



Winchester  
City Council

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WINCHESTER CITY COUNCIL

# HRA DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY

This policy sets out how we will respond to requests for disabled adaptations to council properties.

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# 1. INTRODUCTION

**1.1** This policy sets out how Winchester City Council (The council) will respond to requests for property disabled adaptations to the homes of council tenants and residents.

**1.2** We are committed to supporting residents to live independently within their own home where possible. The increase in demand for social housing requires a greater focus on supporting residents to consider how their housing needs may be met in the longer term and as their needs change, residents may be required to move to a more suitable property.

**1.3** This policy is aligned with our Housing Allocation Scheme and the objectives of making best use of our housing stock whilst responding to the housing needs within the Winchester district.

## 2. AIMS

**2.1** The aims of this policy are to;

- Enable us to provide housing which best meets the assessed needs of residents.
- Support best use of financial resources, to ensure budgets are spent effectively.
- To make effective use of our property assets so that the long-term benefit derived from the housing stock is preserved for future use.
- Ensure that Residents, Occupational Therapists (OT) and other professionals are provided with good guidance and have a clear understanding as to the circumstances in which we will not be able to assist with adaptations.
- Operate a service that offers suitable, practical, and cost-effective solutions that meet residents' assessed needs.
- Meet the long-term needs of residents and their families, ensuring their safety, well-being and quality of life.
- Ensure no resident waits longer than 12 months for an approved adaptation to be progressed.



## 3. LEGISLATIVE, REGULATORY CONTEXT AND DEFINITIONS

**3.1** The Disabled Adaptations Policy considers the following legislation and policies:

- The Care Act 2014
- The Housing Allocations Scheme made under the Housing Act 1996
- Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010
- The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 ("The Order")
- Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People – A good practice guide (June 2006)
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) delivery: Guidance for Local Authorities in England 2022

**3.2** Our Aids and Adaptations Policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Our HRA Asset Management Strategy
- Our Health and Safety Policy
- Our Void Policy
- Our Recharge Policy
- Our Safeguarding Policy
- Our Residents' Handbook
- Our Tenancy Agreements

**3.3** Long-term adverse effect refers to disabilities that have lasted for at least 12 months, the effects of which will last for at least 12 months, and which are likely to last for the remainder of a person's life.

**3.4** Living with disabilities if:

- Their sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired.
- They have a mental health condition or impairment of any kind.
- They are physically disabled by illness or impairment present since birth or otherwise.

## 4. POLICY DETAILS

**4.1** Adaptation work will only be undertaken after careful consideration of various factors such as:

- Current and future needs of the resident(s) and their household
- Individual resident(s) level of disability
- Professional assessment/recommendations of healthcare professionals
- Characteristics of the dwelling, its construction and internal arrangement
- Planning and building regulation requirements and legislation.
- Budget provision and long-term property asset implications
- Most cost-effective approach of achieving the required outcome.
- Alternative solutions to address assessed needs.
- Assessing if the resident(s) should move to an alternative property where an appropriate adaptation already exists.
- Most effective use of housing stock

**4.2** For property disabled adaptation work to be considered resident(s) submit a request for assessment and referral to a Hampshire County Council (HCC) OT.

**4.3** The HCC OT will assess the housing needs and confirm their recommendations to us. In some cases, the HCC OT will request a joint visit with us.

**4.4** The HCC OT assessments will be reviewed and considered by our OT. We as the council landlord will ultimately make the decision on what is a reasonable adaptation in relation to the resident(s) disabilities and housing circumstances to ensure adapted housing is available to a wide range of people.

**4.5** In extreme cases our OT will consider applications directly from third party sources such as the NHS.

**4.6** For an adaptation request to qualify, an OT or other suitable professional must confirm that the effects of the disability will last for at least 12 months and/or are likely to last for the remainder of a person's life.



**4.7** The long-term diagnosis of resident(s) condition and the future use and occupation of the property will be key considerations when deciding about the most appropriate solution.

**4.8** Adaptations may be refused where the costs of adapting the current home are unaffordable and where the assessed needs could be met within our existing housing stock

**4.9** Provision of appliances and portable specialist equipment will not be funded as these are either the resident's responsibility or that of Adult Services.

**4.10 MINOR** adaptations such as handrails up to a combined total value of £250.00 may be carried out without an OT assessment to enable a resident to remain independently living in their home regardless of whether they are under occupying the property. Such adaptations will be revenue funded.

**MINOR adaptation work includes:**

- Grab rails in various locations throughout a property
- Additional internal banister rails
- Additional external handrails
- Lever taps
- Key Safe
- Banister Rails
- Newell Rails
- Internal Door Thresholds
- Reposition Door Handle
- Kitchen cupboard handles
- Door and wall protectors
- Altering sockets and light switches
- Door Intercoms
- Paint nosings on steps and stairs
- Provision of external lighting
- Provision of lighting in principle rooms
- Flashing/ loud doorbells
- Smoke Alarm Alerts

**4.11 MAJOR** adaptations costing above £250.00 and up to a total of £6000.00 will be assessed and if appropriate approved by our OT. All adaptation works that exceed a total value of

£6000.00 will be referred to our Adaptations Panel. Major adaptations will be capital funded.

