



Aids and Adaptations Policy

Date Effective: 1 April 2018
Date of Review: March 2021



Policy: **Aids and Adaptations Policy**

Date Approved: 27 March 2018

Approved By: Board

Applicable to: All existing and prospective tenants.

Lead Director: Head of Service Delivery

In Consultation with: Asset and Housing Services

Review Date: March 2021

1.0 **PURPOSE**

This policy introduces a new process for the prioritisation and delivery of aids and adaptations for existing and prospective tenants. The policy will:

- Outline what an adaptation is.
- Set out who is eligible for an adaptation.
- Set out how requests for adaptations will be prioritized.
- Set out the circumstances when a request for an adaptation may be refused.
- Outline the preventative approach that the Association will take to the delivery of aids and adaptations.

It is the Association's intention to implement this policy in accordance with its values, namely:

- **People-focused:**
To ensure that customers who are in most need of aids and adaptations are provided with assistance to help them remain living within the community for as long as possible.
- **Trusted:**
To act with honesty and integrity, ensuring that no customer is treated less favorably than any other, in line with our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy.

2.0 **SCOPE**

This is an Association-wide policy that has specific relevance to Asset and Housing Services staff.

3.0 **DEFINITIONS**

Unless otherwise stated, the following definitions will apply throughout this policy:

The Association Irvine Housing Association.

Standard Amenity

Standard amenities are defined in the Housing (Scotland) Act 1987 Section 86 (1), as amended by the Housing (Scotland) Act of 2001 and 2006 as:

- A sink provided with a satisfactory supply of both hot and cold water within the house.
- A WC available for the exclusive use of the occupants of the house and suitably located within the house; and
- A fixed bath or shower and wash-hand basin, each provided with a satisfactory supply of both hot and cold water and suitably located within the house.
- Where additional or replacement facilities are essential to the needs of a disabled person.

Adaptations

Under Section 73(3) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 adaptations are defined as: Structural work or work that involves other permanent changes to the house but excluding (a) work to extend any structure to create living accommodation, and (b) work to create living accommodation in a separate building from the current living accommodation.

General Adaptations and Equipment

Equipment to assist a disabled person with daily living for example, shower stools, handrails and banisters.

Major Adaptations

Installation of a stairlift.

Provision of a standard amenity.

Level Access Shower

Re -design of rooms to provide suitable bedroom or bathroom.

Provision of ramps or creation of hard standings or other extensive external alterations.

4.0 POLICY GUIDELINES

4.1 Key Principles

The principles underpinning the Adaptations Policy are in accordance with the Association's Corporate Objectives and are outlined as follows:

- **Customers First:**
The Association is responsive to its customers' needs, for example, by ensuring those most in need for adaptations are provided with assistance timeously and enabled to remain living in their home for as long as possible.
- **Adding Value:**
The Association aspires to achieve value for money through the implementation of this policy, by ensuring that available budget is targeted to customers with the greatest need for adaptations, and to ensure alternative options are considered when adapting an existing property would not provide the best long term outcome for the tenant or best value for the Association.
- **Raising Performance:**
This policy will assist the Association to take a more proactive approach to the delivery of adaptations, reducing waiting times and improving customer satisfaction.

4.2 Legal Context

Whilst there is no legislative duty on the Association to provide adaptations, most Housing Associations apply to the Scottish Government for grant funding to adapt their properties for individual tenant needs.

Relevant legislation which the Association must take account of and reflect in the delivery of adaptations to tenants includes:

- **The Housing (Scotland) Act 2001:**

This act places a duty on Housing Associations to ensure that a house is 'substantially wind and watertight and reasonably fit for human habitation' and introduced the Scottish Secure Tenancy for tenants of social landlords.

This Act also stipulates that tenants in the social rented sector who make a request to undertake alterations to their home cannot have consent unreasonably withheld should they wish to undertake adaptations themselves.

- **Equality Act 2010**

Landlords and managers of rented premises or premises to let are required to make reasonable adjustments to address the barriers faced by their tenants as a result of disability issues.

