



**WOKINGHAM
BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**Disabled Facilities Grants
&
Aids and Adaptations Policy**

UNCLASSIFIED

Disabled Facilities Grant & Aids and Adaptations Policy

Document Control Information

Title: Disabled Facilities Grants & Aids and Adaptations Policy

Number: 745

Date: Approved by PSLT 6th April 2017 for adoption from May 2017
Oversight from Lead Member, Richard Dolinski 21st February 2018

Review date: March 2020
June 2024
June 2025

Version: 1

Classification: Unclassified

Owner: Anita Balmer and Yasmin Ahmad

Version	Date	Description
Version 1	16/03/2018	New document for ASC policies and procedures library.

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Disabled Facilities Grants

Introduction – current policy and context

A suitable home can help disabled people of all ages to build and sustain their independence and maintain connections in their community. There are currently too many older and disabled people living in homes that make it difficult for them to do everyday tasks like washing and using the bathroom, cooking, or getting out and about easily. Many homes are poorly designed for older age or changes in care and support needs. In fact, in 2019-20, around 1.9 million households in England had one or more people with a health condition that required adaptations to their home. (DFG delivery: Guidance for Local Authorities – March 2022)

Wokingham Borough Council Housing Strategy 2020-2024 “Right Homes, Right Places” Housing plays a huge role in the health, environmental and economic well-being of everyone who lives in the borough. It is more than just bricks and mortar; everyone is affected by housing. Housing has become the defining economic and social issue of our time. We have committed to support people, where it is needed most, to live independently in their own homes.

Wokingham Borough Council’s Adult Social Care Strategy 2020-2025 states that our focus is on promoting independence, supporting people to help themselves and providing choice, control, and flexibility.

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) were introduced by the *Local Government and Housing Act 1989 (Section 114)* and then updated in the *Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act (HGCRA) 1996*. The funding is designed to help meet the cost of adaptations to a property for disabled occupants, both adults and children. It is means tested for adults but not for children and young people under the age of 19. To qualify for a DFG, the required adaptations need to be **necessary and appropriate** (as determined by a Social Care or Housing Occupational Therapist employed by the Local Authority or by a competent Trusted Assessor) to meet the needs of the disabled person. It must also be **reasonable and practicable** (determined by the Housing Authority) for relevant works to be carried out.

Under the *Care Act 2014*, practice and rationale is defined and guided by wellbeing and prevention principles.

It is critical to the vision of the Care Act that the care and support system works to actively promote wellbeing and independence and does not just wait to respond when people reach crisis point. To meet the challenges of the future, it will be vital that the care and support system intervenes early to support individuals, helps people retain or regain their skills and confidence, and prevents need or delays deterioration wherever possible. (DH 2016, section 2.1)

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In 2002 the government brought in the Regulatory Reform (*Housing Assistance*) (*England and Wales*) Order 2002 (RRO) (Great Britain. Parliament 20002), which allowed local authorities greater freedom and opportunities when addressing housing issues. The order was extended in 2008-10 to include use of DFG money, creating greater flexibility within the fund and allowing an authority to address issues on a wider preventative basis.

Prior to 2015, DFG money came from the government to each local housing authority. The allocation is now paid through the Better Care Fund (BCF), managed by the local authority, however legal responsibility for provision of DFG remains with the housing authorities to meet their statutory duty to provide adaptations to the homes of disabled people, including for people aged 17 and under. Access to the BCF is dependent upon local council and clinical commissioning groups having jointly agreed spending plans based on an assessment of local needs and pre-set government service requirements.

This document sets out the way in which Wokingham Borough Council (WBC) will provide both mandatory and discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) for residential adaptations. WBC acknowledges that the provision of adaptations does not depend on the tenure of the property, and that applicants of WBC properties should not expect to receive a less favourable service than that of applicants who live in other tenures.

This document contains information on eligibility for grant assistance, conditions relating to applications, approval and payment of grant and other relevant conditions and requirements.

