### Aids and adaptations policy and procedure

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Introduction

1.1 believe housing’s vision
We believe in a life without barriers. If everyone expects more they can achieve more and we can transform lives together. It is this power of ‘more’ that will let people realise what is possible – change perceptions, raise aspirations and create inclusive, vibrant communities.

1.2 Our values

People first: People are at the heart of everything we do. In our communities the way we listen and respond to people will determine the way we grow. It is only by connecting with and trusting people that living can be fully brought to life.

Outstanding delivery: Push the boundaries of customer service and added value through proactive behaviour. Because the smallest detail can make the biggest difference, outstanding must be the new standard and the new routine.

Proud communities: Taking responsibility and feeling confident only occur when there is a sense of pride and optimism at home. Positive steps lead to more positive steps and as a result, there is an ability to create and seize better opportunities.

1.3 Our strategic objectives

• Outstanding business
• Outstanding services
• Outstanding communities

2 Purpose and scope of the statement and procedure guide

2.1 Purpose
This policy statement and procedure guide sets out clear criteria specifying the level of service we agree to provide in relation to: the aids and adaptations service; the standards that customers can expect; timescales of service delivery; the assistance and support we can offer, and the way we will manage the service ensuring that value for money (VFM) is achieved.

2.2 Scope
This policy statement and procedure covers how we will manage the assessment and
delivery of the aids and adaptations service. The policy statement and procedure guide is designed to inform and guide staff and all Occupational Therapy (OT) services that will be assessing occupiers of our homes.

1 Policy and aims

1.1 Statement
By providing an aids and adaptations service, the organisation is committed to doing everything reasonably possible to ensure tenants and other permanent members of the household are adequately housed and to enable them to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible.

1.2 Aims of the policy
The aims of this policy are directly linked to our visions, values and strategic objectives in particular:
- To provide a service that supports our tenants and other permanent members of the household to live independently in their home
- To ensure that we make best use of our existing housing stock
- Ensure tenants and other permanent members of the household are aware of all the options open to them when accessing the aids and adaptations service
- Provide a decision-making process to deliver a cost effective and accessible aids and adaptations service

2 Legislation
There is a range of legislation relating to the necessity for and delivery of aids and adaptations, the main ones being:
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- NHS and Community Care Act 1990

3 Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)
The aids and adaptations service is provided as an inclusive and individualised service open for all tenants and permanent members of the household. The service is provided with the aim of positively advancing equality of opportunity.

In particular this service ensures that disabled people are able to maximise their independence and supports family life. The organisation will endeavour to work with our tenants and their families, partners and contractors to innovate and provide unique solutions to aids and adaptations, which would benefit our vulnerable tenants. We aim to treat all customers of the aids and adaptations service fairly and with respect. We have assessed the policy in relation to the Equality Act 2010 and the Human Rights Act 1998.

4 Consultation
The following stakeholders have been consulted in drafting of the policy:

- The organisation’s Aids and Adaptations Team
- The organisation’s Housing and Allocation Teams
- Durham County Council and NHS OT Services
- The organisation’s senior management

5 Training and awareness
- Awareness of this policy will be raised with all organisation staff at team meetings and the intranet
- Tenants will be made aware of this policy using the organisation’s website, social media, newsletters and information leaflets
- The external recommending OT service, in-house OT’s and contractors involved directly in the delivery of this policy will receive appropriate training appropriate to their role.

6 Links to other policies and procedures
- Health and Safety Policy
- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Asbestos Policy
- Durham Key Options Lettings Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Complaints Policy
1 Definition of aids and adaptations

For the purpose of this guide the organisation uses the following definitions:

1.1 Aids

An aid is a piece of equipment which is portable and not permanently fixed in your home.

Suitable aids are identified during an assessment by a relevant Occupational Therapist (OT); this could be social services, health services, learning disabilities etc. This equipment is issued free of charge on a loan basis and is recycled when no longer required. An aid will always be considered as a first option before any major adaptations are recommended. Examples of aids include a perching stool, chair raisers, toilet seats/frames and bathing equipment.

1.2 Adaptations

An adaptation is the provision of fixed equipment and/or modification to the property, or associated land, where it has been recognised by an OT that an aid alone or specialised equipment, will no longer meet an identified need to enable tenants or other permanent members of the household to live independently and safely in their home.

