

Title:	Aids and Adaptations Policy
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out our approach to requests for aids and adaptations.
- 1.2 If a resident experiences difficulty moving around their home or building, we may be able to provide adaptations to make their environment more accessible. We understand the value of these adaptations in helping residents maintain their independence and continue living in their own homes.

2. Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of the policy and procedure is to:
 - Ensure that aids and adaptations are completed in line with the specifications outlined in an Occupational Therapist's assessment.
 - Treat all residents applying for aids and adaptations in a fair and equitable manner.
 - Promote independence by creating safer and more accessible living environments tailored to residents' needs.
 - Facilitate timely and efficient processing of applications to minimise delays in providing essential adaptations.

- Collaborate with external professionals, such as healthcare providers and social services, to deliver comprehensive support.
- Uphold principles of equality, diversity, and inclusion by addressing barriers faced by individuals with disabilities or mobility challenges.

3. **Scope**

- 3.1 This policy applies to all socially rented properties owned and managed by Women's Pioneer Housing (WPH). Leasehold and Market Rent properties are not covered by this policy.

4. **Key Terms and Definitions**

- 4.1 Aids and adaptations refer to modifications or enhancements made to the homes or communal areas of residents with disabilities, enabling them to perform daily activities. These do not include responsive repairs. Adaptations are classified as follows:
- **Minor adaptations:** Costing up to £1,000, examples include lever taps, grab rails, repositioning door handles, and power sockets.
 - **Major adaptations:** Costing over £1,000, examples include lifting aids, stair lift installations, level-access showers, and wet room installations.
- 4.2 **Definition of Disability:** Under the Equality Act 2010, a disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out everyday activities.
- 4.3 **Role of Occupational Therapists:** Occupational Therapists (OTs) are healthcare professionals who assess the need for aids and adaptations in a resident's home following a referral.
- 4.4 **Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG):** The DFG is a means-tested grant provided by Local Authorities to fund adaptations that provide access to essential facilities, enabling a disabled individual to continue living in their home. The local authority must determine that the adaptation is both "necessary and appropriate" to meet the person's needs and that the proposed works are reasonable and feasible given the property's age and condition.
- 4.5 **Home Improvement Agency (HIA):** HIAs offer services to help older people, individuals with disabilities, and vulnerable individuals live independently and safely in their homes. Services may include home visits for advice on property modifications or coordinating with councils and Occupational Therapists to facilitate aids and adaptations.
- 4.6 **Defect Liability Period:** The defect liability period refers to the time following the practical completion of a new development during which the building contractor is responsible for addressing any identified defects.

5. **Legislation and relevant WPH Policies and Procedures**

5.1 This policy is underpinned by key legislation and regulatory frameworks that guide our commitment to supporting residents with disabilities and ensuring their homes remain safe and accessible. These frameworks include:

- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and 2005
- Equality Act 2010
- European Commission Human Rights Act 1998
- Fire Safety Act 2021
- Building Safety Act 2022
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970

5.2 Other WPH policies and obligations that influence this policy include:

- The Allocations and Lettings Policy
- The Voids Policy
- The Void Management Procedure
- The Responsive Repairs Policy
- Recharges Policy (under review)
- Resident Engagement Strategy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

6. **Our Approach**

6.1 We will not install or maintain aids and adaptations if an application for outright purchase (e.g., Right to Buy or Right to Acquire) is active.

6.2 Minor Adaptations

6.2.1 Residents requesting adaptations will be referred in the first instance to the relevant local authority Occupations Therapy Team (OT) who are best qualified to make assessments of the necessary work.

6.2.2 Residents can approach the relevant OT team directly, or an application can be made on their behalf by WPH.

6.2.3 WPH reserve the right to arrange minor aids and adaptations without a recommendation where, in the judgement of the Tenancy Sustainment and Safeguarding Manager and the Head of Contracts, Compliance and Property Services, there is a clear and obvious need and where it is considered that the specification of the necessary work is within our competence. Where applicable, minor adaptation requests must be supported by relevant evidence, such as a letter from a medical professional.

6.2.4 We will aim to complete the work within one month of approval.

6.2.5 On receipt of an OT recommendation or request the action we take is dependent upon the estimated cost of the recommended works.

6.3 Major Adaptations

- 6.3.1 Major adaptation requests must be assessed and recommended by an Occupational Therapist (OT) and referred by social services. Residents can approach the relevant OT team directly, or an application can be made on their behalf by WPH.
- 6.3.2 Residents are encouraged to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) through their local authority to fund the cost of major adaptations. We may assist in the application process and collaborate with the authority to secure the best outcome.
- 6.3.3 If a DFG is not awarded or funding falls short, we may consider paying the shortfall or we will work with residents to look at more suitable alternative accommodation.

6.4 Internal Transfers

- 6.4.1 At our discretion, we may relocate residents to properties already adapted to their needs rather than modifying their current homes.

6.5 Asset Management and Record Keeping

- 6.5.1 We will maintain accurate records of major aids and adaptations to inform property management, allocations, and maintenance.

6.6 Inspection and Repairs

- 6.6.1 We will inspect major adaptations costing over £1,000 and ensure residents can report any defects.
- 6.6.2 Repairs to aids and adaptations are carried out unless the defect liability period is still active. Maintenance of adaptations after the warranty period may incur service charges (e.g., for stair lifts).

6.7 Retaining and Utilising Adaptations

- 6.7.1 Minor and major adaptations (e.g., permanent ramps, wet rooms) are retained when a property becomes vacant unless they are beyond economical repair.
- 6.7.2 Major adaptations funded or co-funded by local authorities must remain in place for at least five years unless the resident passes away.

6.8 Declining Requests and Temporary Adaptations

- 6.8.1 Requests for adaptations may be declined if the property cannot be reasonably modified, the adaptation involves excessive structural work or poses health and safety risks. In such cases, alternative options, including rehousing, may be explored with the resident.

6.8.2 Decisions are made on a case-by-case basis, considering individual circumstances including health issues, funding options, costs to WPH and feasibility to modify the property.

6.8.3 Where a decision has been made to decline the application, residents can appeal the decision and ask it to be looked at by a dedicated panel of directors and a representee from the Resident Engagement and Scrutiny Panel.

7. Communal Areas

7.1 Requests for adaptations in communal areas are assessed individually, and consultations are held with affected residents.

8. Equality and Diversity

8.1 WPH will ensure that this policy is applied fairly and consistently. We will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people in line with our Equality and Diversity Policy. We will act sensitively towards the diverse needs of individuals and communities and will take positive action or make reasonable adjustments where appropriate.

8.2 We actively monitor access to the services provided under this policy to ensure fairness and equality.

8.3 Requests for Reasonable Adjustments: All resident requests to accommodate their needs are carefully considered and addressed where possible and economically viable, in line with other relevant policies and legislation.