- **Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act**

It is important for a tenant's need for adaptations to be considered in the context of wider welfare legislation such as the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970. Where a tenant has an assessed need for an adaptation the Local Authority must address that need. The Association must be mindful of this duty and assist the Local Authority to meet tenant needs as far as possible.

- **Housing (Scotland) Act 2006**

The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006 sets out the definition of mandatory adaptations and the provision of Local Authority grant to owner occupiers to fund adaptations. The Act does not prevent a council or housing association tenant from applying for a grant. Generally, however, it is expected that adaptations for council tenants are funded by the Council's housing service, and for housing associations by the landlord or through Scottish Government grant funding. This policy has been developed to reflect the principals, context, and definitions of the 2006 Act.

4.3 Eligibility for Adaptations

Any request for an adaptation must be supported by a Community Care Assessment. Initial enquiries can be made by a tenant, family member, a carer, a health professional or an agency direct to Occupational Therapy, Health and Social Care Partnership, or to the Association.

Applications for assistance will be referred to a suitable specialist, usually an Occupational Therapist employed by the local Health and Social Care Partnership, who will be responsible for carrying out the assessment of community care needs. Applications for assessment will be screened on the basis of the information received at the point of referral, to determine the level and priority of the assessment.

The assessment will be in accordance with all relevant legislation and should identify two things; the needs of the person and the eligibility for assistance.

The assessment will also take into account the needs of immediate family members living in the same property and any informal carers as well as the views of the person being assessed and of their carer(s).

4.4 Prioritisation of Adaptations

Across the three Local Authority areas in which the Association operates, the standard Community Care Assessment process applied by Occupational Therapists determines a tenant's need for adaptations as either 'Critical'/'Urgent', or 'Non Urgent'/'Moderate'.

Critical and Urgent Referrals

Generally critical and urgent referrals will be delivered in date order with the earliest referral being delivered first. However, given budget availability is limited the Association will prioritise referrals in the following circumstances:

- Any adaptations needed to enable a tenant to be discharged from hospital and return home.
- Any adaptations which are required to enable a tenant to access standard amenities within their home (as detailed in section 3.0 above) (i.e creation of a WC downstairs if a tenant cannot access an upstairs bathroom, or a level access shower).
- Any adaptations which are required to enable a tenant to access their property (i.e external ramp at the entrance to the property).

Outstanding critical and urgent referrals will always be delivered before non-urgent or moderate referrals if there is sufficient budget available.

If the Association requires further information to establish the specific circumstances of a referral, discussion will take place with the relevant OT to help the Association prioritize between similar referrals if required.

Non-urgent or Moderate Referrals

Non urgent or moderate referrals must still fall under the Association's definition of a general adaptation or equipment as outlined in section 3 above, and not within the category of general repairs or maintenance, furnishings, or other general household provisions which are not directly related to meeting a tenants physical needs.

Critical and Urgent referrals that are outstanding will be delivered before non-urgent or moderate referrals if there is sufficient budget available.

4.5 Complex Adaptations

Where a tenant has been assessed as requiring significant and complex adaptations with an estimated cost of more than £15,000, this request will be discussed with the Head of Service and relevant Occupational Therapist to determine if adapting the existing property will provide the best long term outcome, or if alternative housing options could be explored. The decision to fund complex adaptations will be made by the Head of Service following discussion with all partner agencies, including relevant Common Housing Register partners and the tenant.

4.6 Preventative Approach

The Association recognizes the importance of proactive and preventative assistance, and to reflect this, a proportion of the annual adaptations budget will be allocated to provide 'low level' preventative works such as bannisters and handrails. Requests for these do not need to be supported by a formal Community Care Assessment and can be made directly to the Housing Officer, who will then liaise with the Asset Team. The need for these works may also be identified by the Housing Officer through day to day tenancy management. These requests will be dealt with as they arise up until the annual budget allocation is utilized each year.