There are two categories of adaptations:

• Minor adaptations or minor alterations – any requested or recommended works which costs less than £500 (ex VAT). This includes items such as grab rails, lever taps and stair rails. These adaptations can be requested through the repairs and maintenance service.

• Major adaptations – any recommended work which exceed the value of £500 (ex VAT). This includes items such as level access showers, wet rooms, stair lifts, over bath showers and the provision of door access ramps.

Who qualifies for aids and adaptations?

• The organisation will normally only consider requests for aids and adaptations if the disabled/vulnerable person is the tenant or another permanent resident of the household or would be if the adaptation was done. Undertaking major adaptations to the physical structure of premises which will only fulfil a short term need or where the accommodation is of a temporary nature or offers only limited security may not be cost effective and may be refused. Any requests for assistance will be reviewed on a case by case basis.
• Non-permanent members of the household do not qualify for any adaptations through the organisation and will be signposted to Durham County Council (DCC) Social Care Direct.

• The organisation recognises that leaseholders have a significant legal interest in their homes and can decide who this can be passed on to. The organisation will not fund aids and adaptations within their home or within the common parts. Such requests for assistance will be signposted to DCC Social Care Direct.

• If the leaseholder is required to obtain landlord consent for an adaptation in their own home, or, if they are seeking consent for adaptations to be carried out in the common areas then we will, unless the adaptation has a significant detrimental effect on our asset or other leaseholders or tenants, give permission if the adaptation is supported by an external OT recommendation

1.3 Fitting of specialised equipment
The provision of specialised equipment which is supplied and installed through the relevant OT service, and which requires fixing to the fabric of the property will require an external OT assessment and permission must be sought from the organisation before the work can commence. If permission is granted, the installer must ensure that all health and safety procedures are followed.

1.4 Rental of straight track stairlifts
The organisation will consider an external OT recommendation for the provision of rented straight track stair lifts (not curved) on a temporary basis (12 months which will be reassessed by the recommending OT during this period) for those waiting for suitable rehousing or with a terminal/palliative illness. Each case is considered on an individual basis with supporting medical evidence. Tenants or permanent members of the household who wish to install their own rental stair lifts will need to seek permission from the organisation and a decision will be made on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the organisation’s in-house OT service.

3 Funding
The stock transfer offer to tenants committed to an improved adaptations service. Funding is met by the organisation, but its budget is limited and will be managed to meet our legal obligations and ensure that priority is given to those in most need first. The long-term future use of the property will also be considered when assessing VfM.

4 The aids and adaptations process
All requests from tenants and leaseholders or permanent members of the household for major adaptations will be signposted for assessment through DCC Social Care Direct. DCC Occupational Therapists will assess adults and NHS Paediatric Occupational Therapists will assess children. These are subject to the assessment timescales laid out by those individual organisations. These external OT recommendations will then be submitted to the organisation for review by our in-house OT service. Once approved the installation will be carried out by our preferred contractor who will complete minor works within 15 working days and standard major works within 30 working days. The organisation will notify the relevant external recommending OT service of the completion of the work and the organisation will quality inspect at least 10% of these, this will increase to 100% for the large works adaptations.

5.1 Joint partnership panel
The organisation has a joint partnership panel that comprises of representatives from the recommending OT service (DCC, NHS); members of the organisation’s Strategic Assets and Housing Teams and any other relevant organisations, depending on the circumstances of the case.

5.2 Aids
Tenants or permanent members of the household requiring aids alone will be signposted to DCC Social Care Direct. The organisation’s in-house OT Team can only provide aids if they are currently working with the individual as part of the re-housing process. All aids are funded by DCC Social Care Direct.

5.3 Minor adaptations and minor alterations
Minor adaptations are items such as additional stair rails, grab rails and lever taps. The target for completion of the work is 15 working days from date of notification and on a date and time to suit the tenant.

The organisation will also consider installing minor alterations such as thermostatic radiator valves, safety film or safety glazing, window locks, thumb locks, the alteration of light fittings or additional sockets and external lighting. These works can be requested without requiring any OT assessment.

5.4 Major adaptations (between £500 and £10,000)
Where major adaptations are recommended the organisation’s Adaptations and Special Projects Manager will consider and proceed with the submitted recommendations, subject to value for money considerations. However, with complex or exceptional cases, the joint
partnership panel will consider these before proceeding. The organisation aims to complete these works within 30 working days on receipt of the relevant external OT recommendation. The organisation’s preferred contractor will contact the tenant direct to arrange a survey appointment and arrange an installation date.

