

# **Adaptations for Tenants with Disabilities Policy Housing Revenue Account (Council Housing Only)**

**Department/Group Responsible:** City Services

**Approval Date:** April 2025

**Next Review:** April 2028

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## **1. Introduction:**

- 1.1. The aim of the Adaptations Service is to ensure that tenants with disabilities are provided with the most suitable housing solutions to meet their assessed needs, within the limits of available resources.
- 1.2. This policy supports the best use of resources which, sometimes, can be best achieved by relocating tenants. Adaptations will not be carried out where the person's needs can reasonably be met through rehousing.
- 1.3. The City Council aims to bring greater parity between the way housing adaptations are managed through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) regime applied to other social housing and the private sector.

## **2. Purpose:**

This policy aims to provide a framework to:

- Support people with disabilities in considering how their housing needs can

be met in the long term.

- Improve the overall wellbeing of people with disabilities who reside at Cambridge City Council owned properties. This includes providing support for carers, improving safety at home, facilitating access to welfare benefits, reducing social inclusion and assisting with referrals to sensory services and other healthcare services.
- Provide financial assistance to help with the costs of relocating, where appropriate.
- Carry out means testing for those assessed as having the financial capacity to contribute towards the required adaptations and introduce a recharge in respect of servicing costs.
- Ensure adapted properties are let to those in greatest need.
- Use the available budget efficiently and ensure Cambridge City Council makes the best use of its housing stock.
- Align our processes with the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Health and Wellbeing and Integrated Care Strategy. For more details, check [www.cpics.org.uk/health-wellbeing-integrated-care-strategy/](http://www.cpics.org.uk/health-wellbeing-integrated-care-strategy/).

### 3. Definitions

- **A Person with Disability:** Under the terms of this policy, a person is regarded as having a disability if they have a physical, sensory or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities within their home. A long-term effect refers to disabilities that
  - a) have lasted for at least 12 months;
  - b) the effects of which last for at least 12 months;
  - c) or which are likely to last for the remainder of a person's life.
- **Occupational Therapist (OT):** Occupational therapists help people of all ages to overcome challenges completing everyday tasks or activities. They conduct an Occupational Therapy (OT) Assessment so they can work with persons with disabilities to create a plan of goals and adjustments targeted at achieving a specific set of activities.

## 4. Scope

4.1. This policy applies to tenants of Cambridge City Council and those who live with them.

4.2. This policy also applies to:

- 4.2.1. a partner or a member of the tenant's immediate family who has been a permanent resident of their household for at least 12 months up to and including the date of application;
- 4.2.2. and they have an impairment which has a significant and serious long-term effect on their ability to:
  - a) Carry out normal day to day activities in or around their home
  - b) Access essential facilities within the home

4.3. This policy does not apply to those living in council shared ownership or leasehold properties. Instead, they can apply for assistance in line with other private sector housing procedures via the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency.

## 5. Statutory, Legislative and Regulatory Requirements

This policy and its delivery are intended to be compatible with the following statutory, legislative and regulatory requirements. This list is non exhaustive, and all applicable requirements will be consulted prior to any review of this policy:

- The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, as amended by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.
- The Equality Act 2010
- The Care Act 2014

## 6. Related Policies and Procedures

This policy and its delivery are also intended to be compatible with the following council policies and documents:

- [Complaints Policy](#)
- Housing Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- [Lettings Policy](#)
- [Reasonable Adjustment Policy](#)
- [Tenants and Leaseholders Alterations and Improvements Policy](#)

## **7. Cambridge City Council Responsibilities**

Cambridge City Council will:

- 7.1. Consider the needs of tenants with disabilities and provide reasonable adjustments.
- 7.2. Consult the relevant social services authority and satisfy that the works are reasonable and practicable, taking into consideration the age and condition of the property.
- 7.3. Determine whether the works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the tenant with a disability.
- 7.4. Determine if the cost of adaptation is reasonable and whether alternative solutions might be more practical such as offering alternative housing that meets the applicants needs or which can be readily adapted at a lower cost.
- 7.5. Ensure that the needs of the tenant with a disability are balanced with the suitability of adapting the property depending on the individual's circumstances and the alterations required to the house or flat. The council will consider each request on its own merit considering a variety of factors.

## **8. Tenants' Responsibilities**

- 8.1. Request an Occupational Therapy (OT) assessment by contacting Cambridgeshire County Council on 0345 045 5202.
- 8.2. A tenant may also contact the Cambridge City Council directly on 01223 457000 for certain types of minor adaptations, many of which can be ordered directly. The Council will contact an Occupational Therapist for advice and arrange a visit if needed.
- 8.3. Seek Advice from Council staff if unsure how to proceed with their application.
- 8.4. Tenants with disabilities completing a housing application on Homelink are expected to communicate their needs as part of the housing application process.

