



AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS POLICY FOR COUNCIL TENANTS

This Aids and Adaptations Policy for Council Tenants sets out how Dartford Borough Council will assist tenants with the provision of aids and adaptations in Council properties.

2025

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1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1. This Policy sets out the criteria by which Dartford Borough Council ('The Council') will assess requests for adaptation work, in order to meet the needs of its tenants and their families to live independently in their homes.
- 1.2. The Council has a duty under section 8 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended) to consider housing conditions and the provision of further housing accommodation which have regard to the needs of disabled people and those with a long term illness/condition.
- 1.3. Under the Equality Act 2010, the Council as a landlord does not have to make changes which affect the structure or which would substantially and permanently alter a Council tenant's home e.g. the Council does not have to remove walls, widen doorways or install permanent ramps, but there are some things that it must do to adapt a tenant's home if they need an aid or adaptation to provide assistance with day to day living and if it's reasonable to do so.
- 1.4. The Council may also consider applications from tenants who need adaptations to make their homes safer, such as elderly or frail tenants, tenants and/or immediate family members that are neurodivergent, or in any other cases where a tenant requires an aid or adaptation to assist them in their day to day living.
- 1.5. The Council is committed to facilitating the provision of aids and adaptations to its (Council) housing stock and will endeavour to deal with requests for assistance as quickly, effectively and sensitively as possible.
- 1.6. In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, the Council ensures that its adaptations service is equally accessible to all.

2. AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1. This Policy aims to help Dartford Borough Council tenants and their immediate household (those who have been living in the property as their principal home for 12 months, up to and including the date of the application) to:
 - Live independently and safely in their home
 - Achieve better housing and living conditions
 - Apply for physical adaptations to their property
- 2.2. The key objectives for the Council are to:
 - Provide appropriate adaptations to its homes where required, once an application has been submitted and approved
 - Communicate regularly with tenants to support them and their families throughout the adaptations process

- Work with an Occupational Therapist where required for minor adaptations and for all major adaptations to ensure applications are assessed fairly and equally
- Secure alternative suitable housing in instances where the Council is unable to provide adaptations or where other landlords are better able to meet specific needs
- Refer tenants to Social Services or other agencies when needed, which can provide appropriate support or advice on care services and equipment
- Ensure all tenants are treated in a fair, respectful, empathetic and consistent way.

3. STRATEGIC CONTEXT

3.1. This Policy and its delivery is intended to be compatible with the following Council policies and documents:

- Tenancy Agreement – a contract between a tenant and landlord setting out the legal terms and conditions of the tenancy.
- [Repairs and Maintenance Policy](#) – sets out how the Council will provide a repairs service to tenants. The Policy also sets out the tenants responsibilities for maintaining their home.
- [Vulnerable Adults' Housing Policy](#) – sets out how vulnerable adults, who access the Housing Service, are supported, signposted and referred to other organisations, when they require additional support.
- [Disabled Facilities Grants Policy](#) – sets out the criteria and process to apply for a disabled facilities grant and the Council's role in administering grants.
- [Allocations Policy](#) – sets out the criteria and procedures that the Council uses to prioritise applicants for housing owned by the Council and a proportion of homes owned by our housing association partners in the borough.
- [Decant Policy](#) – sets out the decant process and the practical help and support the Council can provide to any residents that might be affected.
- [Corporate Plan](#) – sets out the strategic direction the Council will take in relation to its powers, functions and responsibilities. The Plan includes a housing ambition to 'Ensure that our homes are well maintained' and to 'Provide a high quality and responsive housing service that's built on respect for aspiring and existing tenants.'
- [Equality and Diversity Document Framework](#) – sets out how the Council will meet the Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010.

3.2. This Policy and its delivery is also intended to be compatible with the following legislation:

- Housing Act 1985
- Housing, Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

- Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002
- Care Act 2014
- Equality Act 2010

3.3. There are also specific expectations placed on the Council, as a social housing landlord, by the Regulator of Social Housing as part of their Safety and Quality Standard to assist tenants seeking housing adaptations to access the appropriate service. Specific expectations include to:

- Clearly communicate to tenants and relevant organisations how they will assist tenants seeking housing adaptations services.
- Co-operate with tenants, appropriate local authority departments and other relevant organisations so that a housing adaptations service is available to tenants where appropriate.
- Allocate homes that are designed or adapted to meet specific needs appropriately.