Part 1 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants

1.1 Introduction

- 1.1.1 Wokingham Borough Council, in its role as a local housing authority, is under the statutory virtue of the provision of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 to provide Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) for residential adaptations and where appropriate legislative conditions are met.
- 1.1.2 The purposes for which a DFG may be given are set out in the Act and can be summarised as follows, however subsequent guidance suggests this list is not exhaustive of what can be considered:
- Facilitating access – grant may be given for works to remove or overcome obstacles which prevent the disabled person from moving freely into and around the dwelling, access to the garden and enjoying the use of the dwelling and facilities or amenities within it.
 - Making a dwelling or building safe – a grant may be given for certain adaptations to the dwelling or building to make it safe for the disabled person and others residing with them.
 - Access to a room useable for sleeping – grant may be given for the provision of a room useable for sleeping where adaptation of an existing room in the dwelling (upstairs or downstairs) or the access to that room is unsuitable. Where the disabled person shares a bedroom with a spouse or partner a grant may be given to provide a room of sufficient size so that normal sleeping arrangements can be maintained.
 - Access to washing facilities – a grant may be given for the provision of, or access to a toilet, washing, bathing and/or showering facilities.
 - Facilitating preparation and cooking of food – a grant may be given to rearrange or enlarge a kitchen to improve the maneuverability for a wheelchair and

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provide specially modified or designed storage units, work top area etc. Where most of the cooking and preparation of meals is undertaken by another household member, it would not normally be appropriate to carry out full adaptations to a kitchen. However, it might be appropriate to carry out certain adaptations that enable the disabled person to perform minor functions in the kitchen, such as preparing light meals or hot drinks.

- Heating, lighting and power – a grant may be given to provide or improve the existing heating system in the dwelling to meet the disabled person's needs. A grant will not be given to adapt or install heating in rooms that are not normally used by the disabled person. The installation central heating will only be considered where the wellbeing and mobility of the disabled person would otherwise be adversely affected. Provision is also made under this section for the adaptation of heating, lighting and power to make them suitable for use by the disabled person.
- Dependent residents – a grant may be given for the works to enable a disabled occupant better access around the dwelling to care for another disabled person who normally resides there whether or not they are related to the disabled person. Such works could include adaptations to be part of the dwelling to which the disabled person would not normally need access, but which is used by the person to whom they are providing care and therefore it is reasonable for such works to be carried out.
- Common parts - a grant may be given for works to facilitate access to dwelling through common parts of a building.

1.1.3 The Authority must be satisfied that that the works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled person and are reasonable and practicable. Wokingham Housing Adaptations Team (WHAT) will reach the decision regarding eligibility assessment and determination of eligibility (necessary and appropriate, by an OT (occupational therapist) and reasonable and practicable, by a technical officer) and this will also include a test of resources. In reaching this decision the Authority will consider whether the proposed adaptations or improvements:

- Are needed for a care plan to be implemented which will enable the disabled person to remain living in their existing home as independently as possible:
- Would meet, as far as possible, the assessed needs of the disabled person considering both their medical and physical needs.
- Distinguish between what is desirable and possible and a legitimate aspiration of the disabled person and what is needed and for which the grant is fully justified.

1.1.4 Although the provision of mandatory DFG's is covered by the Act and the Authority must comply with the legislation, this document sets out the policy that will be applied in the provision of DFG's regarding matters not covered by the legislation.

1.2 Amount of mandatory DFG

The maximum amount of mandatory grant that the Authority can pay for any single grant application is set by Order and is currently £30,000. This amount is reduced by any contribution assessed as payable by the grant applicant (see section 3.3 regarding means tested contributions).

PART 2 DISCRETIONARY DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS

2.1 Introduction

In addition to providing mandatory DFG's, the Authority has the power to offer discretionary financial assistance by virtue of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) order 2002. Using these powers, the Authority has agreed to offer discretionary DFG's in certain specific circumstances. Discretionary grants are also known locally as "top-up" funding. It is expected that any discretionary grant or "top-up" assistance provided would not exceed £30,000 but would be subject to a secondary test of resources in all cases (including applications where the grant subject is a child). Applications should be made in advance of works and will not be considered retrospectively. Following agreement to award a discretionary grant, applicants are required to complete the agreed works within 12 months. Regarding applications for works for a child with dual residency, or for relocation expenses, quotations from independent contractors are required as evidence of reasonable cost. Generally, payment of any discretionary grant will be made on completion of works.

2.2 "Top-ups" to mandatory schemes

These would only be considered if:

- The proposed scheme is for works identified under main scope of Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- If the applicant can demonstrate that they are not able to self-fund the additional cost through a secondary test of resources
- Applications for alternative funding has been unsuccessful i.e. Housing Association, charities etc.
- Where failure to have works carried out would pose significant risk to the service user and their carer
- Where completion of works would potentially bring savings in other areas of social care provision, e.g. reduction in cost of care package
- Where the council can provide the additional funds without impact on other mandatory applications in progress at that time.

