

Aids and Adaptations Policy

Asset Services

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Riverside is committed to the delivery of aids and adaptations that will enable our customers, or members of their household, to live independently and enjoy a better quality of life in a safe environment.

Our policy aims to enable the provision of an inclusive aids and adaptations service, which actively engages with all customers inclusive of any characteristics protected by the Equality Act 2010.

The policy will assist Riverside to deliver the 'Our Riverside Way' values and ways of working of 'We Care, We are Inclusive, We are Trusted.'

It also aims to ensure that we comply with all our legal and regulatory responsibilities; current requirements are set out principally in the following:

- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Children's Act 1989
- Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000
- Community Care (Delayed Discharges etc.) Act 2003
- Care Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regulations Act 1996

This policy will support with our compliance to meet the Social Housing Regulator's standards and regulatory framework. This framework requires us to understand and respond to the diverse needs of our customers.

Additionally, as a group-wide policy, this document has been the subject of consultation with customers, board members, employees and staff groups and sets out to reflect their requirements and priorities. The policy has also undergone an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA).

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This policy applies to customers, or associated family members living in Riverside homes, as well as properties which have services delivered by Managed Agents. It does not apply to leaseholders, owner occupiers, shared ownership or customers who have started the process of purchasing their property through the 'Right to Buy' scheme.

Only minor adaptations will be considered for properties situated on regeneration sites, unless the projected development scale is five years or more. As such, major adaptation requests will not be approved. In this instance, Riverside will support a customer with finding suitable alternative accommodation.

It will apply to provision within communal shared spaces where applicable and where an adaptation is required to provide a sustainable tenancy for a Riverside customer.

This policy should be read in conjunction with Riverside's Responsive Repairs Policy.

3. Principles

Riverside will endeavour to:

- Provide clear information relating to our aids and adaptations process, which is available to customers, their relatives and/or carers.
- Process and install reasonable requests for minor aids and adaptations within published timescales.
- Support and facilitate our customers in obtaining suitable alternative housing where a transfer is considered to be the best provision in line with Occupational Therapist (OT) recommendations.

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- Manage and allocate existing adapted properties efficiently to ensure that the impact on customers of the adaptations process is kept to a minimum.
- Provide adaptations which are reasonable, practicable and supported by an OT. Where applicable, we will work with local authorities to secure the required funding for major adaptations and keep the customer informed on the progress.
- Work in partnership with other agencies to maximise available resources and optimise funding available through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and ensure those resources are prioritised appropriately in line with best practice.
- Work wherever possible and/or relevant, in partnership with other agencies such as health authorities, commissioning bodies, or local authorities in order to meet authority-wide or sub-regional health/disability targets.
- Design new build properties to the specific requirements of customers where possible and appropriate.
- Ensure that appropriate servicing contracts are in place for any relevant equipment such as, but not exclusive to, track hoists, stair lifts and through floor lifts.
- Evaluate all requests for adaptations which are made on the basis of faith or cultural requirements, making suitable adjustments where reasonable and practicable.

To achieve this, Riverside aim to:

Adopt clear strategies:

- Devise a group wide operational procedure guide to enable front line staff to manage the requirements of our customers.
- Utilise a statistical model built on historic delivery data to ensure that budgets are available within our business plan for adaptations, with provisions aligned to an ever-increasing aging population.

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- Develop and implement a model to enable local and departmental action planning.
- Put in place appropriate resources to deliver our objectives.

Use information and analysis to drive strategy and action:

- Carry out equality analysis on all policies and significant change programmes to ensure they deliver our equality objectives.
- Utilise data collected within our stock condition surveying programme to ensure adapted properties are recorded within our stock condition database.
- Collect, review, and measure data on a regular basis so that it informs us of our performance in relation to Aids and Adaptations including lettings, complaints and satisfaction.
- Summarise the data gathered, within a demographic context where relevant, and report to Executive Directors and Group Board with appropriate recommendations to support assurance and management of risk.
- Provide a full explanation of why information is collected and what we use it for, treating sensitive personal data confidentially and only for the purposes of promoting and ensuring equality and fairness and improving outcomes.
- Take active steps to address any issues identified by the above reporting.

Embed best practice:

- Ensure that colleagues receive regular, relevant and up-to-date training and support to enable them to champion and meet the organisation's policy objectives.
- Support individual commitment to and ownership of Aids and Adaptations objectives by ensuring that appraisal conversations focus on the relevant behavioural competencies.