4. ELIGIBILITY

4.1. This Policy applies to individuals who are either disabled, living with a long term illness or those who may need adaptations to their homes to make it safer and easier to move around in, such as elderly or neurodivergent tenants.

4.2. A person is defined as 'disabled' under the Equality Act 2010 if they have a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. A long-term adverse effect refers to disabilities that have lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months.

4.3. An individual will normally be considered for aids and adaptations to their home if:

- They are either a secure Dartford Borough Council tenant; or
- A partner or a member of the secure tenant's immediate family who has been a permanent resident of the household for **at least 12 months** up to and including the date of application; and
- They have a significant or serious long term impairment, or are restricted in their ability to:

- a) Carry out normal day to day activities in or around their home
- b) Access essential facilities within the home

4.4. In cases where a child is disabled, has a long term illness or is neurodivergent and the parents are separated, adaptation works will usually only be completed at the property that is the principal residence of the child, which will usually be determined by the parent in receipt of child benefit.

4.5. Major adaptations will not normally be considered where the applicant is waiting for medical procedures which will improve their mobility until their expected

recovery is complete. Temporary or minor adaptations may be considered during this interim period.

- 4.6. Adaptations will be considered where the applicant is waiting to be discharged from hospital and requires their home to be altered.
- 4.7. Sub-tenants and lodgers who live with a secure Council tenant will not be eligible for assistance under this Policy, and will be provided with housing advice to source their own housing which meets their requirements.
- 4.8. Requests for major adaptations will not normally be approved where a Right to Buy application has been received by the Council. Following completion of a Right to Buy sale, adaptations for disabled tenants could, however, be considered under the Council's [Disabled Facilities Grants Policy](#).
- 4.9. Applicants who are seeking a transfer or mutual exchange will be considered on a case by case basis. Whether the applicant is leaving a suitably adapted property will be taken into consideration. Where an applicant has transferred to a second adapted property, another transfer or mutual exchange will not be permitted unless there are very exceptional circumstances.
- 4.10. The Council recognises that there may be occasions where applications fall outside the scope of this Policy. These will be assessed on an individual basis by the Housing Maintenance and Repairs Manager where appropriate and reasonable to do so.

5. TYPES OF ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

- 5.1. There are two categories of aids and adaptation covered by this Policy:
 - Minor adaptations
 - Major adaptations
- 5.2. The Council is responsible for arranging and carrying out any adaptations works made under this Policy, including future maintenance, as part of the Council's cyclic maintenance contract.
- 5.3. The most appropriate solution will be sought in all cases and will aim to offer best value for money whilst meeting an applicant's needs. This will be achieved by ensuring the works are necessary and appropriate and reasonable and practicable as outlined in the Housing Grants and Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended).
- 5.4. The Council operates a waiting list for both minor and major applications. Minor adaptations are usually carried out within 12 weeks of accepting a recommendation from the Occupational Therapist (OT). Major adaptations take longer and in some cases, up to a year after accepting a recommendation from the Occupational Therapist. However, the Council will prioritise critical cases as recommended by an Occupational Therapist.

5.5. In the unlikely event that there is insufficient budget to carry out works, applicants may make an application for a disabled facilities grant as set out in the Council's [Disabled Facilities Grants Policy](#). The disabled facilities grant is means tested and comes from a separate funding source used to provide aids and adaptations in all housing tenures. Please note however, tenants will be responsible for the arrangement of any works carried out under this programme, including any future maintenance and repair of the aids or adaptations.

6. MINOR ADAPTATIONS

6.1. Minor adaptations are works that cost up to a maximum of £1,000. The timely provision of minor adaptations can often postpone the need for substantial adaptations.