The decision to award any "top-up" funding will be made by a panel of appropriate officers, known as "DFG panel", which will convene once a month. The panel will consist of:

- Head of Assets
- Appropriate representative (Tier 4) from Adult Social Care
- Appropriate representative (Tier 4) from Children's Services

The meeting will also be attended by the following Officers to present the case and answer any questions:

- Housing Adaptations Team Manager
- Housing Adaptations Team Grants Officer
- Case Occupational Therapist

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The purpose of the panel is to:

- Ensure that it meets the main purpose of a DFG as laid out in the Act.
- Scrutinize plans to ensure that the aims of the scheme cannot be achieved more cost effectively.
- Ensure that all alternative funding streams have been exhausted.
- Consider the cost to the Authority regarding its other within year mandatory/statutory commitments and ensure a method of recovery is considered.

WBC reserves the right to recover any discretionary grant or top-up e.g. a “top-up” loan secured on the property, repayable in instalments, or on an ad-hoc basis as the applicant is able, or upon sale of the house (an entry is placed with the Local Land Charges register for 10 years based up the formal completion of works date).

2.3 Dual residency of a disabled child

In cases where families separate, and a court order provides that residence of the disabled child is split between parents (or other designated guardian) the Authority may consider the award of a discretionary grant to one/second property. Mandatory DFG’s can only be provided to the “sole or main residence” of the disabled applicant. The main residence will be determined by the address that is used for benefit correspondence (i.e. Child benefit). This may or may not be within Wokingham Borough.

In addition to the usual considerations for discretionary/“top up” funding (see 2.2), the panel will also consider discretionary funding of adaptations to a second home in the borough should the child receive a significant amount of care at that property. The panel will consider each case on individual merit; however the details of any court order, specifically the allocation of time with each parent, impact the proposed adaptations will be influential in determining need.

2.4 Alternative works and reduced schemes

In situations where the applicant wishes to undertake more works or an alternative design than that considered **necessary and appropriate**, the Authority may consider a payment equal to the cost of the recommended works. The applicant will meet the additional cost of the scheme. The applicant would have to provide evidence that these works were practicable and permissible under planning regulations.

Should the applicant not wish to undertake all of the works considered **necessary and appropriate** i.e. consider a reduced scheme, the Authority will require them to confirm in writing;

- They have been made aware of the implications and risks in declining recommended works by the Occupational Therapist
- Should the applicant apply for DFG (within 5 years) and their situation (regarding care needs and financial resources) remains unchanged, payment for any works subsequently required (having been previously excluded) will only be made up to the maximum grant amount which was available at the time of original application.

2.5 Assistance with moving costs

- A relocation grant of up to £10,000 may be available to an applicant who owns or privately rents their property if adaptations to their current home are not feasible or reasonable and they are considering relocating to another more appropriate property, as determined by an Occupational Therapist. It is subject to the same test or resources as is the mandatory grant.
- A discretionary grant may be made towards specific relocation cost such as estate agent fees, legal and removal costs, but not the cost of the actual property, subject to a secondary test of resources.
- If on the sale of the existing property, a net equity of more than
- £10,000 is released the Authority will only fund the physical cost of removal. (Net equity refers to any equity released when the purchase price of the new property is less than the existing property's selling price).
- The new property must be the disabled person's main residence, and no applicant will be granted assistance with moving costs on more than one occasion.
- Should the applicant move from the new property within 5 years then the Authority may seek to recover the grant.

PART 3 GENERAL REQUIREMENTS AND GRANT CONDITIONS

The following general requirements and conditions will apply to both mandatory and discretionary DFG's

3.1 Applications for Grant

3.1.1 Definition of disability

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person (child or adult) is defined as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.

Under this definition;

- 'Substantial' is more than minor or trivial e.g. it takes much longer that it normally would do complete a daily task like getting dressed.
- 'Long term' means 12 months or more, e.g. a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection.

There are special rules about recurring or fluctuating conditions e.g. arthritis. Further guidance can be accessed on Gov.uk.

Progressive conditions – are ones that get worse over time. People with progressive conditions can be classed as disabled.

Conditions that automatically meet the definition of disabled under the Equality Act are HIV infection, cancer and multiple sclerosis.

3.1.2 Applicants Criteria

The Authority cannot consider an application for a mandatory or discretionary DFG until it is satisfied that the applicant:

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- Owns or proposes to own (has a mortgage relating to) the property where works are required and has minimum of 5 years lease/tenancy available to them
- Is a tenant of the property where works are required.

An application for a DFG must be accompanied with either an owner or tenants certificate, and confirmation that they as the owner or landlord, reasonably intend the disabled person, or the disabled occupant (in case of the landlord) will live in the property as their only or main residence throughout a period of five years following completion of adaptation works.