## **9. Adaptations Application Process**

Cambridge City Council is committed to collaborating with Health and Social Care services to enable people with disabilities remain independent in suitable housing for as long as possible.

- 9.1. The Occupational Therapist (OT) will refer the tenant to Cambridge City Council detailing the works required. Each case will be individually assessed on its own merits.
- 9.2. The OT may order some minor works without a home visit. These orders will be sent to the Council as appropriate. Once an order is received, the Council will contact the tenant.
- 9.3. Adaptations will be categorised into two groups:
- a) Minor adaptations as referred to in Section 10.1 of this policy
  - b) Major adaptations as referred to in Section 10.2 of this policy.
- 9.4. **Reasonable and Appropriate, Reasonable and Practicable Works:**
- a) The Council will determine what is *reasonable*, taking into account the need to provide suitable housing for a wide range of people over the long term.
  - b) If certain adaptations limit the future use of the property, the Council might decide that carrying out these adaptations is *unreasonable*. In this case, the Council will support the person with a disability to move to more suitable accommodation.
  - c) The Council may refuse an adaptation and consider it *unreasonable* if the property construction type makes it excessively costly to adapt. In these cases, the Council will explore alternative housing options that meet the applicant's needs or can be readily adapted at a lower cost.
- 9.5. **Timescales:**
- a) As a general guideline, tenants can expect their adaptations to be completed within 90 days from the date when the work is ordered.
  - b) Approved Adaptations will be prioritised where tenants are:
    - awaiting hospital discharge,
    - have limited access to essential facilities, or
    - where there is a potential risk of harm to a carer.
  - c) The Council will work closely with health and social care professionals to ensure that the needs of tenants with deteriorating or life-limiting conditions are addressed in a timely manner, with dignity and in consideration of their current and future needs.

## **10. Adaptations Categories and Charges**

### **10.1. Minor Adaptations (under £1000)**

10.1.1. The Council will provide minor aids and adaptations up to the value of £1000 free of charge. These will include but are not limited to:

- Lever Taps
- Grab Rails
- Mopstick handrails
- Toilet handrails
- Half steps

10.1.2. Where a customer has accessed an Occupational Therapist (OT) directly (9.1 above) and an assessment has been completed, the Council will determine whether additional consideration of a tenant's long-term housing options is required.

### **10.2. Major Adaptations:**

#### **10.2.1. Long Term Housing Needs:**

Moving home can be a stressful process. The Council has extensive experience of supporting people to move and resettle in new accommodation. Every effort will be made to support the person to find housing in a location that is most suitable for their needs.

- a) Where an adaptation is likely to exceed £1000, a visit may be arranged to discuss the tenant's broader needs such as the best long term housing solution. This may include a move to alternative accommodation.
- b) If a tenant's needs are better met by relocating, financial help may be offered if the estimated cost of the initial adaptation request would have exceeded £2500. The discretionary payment will only be made in lieu of extensive major adaptations such as extensions or work over the value of £20000.
- c) Where a tenant decides to move, they will be able to bid on the Homelink system for a suitable property. Where the tenant's rehousing needs have been assessed by an OT, a housing needs report will be submitted to the Housing Advice Service. Help to complete the application will be offered where requested along with the option to select automatic bidding.
- d) As there are home seekers on the housing register who also require an adapted property, adapted properties will continue to be advertised on

Homelink to promote choice and ensure fair access to accommodation.

- e) Where an applicant has an urgent medical need to move, they will be given a priority move (either Emergency Housing or Band A status), in accordance with the Lettings Policy.
- f) Where an applicant requires a specific size, type or adapted property, they will be placed in the appropriate housing needs band, but may be offered a direct let, if the Council has a shortage of suitable properties.
- g) Those waiting for an urgent move will be provided with temporary adaptations; for example, a removable ramp or other equipment as recommended by an OT to meet their needs in the short term.
- h) Non urgent cases will be banded in accordance with the Lettings Policy.

#### **10.2.2. Other Considerations:**

The council will liaise with the tenant and their family to ensure that the applicant's needs have been fully considered in accordance with section 10.2.1. above and will only complete major adaptations where the works are identified as necessary and appropriate, reasonable and practical as recommended by an OT.

A) The following will be considered:

- The total value of the proposed adaptation (including design costs) which should not exceed the max value of an equivalent Disabled Facilities Grant.
- The availability of housing that would be more suitable to adapt.
- Any exceptional circumstances which require the person to remain in their current property.
- Whether the property is suitable for building alterations as determined by the Council.
- The size of the household and their housing need.
- Any unacceptable health and safety risks associated with the desired adaptations.
- The occupant's status, the type of tenancy held and any pending possession access.