The Association also promotes a preventative approach through the delivery of our capital programme, (i.e any specific needs of a tenant will be taken into account when carrying out a cyclical bathroom replacement or upgrade). The future and changing needs of tenants are also considered when designing our new build properties, to minimize the need for reactive adaptations at a later date.

4.7 Alternative Housing Options

The Association reserves the right to refuse a request for an adaptation in the following circumstances:

- The house to which the request relates will not provide long term suitable living accommodation for the applicant and their household after completion of the proposed works.

- The adaptation does not reflect best value.
- The property and/or the grounds are in a poor condition and would impact upon the effectiveness of the adaptation.
- The property does not have the required infrastructure to support the adaptation, as considered reasonable by Irvine Housing Association.

Some examples include:

- A house that does not lend itself to the required adaptation e.g. external access to an upper flat.
- An adaptation that cannot achieve Planning Consent or will not meet Building Regulations.
- Appropriate infrastructures are not in place and would potentially incur significant additional costs.

In all cases, alternatives to an adaptation that may provide a more satisfactory solution will be considered. Tailored information and advice will be offered to the tenant by the Association's Housing Options team, and in conjunction with the Local Authority, and will include a range of alternative housing options, for example;

- Transferring to a more suitable IHA property.
- Buying or renting a new home privately on the open market.
- Getting independent financial advice.
- Applying for Housing with Care.
- Applying for suitable accommodation from the local Council or another Housing Association.

4.8 Allocating Adapted Properties

If an adapted property becomes available to let every effort will be made to ensure that it is allocated to an applicant with appropriate needs. This is to try and achieve best value and long term benefit from adaptations funding.

If no suitable applicants can be identified, the Association will strive to recycle any equipment if it is still safe and reasonable to do so in conjunction with any Local Authority and Health and Social Care Partnership schemes.

If a tenant, whose property has been significantly adapted to meet their needs dies, and the remaining household members do not have a need for the adapted property, a meeting will take place with them to discuss suitable alternative housing options, with the aim of reallocating the adapted property to an applicant with relevant needs.

The needs of applicants on our waiting lists will be identified as far as possible through the application and Housing Options process with the aim of allocating properties to tenants which meet their needs at the outset. This is to minimise the level of reactive adaptations work that may be needed through the duration of their tenancy.

If an applicant requires a property to be adapted before they are able to move in, discussion will take place with the Asset Team to confirm timescales and these will be confirmed and accepted by the tenant when they accept the offer of accommodation. No tenants should sign up to a new tenancy until required adaptations are complete and they are able to move into the property.

4.9 Maintenance and Aftercare

The Association is responsible for the ongoing maintenance and aftercare of any equipment that is installed, to ensure they continue to meet required standards, and for any adaptations works which have been delivered by or on behalf of the Association.

5.0 Funding

The Association applies to the Scottish Government on an annual basis for funding to support the delivery of aids and adaptations. This funding is applied for in April of each year and received in late June/July. Approximately £50,000 will be allocated from the Association's capital budget to deliver adaptations between April-July, to prevent creation of a backlog pending the receipt of Scottish Government subsidy.

6.0 REFERENCES

This policy should be read in conjunction with other Association policies and literature. These would primarily be as follows:

Allocation Policies – These policies outline how the Association allocate properties that become vacant in each local authority area.

Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy – This policy outlines the actions taken by the Association to ensure everyone is treated in an equitable and appropriate manner.

Void Management Policy – Outlines the process of identifying adapted properties prior to the end of the tenancy agreement.

Complaints Policy – Should any tenant feel unfairly treated by the Association, then reference should be made to the Association's Complaints Policy

7.0 APPENDICES

This policy is supported by the Association's Equality and Diversity policy.

8.0 ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

The Association's Board is responsible for approving this Policy.

The Head of Service Delivery, is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the Policy.

9.0 MONITORING AND REVIEW

This policy will be reviewed on an annual basis to ensure it continues to reflect the Association's aims and objectives.