3.2 Cost of work

The Authority is obliged to ensure value for money, therefore needs to ensure that works meets the needs of the applicant and has no obligation to provide high specification scheme. Should the applicant wish to have a higher specification, at greater cost, they will be required to fund this.

The applicant will be required to obtain three or four quotes (depending on scale and scope) for the proposed works, depending on complexity and anticipated value. WHAT are able to undertake this for the applicant including project managing the scheme through to completion. The grant is usually approved based on the cheapest quote unless there are extenuating circumstances. Where the applicant wants to use a contractor that will cost more than the quote, and the contractor is deemed acceptable, the applicant will be required to fund the additional cost direct to the contractor.

Any assessed contribution that is determined following the test of resources will also be payable direct to the contractor or through WHAT. Should WHAT be engaged in the grant process, the contribution shall be paid prior to commencement of works and held in a 'suspense account' and then transferred to the contractor on completion.

3.3 Means tested contributions

Applicants, except for those specifically exempt (children and ex-services personnel), will be required to complete a test of resources (TOR) to determine any contribution that they are required to make towards the cost of works. The Authority will undertake such test of means in line with the prevailing statutory provisions in force at the point of application. In most cases a preliminary TOR will be undertaken prior to referral to the Housing OT to provide the prospective applicant with an early indication of their likely contribution. Preliminary TOR will not necessarily be required for urgent cases or where the Authority is aware that the prospective applicant is in receipt of a means tested/passport benefit i.e. pension credit, income support.

3.4 Grant approval

The Authority is required to inform the applicant the outcome of their application within six months of submission. An application is deemed to be complete when the following documentation has been provided. WHAT can assist with this process:

- A completed application form
- Appropriate owner or tenant certification
- Appropriate evidence of financial resources to determine any requirement to contribute to cost of works

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- Appropriate number of quotes
- Confirmation by the Authority's Occupational Therapist and Technical Officer that works are necessary and appropriate and reasonable and practicable in accordance with legislation.
- In case of discretionary DFG appropriate evidence depending on nature of the request.
- Signed copy of the Grant Conditions

The Authority will not approve an application for a Grant retrospectively or where works are already in progress.

3.5 Payment of grant

3.5.1 Completion of work

- The Authority will pay the contractor the grant on satisfactory completion of agreed works.
- The applicant will be responsible for payment of their contribution direct to the contractor and for any additional works undertaken at their request (see section 9.3 where WHAT are engaged)
- Should a dispute arise between the applicant and the contractor and the Authority is satisfied that works have been completed to a satisfactory standard, this is will a matter between the applicant and the contractor, where WHAT are engaged they may be able to act as arbitrator.
- If the Authority is not satisfied with the standard of works, they will delay payment until such time as the issues have been resolved.

3.5.2 Entitlement to grant ceases

- Where the applicants ceases (i.e. they sell their home, or the tenancy is ended) to be entitled to the DFG prior to completion of works, the Authority is required to cease payment or stop any further instalments.
- The Authority has the right to demand the return of any instalment that has already been paid together with interest. The Authority will consider each case in regard to the individual circumstance when deciding to recover such payments.

3.5.3 Changes in circumstances

In some cases there are changes in circumstance after the grant has been approved that affects payment, such as:

- Where works cease to be **necessary and appropriate** to meet the needs of the disabled person
- The disabled person ceases to occupy the dwelling
- The disabled person dies.

In such circumstances, the Authority can take action is it deems appropriate such as:

- Stop the grant from being paid, or cease further instalments,
- Agree for works or some of the works to be completed, and pay the grant or an appropriate proportion of it.
- Seek to re-determine the application regarding the new circumstances.

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The Authority has the right to demand the return of any instalment that has already been paid together with interest. The Authority will consider each case regarding the individual circumstance when deciding to recover such payments.

3.5.4 Cases where grant may be recalculated, withheld and repaid

The Authority is entitled to refuse, or reduce payment of make any further instalment in the following circumstances:

- The Authority ascertains that the amount of grant was approved on the basis of inaccurate information and exceeds that which the applicant is entitled.
- The Authority ascertains that without their knowledge the eligible works were started before the application was approved.
- The works are not completed within 12 months of grant approval
- The cost of works is less than estimated
- The work has been carried out by a different contractor to who quoted for work at point of application.

The Authority can demand that the applicant repay all or part of the grant together with interest. The Authority will consider each case in regard to the individual circumstance when deciding to recover such payments.