Sometimes major adaptations may involve buying specialist bespoke equipment such as curved stair lifts or may require planning or building regulation approval. In these cases the completion of these works may take longer than the agreed timescales. However, if this is the case the organisation will inform the tenant or other permanent member of the household or their appointed representative.

5.5 Major adaptations (between £10,001 and £30,000)

For adaptations in this range the external OT service will advise the applicant at the assessment stage that no recommendation can be agreed before being approved by the joint partnership panel and ratified by the Strategic Assets Manager.

The recommendation must be deemed to be reasonable and practical and must meet the long-term health and wellbeing needs of the individual; and all other alternatives must be explored and discussed with the individual, e.g. alternative housing and the provision of equipment.

Where approved, the external OT service will submit their recommendation to the organisation and confirm this in writing to the tenant or other permanent member of the household receiving the works or their appointed representative.

5.6 Major adaptations (over £30,000)

With adaptations over £30,000 provisionally approved by the joint partnership panel the Adaptations Manager and the in-house Senior OT will prepare a report for the Head of Assets who will liaise with the Head of Neighbourhoods and the Head of Housing Operations recommending either option 1 or 2 below.

**Option 1 – Initial panel recommendation for works to proceed:**

- Proposed works
- Estimated costs
- Options that have been explored including suitable rehousing
- Exceptional circumstances.

**Option 2 – Panel recommendation for works not to proceed:**

- Reasons why works are not deemed to be reasonable and practical
- Options that have been explored including suitable rehousing
• Alternatives being explored, i.e. incentives to rehouse and care packages
• VFM alternatives and Financial Assessment Tool and Asset Locator implications

If the Head of Assets agrees to proceed, the organisation will notify the external OT service who will then submit their recommendation to the tenant in writing or other permanent member of the household receiving the works or their appointed representative.

Where the proposed adaptations are not deemed to be reasonable or practical, alternatives, including rehousing, will be discussed and the organisation will inform the tenant or other permanent members of the household or their appointed representative in writing detailing the reasons why we have declined the request for the adaptations.

This decision will be based on the following:

• If the adaptation does not represent value for money
• If the adaptation does not meet the tenants current or future needs
• If the property is unsuitable for adaptation
• There are any accessibility issues including stairs, access steps and bathing
• There are issues concerning shared access and communal buildings
• The availability of other suitable properties more appropriate for the tenants needs
• The adaptation causes issues with the long-term prospects of re-letting the property once any works are completed.

The tenant or other permanent member of the household or their appointed representative has a right of appeal in respect of any decision not to proceed with an adaptation.

6 Alternative solutions

Where a decision is made not to authorise adaptations, the organisation will work with the relevant OT service and the tenant or other permanent member of the household or their appointed representative to look for alternative solutions to meet their needs; these options could be:

• Rehousing
• A direct let can be requested at the discretion of the Housing Operations Team
• Alternative adaptations
• Tenants may also have the option to request permission to make alterations themselves (secure tenants only).

7 Ramps, drop kerbs and vehicle hardstandings
External ramps and vehicle hardstandings are a major adaptation which can be installed following an assessment by an external OT service to help permanent wheelchair users, and where the wheelchair has been prescribed by Wheelchair Services (NHS). External ramps will be installed to meet (Part K and M of the building regulations) and are not for mobility scooter use (also refer to clause 12 below).

The organisation cannot provide dropped kerbs on adopted highways and the tenant will be signposted to DCC Highways Department for information regarding these. The exception to this is where these are required to enable access to the provision of hardstandings within the curtilage of the organisation’s properties.

The organisation will also consider external OT recommendations for the provision of ramps where the tenant or other permanent member of the household is not a wheelchair user and are not able to access and egress their home safely.

8 Mobility scooters and self-purchased wheelchairs

The organisation will not provide adaptations (e.g. ramps, vehicle hardstandings, door alterations, path alterations, the provision of electrical charging points, sockets and storage facilities) for tenants or permanent members of the household with a mobility scooter or a self-purchased wheelchair. Should a tenant wish to undertake their own alterations they will need to seek written permission from the organisation.