- The person's wider physical health needs and the length of time that they will remain in the property
- B) Some adaptations may be fast tracked where the tenant's accommodation is suitable for their on-going needs. As a common example, this may include level access showers to ground floor flats.
- C) Vehicular access ways and hard standings will only be installed where the availability of parking is limited in relation to the distance to the applicant's entrance door.
- D) Some cases are complex and require a multi-disciplinary approach with other professionals. However, all cases will be determined on their own merit and where an applicant's needs can only be met in their existing accommodation; this work will be arranged without further delay.
- E) Adaptations will be completed subject to available budget. If the budget is spent, applications received beyond this, will be added to a waiting list.

### **10.3. Test of Financial Resources (Means Test):**

10.3.1. The Means Test, known as a "test of resources" is used to calculate the financial contribution that the tenant may be required to make towards the cost of the adaptation.

10.3.2. The Means Test operated by the Council aligns its service with the principles adopted for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), which are applied in the private sector and in housing associations. This will not apply to adaptations below £1000.

More information about DFG is available at [www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants](http://www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants) and a guidance leaflet explaining the test of resources will be available for tenants.

10.3.3. In accordance with the criteria, children (under 16) and certain young people (16-20) with disabilities will be exempt from the test of resources; however, where the works are likely to exceed £30,000, a means test similar to that used in DFG cases will be applied.

10.3.4. Tenants in receipt of the following benefits will be exempt from the test of resources:

- Universal Credit
- Income Support



- Income based Job Seekers Allowance or Income Based Employment Support Allowance
- Working Tax with gross income less than the current level set by the Department for Work and Pensions.
- Guaranteed pension credit (not savings pension credit alone)
- Housing Benefit
- Or child tax credit with a relevant income less than current level set by DWP

Tenants will be asked to provide at least 3 months evidence of claiming the above benefits over the preceding 3 months.

10.3.5. If a financial contribution is required, the tenant will be required to pay this in advance of the work being completed. The outcome of the test of resources assessment will be shared with the tenant. The multipliers used as part of the test of resources are lower for social housing tenants than those in the private sector resulting in a comparable lower contribution toward the cost of the adaption.

10.3.6. If a tenant does not wish to disclose their financial details, they are not required to do so; however, no financial assistance will be offered by the Council and the tenant will have to pay for the full cost of the adaptation.

#### **10.4. Servicing and Annual Maintenance Charges:**

10.4.1. Any adaptations, which require regular servicing resulting in ongoing maintenance costs, will be subject to a weekly recharge to the tenant. This will include replacements for existing tenants. This will not apply to equipment fitted for children (under 16) and certain young people (aged 16-20).

10.4.2. The cost will appear as a weekly charge on the tenant's rent account. If the tenant is in receipt of housing benefit, the charge will be covered in part or in full in accordance with the housing benefits regulations as they apply.

10.4.3. The table below provides indicative (2024/25) weekly charges:

Stairlift	£2.32 per week on a 53 week basis
Steplift	£2.32 per week on a 53 week basis
Through floor lift	£3.29 per week on a 53 week basis
OHT / Hoist	£2.33 per week on a 53 week basis
Specialist W/C	£3.46 per week on a 53 week basis
Door entry Equipment	£5.05 per week on a 53 week basis

10.4.4. Service recharges will be limited to a maximum of two per property and will be payable weekly with the rent.

## 11. Refusal of Adaptations

This section of the policy only relates to adaptations exceeding £1000.

We will **not** adapt a property in the following circumstances:

- 11.1. Where a person is under-occupying by *more than* one bedroom, where they are overcrowding (except in exceptional circumstances) or are waiting for a transfer to another property.
- 11.2. Where the adaptation is unreasonable; for instance, installing a level access shower to a house or a flat above ground floor which cannot be accessed by an *existing* lift or; where the tenant's needs can be met with alterations to the original proposal i.e.: fencing a reasonable amount of garden rather than the entire garden or using a ground floor second reception room as a bedroom.
- 11.3. Where there is other suitable alternative adapted, part adapted accommodation or where it is considered likely that a suitable property will become available within 12 months of the request being made.
- 11.4. Where an adaptation would adversely affect the Council's ability to make the best use of the stock and relet the property in the future.
- 11.5. Where the cost of the adaptation is prohibitive and exceeds the equivalent maximum value applied to a DFG.
- 11.6. Where the applicant's condition is such that further adaptations will be required over time and during that time, it is considered likely that alternative suitable accommodation will be available.
- 11.7. Where an adaptation would place others at risk e.g. a communal stairlift with no alternative access for other first floor residents
- 11.8. Other than in exceptional circumstances, where a person is leaving a property with suitable adaptations already present within 5 years of those adaptations being completed.
- 11.9. Where the building is unsuitable for adaptation due to its construction.

## 12. Appeals

If a tenant wishes to appeal against the decision to refuse an adaptation, they may write to the Assistant Director who will refer the case to a panel of senior officers. Where available this will also include an OT.