3.5.5 Repayment in case of compensation relating to works

If the applicant makes a successful relevant claim for compensation, they are required to repay the grant so far as appropriate out of the proceeds. A relevant claim is:

- An insurance and/or legal claim against another person in respect of damages to the premises to which the grant relate
- A legal claim for damages in which the cost of the works to the premises to which the grant relates is a part of the claim.

3.5.6 General provisions

- Where work has commenced but grant entitlement has ceased and where the Authority has decided that the works or part of the works should be completed, and the grant or appropriate proportion of it paid, the Authority will arrange to make good so that the property is safe, secure and water-tight.
- The Authority is not obliged to carry out such works such as finish works to completion e.g. finishing of internal surfaces and plumbing new facilities (unless these are the only facilities in the property). Any work over and above making the property safe, secure and water-tight is the responsibility of the applicant.

3.5.7 Deferring grant payment

The Authority has the discretion to defer any payment of an approved grant for a period of up to twelve months from the date of approval.

3.6 Grant conditions following completion

There are certain grant conditions that run for a period following the completion of the works/grant. These conditions will commence from the certification date (when works were agreed to have been satisfactorily completed), and shall remain in place for five years, assuming the applicant continues to have interest in the property.

3.6.1 Repayment in case of disposal of premises

The Authority may demand that the applicant may repay a proportion of the grant not exceeding £10,000 if:

The applicant disposes (either by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the property within in 10 years of the certification date and the authority having considered –

- a) the extent to which the applicant would suffer financial hardship were they required to repay the proposed proportion of the grant
- b) whether the disposal of the property is to enable the applicant to take up employment or to change the location of their employment
- c) whether the disposal is made for reasons connected with the physical or mental health or wellbeing of the applicant or of the disabled person
- d) whether the disposal is made to enable the applicant to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or vulnerable and who needs care and support, which the applicant is intending to provide.

is then satisfied that it is reasonable in all circumstances to request repayment.

The applicant is required to submit in writing their case in regard to why they should be considered exempt from repayment. Any decision to waive grant recovery will be made by the DFG discretionary grant panel.

3.7 Installation of equipment and maintenance

Typically the type of equipment that will be covered by the mandatory DFG includes:

- Stair lifts
- Through floor lifts
- Rise and fall shower tables
- Rise and fall/specialist baths
- Wash dry toilets

The Authority will, through grant assistance, pay a short maintenance/service plan for powered equipment funded by a mandatory grant. After which time the applicant is responsible for ensuring that the equipment is maintained and serviced in accordance with manufacturer's recommendations. The applicant is also advised to ensure that they have appropriate insurances in regard to the equipment.

If an application is made for the replacement of defective/obsolete equipment it will not be approved if it can be evidenced that the equipment can be repaired at reasonable cost in comparison to renewal, in such cases the cost of repairs will be the responsibility of the applicant.

3.8 Contractual relationships

- Following the referral from an Occupational Therapist, WHAT will form a schedule works that are considered **necessary and appropriate** and **reasonable and practicable**. This schedule will form the basis upon which contractors will be invited to quote. If the applicant is undertaking the works themselves, they will be required to obtain a minimum of two quotes (depending upon complexity of

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- the scheme).
- Whilst work is being undertaken WHAT will wherever possible visit the property to ensure that the work is being undertaken as per specification. On completion WHAT will complete a final inspection to ensure that works have been completed satisfactorily.
- Where WHAT are engaged and act as applicant's agent, they will ensure that all contractors satisfy the Authority's policy in regard to insurance, health and safety compliance, and hold appropriate accreditation and registration. It should be noted however that the applicant directly employs the contractor.

Part 4 Minor Works

4.1 Introduction

Clause 2 of the Care Act [2014] recognises the value and importance of early intervention, to prevent, and delay the need for care and support and reduce any need that already exists. The Authority will therefore consider undertaking minor works for which the DFG process would be deemed too cumbersome and lengthy. Examples of such works might include the provision of handrails to a staircase to allow access to upper floors, fitting of grab rails in a shower area to reduce risk of falls, fitting of a key-safe, construction of a ramp to give wheelchair access.

4.2 Application for Minor Works assistance

The need for minor works will usually be identified by an Occupational Therapist (following referral into adult or children's social care service) but maybe also be identified by another appropriately designated officer.

4.3 Direct payments for minor works

The applicant may request a direct payment to allow them to directly commission the agreed minor works. In this event the Authority would base the value of payment on an estimate from one of its contactors. Payment would be made direct to the customer on completion of works.