**MAJOR adaptation work includes:**

- Over-bath showers
- Level access shower
- Stairlifts
- Door and Threshold adaptations (including door openers and environmental controls, where part of a major scheme)
- Ramping or adaptations to steps including handrails
- Significant external handrail installations
- Improving access to toilet, bathroom and essential living areas
- Adapting the kitchen to provide accessible facilities to enable the person with the disability to access and use the kitchen
- Adapting heating and lighting controls to ensure appropriate access and ease of use
- Extensions to existing property to provide essential amenities, i.e. accessible bath or shower facilities, bedroom

**4.12** In circumstances where adaptation works will exceed a total cost of £6000.00, these cases will be referred to our Adaptations Panel. Our Adaptations Panel will meet to review each case and the membership will include:

- Our HRA Occupational Therapist
- Our Tenancy Services Manager
- Our Assets and Planned Maintenance Manager\*
- Senior allocations officer
- Our Housing Support and Inclusion Manager

\* Our Assets and Planned Maintenance Manager will be the lead member of the panel.

When appropriate representatives from other agencies with a specialism in relation to the resident(s) circumstances may be invited to attend.

Our Adaptations Panel will assess each case and consider the criteria a) - n) below to determine if the requested adaptation is appropriate. The panel will advise the resident in writing within 20 working days of the outcome of the decision and include

detailed reasons if the outcome is to reject the request. If the panel determines that the adaptation is approved, the resident will be informed accordingly and given an indication of timescales.

- A. Is the intended property to be adapted, under occupying by one or more bedrooms?
- B. Is the resident waiting for a transfer to another property?
- C. Is the tenancy ending imminently?
- D. Will the property require structural alterations?
- E. Is the adaptation, installing a level access shower above ground floor?
- F. Can the resident(s) needs be met with alternative use of the property, for example, using a ground floor second reception room as a bedroom?
- G. Are other suitable alternative adapted, or part adapted accommodation available?
- H. Might the required adaptation adversely affect our ability to make best use of the stock and re-let the property in the future?
- I. Might the household's circumstances be such that further adaptations will be required in the future and therefore more suitable accommodation may be more appropriate?
- J. Would the adaptation place others at risk e.g. a communal stairlift with no alternative access for other residents?
- K. Is the property unsuitable for adaptation due to its construction?
- L. Does the council own the property?
- M. Is the property temporary housing ?
- N. Is the adaptation a good use of HRA funds. Has the cost of a supported move compared with the cost of the adaptation work been reviewed and assessed?

Where we consider that a resident(s) needs are best met by moving them to a more suitable home, the focus will be to understand the wider impact of a potential move on the resident(s) well-being and continuity of care. Should a move be the required solution, it will be managed and supported by Hampshire County Council, Adult Social Care and our Housing Services.

The following should be considered by the Adaptations Panel.

- **Support Networks** – Whether sufficient support networks exist to support the resident(s) move, or will support be lost if they move. E.g. proximity to family networks?
- **Health** – Would the upheaval of a move be detrimental to the resident(s) health, location of specialist treatment and groups?
- **Employment** – If the resident(s) is employed, would the new location impact the resident(s) ability to sustain employment?
- **Education** – If the resident(s) has children at school, would the new location impact schooling?
- **Social Networks** – Would a move make it difficult for the resident(s) to maintain important social activities that aren't available in other locations?
- **Cultural considerations** – Would a move make it difficult for the resident(s) to maintain proximity to cultural groups?
- **Faith considerations** – Would a move make it difficult for the resident(s) to maintain links with faith-based organisations?
- **The resident's view** – Has the resident given sound reasons for not moving?

If the resident refuses the suitable accommodation recommendation, they can appeal to our Service Lead - Housing Landlord Service. If the resident(s) decides not to move, they will remain in their current property and we will support them with appropriate minor adaptations.

Where we decline adaptations in favour of the resident(s) moving to suitable alternative accommodation, financial assistance may be provided for the move at our discretion.

**4.13** Where a resident(s) living in an adapted property is being moved because of redevelopment or refurbishment of their home, essential adaptations will be carried out in the new home being offered.

**4.14** During planned works, we will maintain any existing adaptation or fixed equipment if it is still needed for the household.

**4.15** We may remove semi-portable equipment or minor adaptations such as a handrail, stair lift or specialist shower if no longer needed due to a permanent change in the household requirements. Fixed adaptations such as structural alterations or concrete ramps will be retained and maintained.

## 5. CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH ADAPTATION TASKS WILL NOT BE UNDERTAKEN.

**5.1** We will not install a through floor lift unless this can be accommodated within the existing property without utilising a bedroom.

**5.2** We will not install stairlifts in under occupied properties.

**5.3** We will not replace adaptations in a property where they have been removed by the current resident. If they are required, it will be at our discretion whether to reinstall, and the cost may be recharged to the resident(s).