9 Door entry systems

The organisation will consider relevant external OT recommendations for the provision of door entry systems. If approved, the organisation will arrange and fund the installation of the system and will be responsible for servicing and repairs.

10 Specialist toilets

The organisation will consider relevant external OT recommendations for the provision of specialist toilets. If approved, the organisation will arrange and fund the installation. Once the warranty period has expired it has been agreed with DCC OT service that future servicing and repair will be arranged and funded by the referring relevant external OT service. If this servicing or repair does not occur, the organisation will step in to carry out the necessary works so as not to leave the tenant without toilet facilities.

11 Sensory loss

Tenants or other permanent members of the household with sensory loss should seek advice from the DCC Sensory Support Team. Any recommendation from the team will result in the
organisation fitting any items of specialist equipment with supply and responsibility for such equipment resting with DCC.

12 Allocation of adapted properties
Properties available for allocation will generally be advertised via Durham Key Options lettings website. This will include adapted properties to ensure the process is open and transparent. There will be cases where significant adaptations have been carried out where a direct let may be made to match the property to the applicant most in need of the property.

Applications for adapted properties should be made through Durham Key Options. There are two medical priorities for the degree of medical need. Properties that are already adapted will be identified and advertised by the lettings teams who will try and match individual needs with available properties.

For vulnerable applicants with a high medical need the organisation’s in-house OT team will assess the housing need and provide the Lettings Team with a recommendation for property type, existing adaptations and priority.

13 Quality management
The organisation’s Aids and Adaptations Team will ensure that all external OT teams will be provided with completion information for all adaptations on a monthly basis. The contractor will be responsible for inspecting 100% of all completed major adaptations and the organisation’s Aids and Adaptations Team will quality inspect a minimum of a further 10%.

14 Performance monitoring and review

14.1 Monitoring
The performance of this procedure will be monitored by the Asset Managers group on a monthly basis.

• Minor adoptions to be completed within 15 working days of receipt of request.
• Standard major adaptations to be completed with 30 working days of receipt of OT referral.
• Customer satisfaction with the service will be monitored quarterly and we will aim to achieve 98% overall satisfaction

14.2 Review
This policy statement and procedure guide will be reviewed every three years or sooner due to:
• Changes in relevant legislation
• Any issues raised by an independent organisation (such as an inspection) which then in the opinion of the organisation would require a review of this policy.

14.3 Service standards

The organisation will ensure that its contractors comply with the following;
• Give the tenant at least seven calendar days written notice before they commence major adaptation work in their homes
• Protect the property and the tenant’s possessions during the installation works
• Ensure all services are functional at the end of each working day
• The installations will be completed to the agreed timescales however, should unforeseen delays arise the contractor keep the tenant informed
• The contractor will show the tenant how to use and maintain any new fittings and fixtures.

15 Value for Money (VFM)

The organisation is committed to providing an outstanding value for money aids and adaptations service.

15.1 Partnership Working:
• The organisation will carry out joint feasibility visits with the relevant OT services
• The organisation will facilitate regular joint partnership panel meetings to consider high cost and complex adaptation requirements
• To provide minor adaptations to facilitate hospital and care home discharge to help alleviate ‘bed blocking’
• Involve the OT services in budgetary discussion and performance management
• Manage performance with the contractor
• Share good practice and look for innovative solutions
• The organisation will be willing to work with national organisations to evidence areas of best practice/models of working.

15.2 Planned maintenance and improvement programmes
When the organisation is planning improvement programmes, conversions, new build or environmental schemes, we will work with our in-house OT service to consider the incorporation of adaptations as part of the works. For example: housing demand for new build adapted properties, dropped kerbs, communal access issues and replacement kitchen and bathroom programmes, etc.

15.3 Recycling adaptations

Where possible, the organisation will carefully consider reusing equipment that has become redundant in its current situation, such as stairlifts and metal ramping systems.

16 Appeals

An applicant who is not satisfied with the organisation’s decision not to proceed with an adaptation may appeal against that decision. The appeal will be considered at a case review where a Head of Service that has not been involved with the original decision will consider the views of the applicant alongside the reasons for the decision not to proceed. The Head of Service, having gathered such information they deem necessary, may decide to uphold the original decision, in which case the reasons for doing so will be provided to the applicant in writing, or, decide that the works will proceed.