4.4 Policy amendments

Minor amendments that do not affect the broad approach of policy direction may be made by the DFG panel at any time. Major policy changes are only undertaken with agreement of WBC members and will be subject to prevailing legislation

4.5 Complaints

Where an applicant is dissatisfied with the service that they have received including regarding where a grant has been refused, they are advised to follow WBC complaints procedure.

Aids and Adaptations Policy

5 Policy Overview

This policy outlines Wokingham Borough Councils approach to aids and adaptation to tenant's homes within its housing stock. The policy covers tenant requirements for minor and major aids and adaptations, the application and assessment process, funding for adaptations and the maintenance of aids and adaptations.

6 Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to provide aids and adaptations to properties, or the provision of adapted rented accommodation, where this will directly relate to improving the quality of life of disabled tenants, vulnerable tenants and/or their carers. In doing so the Housing Service aims to make the most efficient use of the resources available to fund aids and adaptations, ensuring value for money, undertaking works in line with good practice principles, complying with legislation and ensuring equal opportunity.

7 Scope

The policy seeks to enable tenants to remain in their home and retain their independence and improve quality of life through the provision of aids and adaptations to the property.

8 Legislation/Regulatory Requirements

The Council will ensure that in the carrying out of all its aids and adaptations works it complies with all relevant legislative and regulatory requirements including:

- Housing Act 1985
- Chronically Sick & disabled Persons Act 1970
- The Single Equality Act (disability) Regulations 2010 (which replaces the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & 2005)

9 Equality & Diversity Impacts

This policy will be applied fairly and consistently to all tenants of Wokingham Borough Council regardless of gender, race, colour, marital status, national or ethnic origin, nationality, disability, sexuality, age, religion.

10 Review

This policy will be reviewed three years from the date that it was signed off by the relevant Tenant Group (standard industry practice) or earlier if there are changes in regulation regarding aids and adaptations.

11 Objectives of Policy

The Aids & Adaptations Policy sets out how in practice we will:

- Meet relevant legislative and regulatory requirements
- Determine eligibility for works to be undertaken
- Categorise the types of aids and adaptations installed
- Administer the application and assessment process
- Fund works (or facilitate where tenants want to 'self-fund works')
- Prioritise cases
- Maintain Aids & Adaptations
- Deal with letting of void properties that have had Aids or Adaptations installed

12 Description of Policy

12.1 Eligibility

The Housing Service will normally only consider a request for aids and adaptations if they are required for the benefit of themselves, their partner or a member of their immediate family who is permanently resident in the household.

The person for whom the works are being sought will need to demonstrate that they have a physical or mental impairment that has a long term, potentially substantial, effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities within their home. As a guide, the person will normally need to have an impairment that will last for the remainder of their life, or at least for a further 12 months or more, this being the statutory requirement. However, Minor works may be considered if there is a pressing need that has arisen, for example, a disability or condition has developed quickly, or the installation of a handrail is required for the period whilst a person is awaiting an operation.

Requests for works will not normally be approved where a Right to Buy application has been received and is being currently processed or if the applicant is on the transfer list.

Tenants on an Introductory Tenancy are not eligible for any aids or adaptations.

12.2 Types of Work

For the purpose of this policy an aid or adaptation is the provision of fixed equipment and/or modifications to the property or associated land (e.g. pathways) where there has been an identified need, subject to meeting the stated eligibility criteria (see section 8.1)

The Housing Service splits its aids and adaptations works into two types; 'minor' and 'major'. They are distinguished by their varying timescales, cost and the amount of actual work to be carried out to install the aid or make the adaptations.

12.3 Minor Aids & Adaptations

Minor aids or adaptations are those that can be carried out more quickly due to their limited scope of work and their relatively low cost.

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The Housing Service recognises that the timely provision of minor adaptations can often sustain the independence of individuals who may otherwise become dependent upon more substantial adaptations.

They are therefore seen as an important preventative service to tenants and The Housing Service will therefore make access to Minor adaptations as easy as possible.

Examples of this type of work may include:

RAILS	Galvanised Rails Grab Rails Newel rails Hand rails Stair handrails
KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS	Window opening equipment (non-electric) Lever taps Fixed Toilet Frame Carer Screen
ACCESS	Level door threshold Short concrete ramp/flag alterations Door Widening (1 only) Door entry intercom (simple speaker phone)
VISUAL IMPAIRMENT	Staircase applications External lighting to external door
HEARING IMPAIRMENT	Flashing/amplified doorbells Vibrating Flashing Smoke alarm alerts
GENERAL AND SAFETY MATTERS	Door and wall protectors Electric sockets/switches (1 only)

12.4 Major Aids & Adaptations

Major aids or adaptations are those that take more time to provide due to their more significant scope of work and their higher associated cost.