**5.4** Where a home has been adapted for a specific resident who no longer lives there, we will seek to identify a suitable resident(s) for the property. Should it not be possible the property will be let with adaptations in place, and these will not be removed at the request of the new resident(s). The property will be advertised and let as such unless there is prior agreement in writing from us to carry out works.

**5.5** Extensions and/or conversions to properties will not be considered except in exceptional or specific individual cases. This is entirely at the discretion of the council. Any such work may require up to 36 months to complete.

**5.6** We will not consider adapting an under-occupied property except if the potential benefits are greater than us moving a resident(s) to a more suitable smaller home. Should a resident(s) be under-occupying and have requested adaptations, we will assess the suitability of the property for their needs.

**5.7** We will not carry out adaptations to properties that are subject to a Right-to-Buy application.

**5.8** Pavement crossovers and hard standings will only be considered for wheelchair users and residents with severe disabilities. Where a need for parking is identified we may identify a suitable alternative property. If we do agree, these requests are subject to approval by the Planning Department and Hampshire County Council Highways.

**5.9** There is no statutory duty to grant works to communal areas. Where works are both necessary and reasonably practical, we will consider essential access requirements. Such proposals may require the consent of other resident(s) and must not compromise other resident(s) safety and will therefore be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

**5.10** Adaptations to make provision for a mobility scooter will not be approved where the resident(s) is under occupying and if alternative accommodation is available. Requests for provision of a mobility scooter store will be considered by the our Adaptations Panel.

**5.11** Where a resident requests a mutual exchange or transfer from their adapted property, to one that is not adapted we are likely to decline the request unless there is evidence that the adaptations are no longer required. We may not carry out further major adaptations to the subsequent property unless there are exceptional circumstances. When a resident(s) requests a mutual exchange, the incoming resident(s) will be expected to have an OT recommendation for any installed adaptations.

**5.12** If suitable access is not viable via the main entrance door/s the most economical provision will be explored, which may include other adaptations such as changing windows to doors. This will be at the discretion of our Adaptations Panel. It is highly likely in such cases that alternative accommodation will be the recommendation.

**5.13** A request for provision of additional space, for example an extra bedroom, and/or additional space for a child who has challenging behaviour due to their disability will be referred to our Adaptations Panel.

**5.14** Resident(s) wishing to carry out their own adaptations, including making provision for a mobility scooter, need permission from us. The resident(s) must;

- Acquire written approval from our Repairs, Voids and Compliance Manager
- Ensure proposed work is carried out by a fully competent qualified contractor
- Conform to the appropriate regulations and legislation
- Be responsible for putting right any damage relating to the works being carried out
- Contact our Housing Service upon completion of any work so an inspection is carried out
- Provide us with any relevant certificates of the work upon completion
- Maintain and repair any equipment or fittings they have installed.

We reserve the right to request that the resident(s) signs a legal agreement confirming they are responsible for ensuring the property is returned to its original condition upon termination of the tenancy. The cost of this must be met by the resident(s). A reasonable charge may be made to cover the cost of our staff engaged in monitoring this work.

## 6.0 COMMUNICATION AND CONSULTATION

**6.1** We will provide clear and comprehensive advice and information to resident(s), with an aim of providing a single point of contact

**6.2** Where major works are approved by us, we will consult with resident(s), explaining the scope of the works and the completion timescales.

**6.3** We will promote our Disabled Adaptations Policy and the adaptations service through a range of media including social media, leaflets, posters, newsletters and on our website.

**6.4** Should a resident(s) not be satisfied with any aspect of a decision made on their disabled adaptations application; they have a right to request a review. If dissatisfied with the outcome of

the review, they may make a complaint under our complaint procedure.

## 7.0 MONITORING AND PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT

**7.1** Our Disabled Adaptations Policy will be reviewed every three years to ensure that it remains a relevant service, is financially viable, meets resident(s) housing need requirements and meets any legislative duties.

**7.2** We are committed to monitoring completed disabled adaptation works using customer satisfaction surveys; to ensure performance meets customer satisfaction and to help inform future service improvements.

**7.3** Publishing information in relation to our performance against the aims and standards set out in our Disabled Adaptations Policy.

**7.4** Training of our staff to recognise the need for disabled adaptations and to enable them to give guidance to resident(s) who may require an OT referral.

## 8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

**8.1** The policy seeks to promote fairness and equality throughout the activities of the council, regardless of where resident(s) lives, their background or circumstances. In deciding whether to carry out adaptations, we will have regard to the housing need in the area and the duty to achieve best use of stock.

**8.2** Where there is a barrier in accessing information, extra effort will be made by our staff and their representatives. This may involve asking a relative or third party for help (with the consent of the service user) or employing translation or interpretation services if necessary.



**8.3** An Equality Impact Assessment screening has been carried out on our Disabled Adaptations Policy and is available on request. If we decline adaptations in favour of a move to more suitable property, support will be available to navigate this process to achieve a positive outcome and to ensure that suitable adaptations are either already available in the selected new home or these are installed to the OT's specification.







## UPDATING THE POLICY

To ensure the policy remains up to date and evolves in time the policy will be regularly reviewed every 2 years to support compliance, minimise risk and support operation.

**Policy implementation Date:** June 2025