safe the existing access for the disabled occupant to use

The following works will not be considered

- Provision of secondary access from dwelling house. e.g. creating a side access so a person can also go around the side of a house
- Where homes have communal gardens served by a single access, individual access to the garden from the disabled person's home will not be provided unless it can be demonstrated that their condition makes the travel distance excessive and unreasonable.
- Landscaping gardens to make them more suitable for the disabled person
- Formation of patios, garden paths, walkways from garages and sheds etc
- Creating a safe play area or secure boundary fencing

OTHER WORKS

Additional rooms and extensions

- Additional bathrooms or bedrooms may be allowed where they are specifically for the disabled person and it can be demonstrated that adaptation of other rooms or space or access to those rooms in the property is unsuitable. Extensions will only be allowed following a detailed cost/benefit analysis of alternative options and are subject to the £30,000 cap on costs.
- Requests are sometimes received to provide separate bedrooms where disabled children with behavioural difficulties share a room with other siblings and disturb their sleep. This will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that the child is prone to violent outbursts and there is risk of physical harm to the child or to the other siblings.

Heating

- Heating the rooms that are in everyday use by the disabled person where a medical need can be demonstrated will be considered. This does not include repair to existing systems. Changes to the type of heating system will only be allowed if evidenced by medical need.

Repairs

- Where an adaptation cannot be carried out due to disrepair issues, limited repairs may be carried out. This includes works such as replacement of rotted flooring or strengthening of the floor as part of a level access shower installation, electrical repairs to enable works to be carried out safely, and dealing with low water pressure.

The following works will not be considered

- Alterations to the height and/or position of light switches and power points to make them accessible to the disabled person.
- Provision of laminate glass or specialist lighting or guards to fires and around radiators where disabled children with violent behavioural problems may harm themselves.
- Provision of enhanced fire alarm systems for those with hearing difficulties.
- Carrying out structural alterations where necessary to provide fixings for disabled equipment provided by Social Services e.g. fixing for tracking /overhead hoists.
- Any additional works required to comply with listed building consent
- Major repairs such as replacing defective drainage, a full rewire.
- Scooter access and storage and charging points
- Storage areas and charging points for wheelchairs,
- Storage areas for equipment and children's equipment.
- Portable/non-fixed aids, e.g. bath hoists
- Provision of disabled aids and equipment that can be fitted with no or little structural alterations. These are likely to be able to be removed fairly easily and re-used if the disabled person should decide to move in the future.
- Service contracts for lifts and other equipment.
- Replacement of rooms or parts of rooms which have been "lost" by carrying out adaptations (e.g. where a ground floor living room or dining room is converted into a bedroom with en suite shower room for a disabled person, the construction of a "replacement" living room or dining room for use by the rest of the family could not be grant aided)
- Fittings in rooms, for example built-in cupboards, wardrobes, storage units etc
- Extensions to living rooms.
- Provision of treatment rooms
- Provision of pager systems linked to doorbells or telephones for the profoundly deaf.
- Floor coverings (except thermo-plastic tiles or similar permanent floor finish to bathroom area).
- Wall tiling (except splash backs and immediate shower areas).
- Sliding doors/two way doors
- Air conditioning.
- CCTV
- Provision of clothes drying facilities
- Formation of bin store areas
- General provision of external lighting