Examples of this type of work may include:

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Bathroom Fittings and Alterations	Showers over Baths. Level Access Showers (<6" step in tray) Wet room shower conversion Wash/dry w.c Larger or reposition of w.c pan. Hydraulic raising bath Height adjustable/auto wash hand basins
Kitchen Fittings and Alterations	Specialist Kitchen Units Low Height Surfaces Height adjustable appliances Creation of Turning Space
Providing front and rear access to homes, rooms and facilities	Ramps and Pathways Stair lifts Through floor lifts Widening Doors Low Level Light Switches and raised power sockets Internal room conversions Bathroom, bedroom (or both) extensions.
Street to property access	Drop Kerbs within The Housing Service' land boundaries Handrail provision with IC land boundaries Driveways

This list is not exhaustive and the works can vary widely dependent upon an individual's need and the configuration and location of the property.

For major works, the Council's established approach is to work with colleagues in Adult Social Care and Children's Services for assessment and a referral from an Occupational Therapist and will follow the same process as DFGs. Major works, including adaptations that require major building work, are subject to planning permission and/or building regulations, timescales for completion will be longer, but will ideally be carried out within 12 months.

The Occupational Therapist will carry out an assessment of the needs of the person requiring the aid or adaptation/s. When the Occupational Therapist visits the property, they will assess and discuss what the specific needs are. The Occupational Therapist will consider both immediate needs and potential needs in the future. Based on this assessment the Occupational Therapist will recommend a course of action that best meets the immediate and future needs of the person. In many cases this will include the potential for fixed equipment or physical alterations to the property in line with the usual types of Major Aids & Adaptations listed above.

If the Occupational Therapist recommends the installation of a **stair, step or through floor lift** the following considerations must be considered:

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- The installation of these lifts must comply with:
 - LEIA (Lift and Escalator Industry Association) regulations
 - EN 81-1:1998
 - LOLER: Lift Operations and Lifting Equipment
 - PUWER: Provision and Use of Work Equipment Regulations
 - Electricity at Work Regulations
 - COSHH: Control of Substances Hazardous to Health

Lifts enable tenants to maintain independence in their home, but it is likely that additional work, e.g. a level access shower, will be needed in the future. Because of this, the Housing Service will discuss potential future needs with the tenant before deciding whether to grant permission for this type of equipment to be installed.

If alterations to/from the property (pathways, ramping etc.) are being proposed, any works will need to comply with building regulations. In some cases, one of the options the Occupational Therapist should consider is recommending that The Housing Service works with the tenant to look at potential re-housing options to a home that better suits the longer-term needs of the person concerned. This may be because, for example:

- The existing property cannot be satisfactorily modified
- The costs of undertaking works would be too high, given the nature and scope of the physical changes required
- There are other properties available that are more suitable to meet the identified needs
- The existing property offers poor accessibility (e.g. installation of a level access shower may be inappropriate if there are steps on pathways up to the property or the property is a first floor flat with no lift facility)
- The tenant is actively seeking re-housing

Alternative housing could include arranging a suitable alternative home with another social housing provider. If such accommodation is available within a reasonable time from the date of application for the adaptation (normally within 6 months) the tenant would be expected to accept the alternative property.

Lettings to significantly adapted properties e.g. properties with wet rooms or where low-level kitchens are fitted are prioritised to the most appropriate applicant whose needs can best be met by allocating the property to them.

If a tenant refuses a reasonable offer of alternative accommodation, The Housing Service may refuse to undertake the requested adaptation(s). Under such circumstances, discussions will take place with the tenant setting out the options of self-funding or charitable funding.

Before undertaking any adaptation, the tenant must agree that the scope of works is satisfactory.

12.5 Funding Works

Wokingham Borough Council as landlord has determined that it will generally meet the cost of Aids & Adaptations to its properties. These costs are met through the Council housing revenue and capital budgets that are managed by The Housing Service. However, whilst The Housing Service will do everything it can to ensure there is sufficient funding to meet need, this is not always possible. One of the main aims of this policy and procedure is to enable The Housing Service to openly and transparently make decision about what can reasonably be afforded and to ensure the service delivers good value for money, fairly and equitably.