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- Ensure that, through our procurement processes, we appoint partners and suppliers with a relevant, robust and compliant approach to Aids and Adaptations, as well as the wider Equality, Diversity and Inclusivity (EDI) agenda.
- Provide guidance and support on all aspects of aids and adaptation provision by reference to our best practice group and sector experts. The best practice groups will also support with the continuous improvement of our existing practices.
- Ensure that we adopt sector best practice where applicable.

Have in place reasonable and accessible procedures and approaches to support the delivery of Aids and Adaptations:

- Make a clear commitment to stakeholders on how we meet their particular service requirements, provide clear information regarding the service to our customers in a format which reflects their diversity.
- Support effective communication by providing a range of contact methods, shaped to customers' requirements, including effective use of digital services.
- Ensure that no current or potential customer is discriminated against by managing a request for Aids and Adaptations on less favourable terms due to a protected characteristic.
- Involve customers in shaping and scrutinising services.
- Have procedures in place to ensure our properties comply with our legal obligations to meet requirements arising from disability and other protected characteristics including Aids and Adaptations procedures for customers.
- Recognise that disability includes mental health and that not all disabilities are visible.

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Minor adaptations are usually non-complex adjustments or fixtures costing less than £1,000. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Grab rails
- Additional banister rails
- Floor to wall / ceiling rails
- Half steps
- Adjustments to door handles / window latches
- Lever taps
- Flashing doorbells
- Key safes

Internal Process:

For any minor adaptations which exceed the threshold allowance, the Aids & Adaptations Officer must seek approval from either the Regional Head of Asset Strategy and Delivery or the Delivery and Performance Manager before proceeding.

	Threshold Allowance
Riverside: North, Liverpool City Region, South & Central and London (former One Housing Group)	Up to £1,000
Riverside Scotland	Reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Major Adaptations:

Major adaptations are usually significant changes to a property which cost more than £1,000. These adaptations will need to be recommended

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by an Occupational Therapist, employed by a customer's Local Authority. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

- Level-access showers
- Wet rooms
- Over bath showers
- Ramps
- Stair lifts / through-floor lifts
- Wash / dry toilets
- Specialist baths
- Extensions and/or Structural Alternatives

Funding:

In the first instance, wherever possible, Disabled Facilities Grants should be used in line with Local Authority agreements.

Major adaptations will usually be funded through a grant dependent on whether or not the customer meets the eligibility criteria and may be subject to passing a financial assessment.

Where the customer is unsuccessful in obtaining grant funding or where other funding cannot be sourced by the customer and evidence has been provided, we may, in exceptional circumstances, consider match funding or funding the whole cost of the adaptation, however each case will be considered on its own merits.

If the customer is funding the adaptation themselves, they will need to ask for permission before making any major adaptations to their home.

	Maximum Contribution Limit
Riverside: North, Liverpool City Region and South & Central	50% or £30,000 (whichever is higher).

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Riverside Scotland	Fully funded by HARP (Housing and Regeneration Programme).
London (former OHG)	Fully funded through DFG (Disabled Facilities Grant).

Reasons for Refusal:

An adaptation may be refused under the following circumstances:

- The occupancy is temporary in nature.
- It is not physically possible to alter the property in the requested way.
- It does not meet all planning and building regulation requirements, or there are legal or contractual reasons which prevents us from carrying out the adaptation; or it would present a health and safety risk.
- It reduces the bedroom count of a property.
- It is not for the customer or a member of their registered household.
- The need has not been identified by an Occupational Therapist.
- It would have an adverse impact on other residents.
- The property is in disrepair or scheduled to be demolished.
- The property is included in a regeneration scheme.

If we are unable to fulfil a customer's adaptation request, we will provide a full explanation in writing and our Housing Team will support them to find a suitable alternative property if necessary.

Communal Area Adaptations:

A request for an adaptation located in a communal area will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be led by the regional Aids & Adaptations Officer. Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:

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- Handrails
- Ramps
- Stair lifts / through-floor lifts
- Extensions

Maintenance, Repairs and Service Charges:

There may be circumstances where the responsibility to repair and maintain certain equipment is not held by Riverside, however, the responsible party will be clearly outlined and communicated at the time of installation. In all other cases, once a product warranty has expired, Riverside will undertake necessary repairs and maintenance to an applicable adaptation that is considered to be part of the property's fixtures and fittings.

A service charge may be applicable for mechanical adaptations to cover the cost to service and maintain the equipment where appropriate. Customer's will be notified in the event that a service charge is applicable.