Applicants always have the option of discussing with The Housing Service the options available for self-funding the cost of any works, or seeking funding from a charitable source bearing in mind that, in such instances, permission to install the aid or adaptation/s may be required.

Tenants who choose to fund their own adaptations will be required to:

- Obtain written approval from the Housing Service for the work to be completed
- Obtain (if appropriate) formal planning consent and/or building regulation approval
- Provide details and drawings to allow an effective evaluation of the proposed works
- Complete works using a qualified and competent contractor
- Allow the Council to inspect the works on completion
- Sign appropriate documentation to transfer any equipment or fittings into the Council's ownership if they require the Housing Service to maintain the adaptation equipment or fittings

In normal circumstances the Council will not allow tenants to pay an additional sum to change or enhance the standard, quality and/or specification of the aids or adaptations to be installed.

12.6 Priority Cases

The Housing Service recognises that the usual timescales for the application, assessment, approval and installation process of up to 6 weeks for Minor Aids or Adaptations and up to 12 months for Major Aids & Adaptations may cause difficulty in some cases. For this reason, The Housing Service will seek to 'fast-track' those applications where a pressing need or urgency is identified, working with colleagues in Social Services and other agencies as appropriate.

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Instances where this 'fast-tracking' may be appropriate include:

- Situations where discharge from hospital is dependent upon aids or adaptations having been installed
- Where a disability or medical condition has developed particularly quickly
- Where the person requiring the aid or adaptation has had to move out of the property temporarily pending the works being undertaken
- Any other circumstance where an urgent need can be demonstrated

12.7 Maintenance of Aids & Adaptations

The Housing Service will maintain all approved aids and adaptations and will replace these at the end of their economic life provided they are still required. This includes all Minor and Major Aids and Adaptations and, most commonly, may include:

- Grab rails, door alterations, ramps, handrails, stair lifts etc.
- Low access baths, provision of showers and lever taps
- Alterations to kitchen units, raising electrical sockets and lowering switches.

12.8 Record Keeping

The Housing Service will record all works that we and/or Social Services carry out to properties. This information will be used to help us to properly repair and maintain aids and adaptations that have been installed and to help match future tenants with suitable homes.

The Housing Service will also collect information about the needs and requirements of our tenants to inform future programmes of work.

12.9 Void Properties

Where a tenancy is terminated in respect of a property in which an adaptation has taken place The Housing Service will consider the appropriateness of restricting the allocation of the property to match applicants on the waiting list who require the particular aid or adaptation, based on need, time waited, and types of adaptations required. This makes best use of stock; the investment made and ensures that disabled clients are considered first for adapted stock. However, it is more likely to be appropriate in instances where Major works have been undertaken rather than minor works.

If the adaptations installed in a property are no longer required, either because the current tenant or occupant (s) no longer require them (i.e. due to an improvement in health, the disabled person moving out, or their death) The Housing Service may re-convert properties by removing the adaptations, subject discretion. Examples of this might include:

- The removal of stair-lifts
- The removal of level access shower trays and their replacement with a bath (but not the installation of a bath in a wet room)

13 Who is/are Responsible for Overseeing the Policy?

The service manager for Asset and Maintenance will be responsible for overseeing the policy and ensuring it is adhered to.

Appendix Examples of works that are considered non-mandatory under DFG

- Electrical kitchen appliances i.e. cookers, hobs, refrigerators, washing machines and waste disposable units.
- Provision of cupboards and storage facilities considered above and beyond scope of need.
- Replacement of rooms/areas, which may have been lost/compromised due to adaptation (i.e. living area that may have been reduced in size or study/utility area that may have been converted, conservatory that may have been replaced by an extension).
- Fitments to room i.e. built in cupboards, light coverings, curtains etc.
- Extension to living room/areas.
- Formation of patios, walkways to and from garages/scooter areas.
- Service contracts for electrical equipment beyond 5yrs.
- Provision of treatment rooms.
- Floor coverings other than those required following adaptation of a bathroom/wet area or kitchen.
- Equipment which can be easily installed and removed with little or no structural modification, e.g. equipment available on core stock via Community Equipment Loans Service or alternatives to core stock items.
- Wall tiling other than splash backs and immediate shower area.
- Air- conditioning.
- Security systems i.e. burglar alarms, CCTV.
- Formation of refuse storage areas i.e. for garden waste/recycling bins etc.
- Provision of clothes drying facilities.
- Drop-kerbs, hard standings and ramps for non-wheelchair users/non drivers.
- Creation of play areas/fencing.
- Storage for outdoor equipment and vehicles i.e. cars, scooters, children's toys.