Completion Timeframes:

	Minor Adaptation Timeframe	Major Adaptation Timeframe
Riverside: North, Liverpool City Region, South & Central and London (former OHG)	Usually within 28 days of being approved.	Usually within 6 months of being approved.*
Riverside Scotland	In line with the Scottish Housing Regulator.	In line with the Scottish Housing Regulator.

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*Unless there are exceptional circumstances, and a particular case needs to be prioritised.

Local Authority: If the Local Authority is completing the work on behalf of the customer, it will be completed in accordance with the timeframes set by the Local Authority.

Landlord Applications:

	Regional Process
Riverside: North, Liverpool City Region and South & Central	Claim from the council and then complete the works.
Riverside Scotland	Complete the works and then claim from the Scottish Government.
London (former OHG)	Complete the works and then claim from the council.

Removal of Existing Adaptations:

Properties will be allocated to customers based on their needs and any existing adaptations in a property will be taken into consideration. In some instances, customers may be allocated a property which include adaptations but may not be required, therefore, the following will apply:

	Process	Budget
Riverside: North, Liverpool City Region and South & Central and London (former OHG)	All requests will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and if reasonable, the removal will be actioned.	Voids
Riverside Scotland	The customer agrees to move into the property under the	Voids

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condition that the adaptation is retained / removed.
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If an adaptation is owned by the Local Authority, it is at their discretion as to whether or not they choose to remove it from the property. The customer should contact their local council if they require more information about this.

Critical Reactive Adaptations:

In the event that either an Occupational Therapist and/or Aids & Adaptation Officer has deemed a case to be critical due to an immediate risk to a customer's health and safety, a case management approach will be adopted in order for an appropriate solution to be agreed. As such, the following stakeholders should be involved:

- Aids & Adaptations Officer
- Housing Officer
- Lettings Team
- Care & Support
- Local Authority

The above stakeholders should assess whether a more suitable property can be sourced to meet the urgent needs of the customer, or whether a temporary decant is required whilst the works are being undertaken as quickly as possible.

4. Further Information & Support

Definitions:

Aids and adaptations are items of equipment or special fixtures and fittings which may improve access to a customer's home, improve a

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customer's mobility in and around their home, or help with daily living, including for religious and cultural reasons.

Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an equal opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents and believing that no one should have poorer life chances because of where, when or whom they were born, or because of other characteristics. Promoting equality is about behaving in a way that tackles inequalities, aiming to ensure that all staff and service users are treated fairly, and do not experience discrimination.

Promoting **diversity** is about recognising that everyone is different and creating an environment that values each customer and employee ensuring that services are delivered that suit all sections of the community.

Inclusion is about positively striving to meet the needs of different people and taking deliberate action to create environments where everyone feels respected and able to achieve their full potential.

Protected characteristics are the listed characteristics which are protected by the Equality Act 2010.

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5. Roles and Responsibilities

Front Line Colleagues	• Contact A&A team if a customer requires advice on adaptations in their home. • Notify A&A team before attending a property and/or if they find a fault with an installation. • Ensure vulnerability characteristics are updated within the relevant systems.
Aids & Adaptations Officer	• Full responsibility for delivery and contract management of A&A contractors. • Responsible for budget accountability.
Regional Delivery & Performance Manager	• Monitor adherence to the policy. • Monitor delivery performance. • Dealing with escalated issues. • Support with delivery and escalations. • Accountable for regional budget.
Head of Asset Strategy & Delivery (South & Central)	• National lead for Aids & Adaptations. • Responsible for national budget.
Head of Assets & Sustainability (Scotland)	• Deal with escalated issues. • Responsible for reviewing policy and procedure. • Accountable for overall spend against budget. • Obtain funding to support delivery.
Asset Operations Manager (Scotland)	• Monitor delivery performance & contract management. • Support delivery and escalations. • Monitor budget and authorisations. • Monitor adherence to the policy.
Occupational Therapist	• Assessing and prescribing adaptations based on customer needs.
Local Authority	• Hold DFG budget. • Service offered varies depending on region.

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6. Appeal & Complaints

Riverside aim to meet all its obligations to carry out repairs within statute and the Responsive Repairs policy. If we do not, our customers can contact us and inform us of this. We will respond to complaints regarding our repairs service in line with our Complaints Policy and Customer Feedback Procedure.

7. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

Riverside is committed to Equality, Diversity & Inclusion. We strive to be fair in our dealings with all people, communities and organisations, taking into account the diverse nature of their culture and background and actively promoting inclusion. This policy aligns with Riverside's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy and has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

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