6.2. Minor adaptations which are funded by the Council include:

- Door entry intercom
- Grab rails
- Hand rails (Internal/External)
- Window opening equipment
- Lever taps
- WC lever flushing handles
- Altering heights of electrical faceplates
- Over bath showers
- Door and wall protectors
- Key safes
- Concrete half steps
- Shatterproof glass
- Guards around items such as fires, radiators, heating pipes

The list is not exhaustive and each referral will be assessed on its own merits.

6.3. Some minor adaptations can also be provided via the Council's [Handyman scheme](#), such as fitting grab rails. The service can also provide security advice, free of charge to Council tenants

6.4. The Council may require an assessment from an Occupational Therapist for some of the listed minor adaptations set out in 6.2. Tenants should contact the Council in the first instance when requesting any minor adaptation. The Council will then be able to advise on the need for an Occupational Therapist. All larger scale or substantial adaptations will need an assessment and recommendation from an Occupational Therapist.

7. MAJOR ADAPTATIONS

7.1. Major adaptations which are funded by the Council include:

- Full kitchen adaptations
- Re-organisation of a property's layout
- Installation of flush floor showers and level access trays (ground floor only)
- Ramping
- Access widening (including internal rooms)
- Stair lifts or through-floor lifts
- Extensions to buildings (where no other options are available)

The list is not exhaustive and each referral will be assessed on its own merits.

7.2. Tenants should contact an Occupational Therapist in the first instance who can request adaptations on behalf of the person who needs them. Referrals for adaptations or equipment are made via Kent County Council (KCC), where a care needs assessment will be completed in order to assess an individual's situation. KCC will then advise on what can be done to help tenants to adapt their home.

7.3. For all major adaptations, the Council and the Occupational Therapist will work together to ensure that:

- Cases are assessed fairly and equally
- Exceptional needs are taken into account
- Public money is used responsibly
- Budgetary issues which may affect service delivery are communicated promptly
- There is close liaison on individual cases and alternative options to meet an applicant's needs are considered
- With more complex cases, arrange joint visits between the Council's Technical Officer and the Occupational Therapist to discuss all available options for the applicant
- Regular meetings are held between the Council and the Occupational Therapist to discuss the progress of individual cases and current working practices

7.4. The Council will only consider major adaptations if an Occupational Therapist has assessed the household situation and has recommended that the works are both **necessary and appropriate**, based on the applicants requirements.

7.5. In consultation with the applicant, all options will be considered, in line with this Policy, to find the most appropriate solution.

7.6. The Council has the final decision on whether to accept an Occupational

Therapist's recommendations and ultimately, adapt its properties.

- 7.7. Where another organisation has agreed to part fund the cost of the works, this must be done in agreement with the Council and the Occupational Therapist.
- 7.8. In cases where a move to a more suitable property is the preferred option, it is expected that the move will take place within six months from the date of the application and in line with the [Allocations Policy](#).
- 7.9. The Council will record all major adaptations on a stock condition database. Whenever practical, this information will be utilised to ensure that full use is made of existing facilities by targeting suitable adapted properties or applicants with matching mobility or other needs.

8. ASSESSMENT OF APPLICATIONS

- 8.1. As a local housing authority, the Council has wide discretionary powers set out in the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 to provide financial assistance for repairs, improvements and adaptations to living accommodation. This includes help with the cost of moving and adapting or improving another property where it is deemed to be a more cost effective option. It is therefore the Policy of the Council to examine all the options available to the individual before immediately embarking on plans to adapt the current property where major adaptations are required.
- 8.2. Once the Council has established that an applicant is eligible for assistance, there are a number of factors that need to be considered in order to establish the overall suitability of the property for the recommended works. These are:
 - The age and structural condition of the property to ensure the works can be carried out safely;
 - The suitability of the property for the size of the household (as set out in the [Allocations Policy](#));
 - Whether suitable alternative accommodation is available where major works are required;
 - The applicant's intentions regarding the long term use of the property;
 - Whether the adaptations will meet the long term needs of the tenant;
 - Whether external adaptation might adversely affect other residents in the area.
- 8.3. Where alternative accommodation is being considered, the likely impact on the applicant of moving house will be assessed in relation to their health and individual circumstances to ensure that the move will not have a serious adverse effect on them.
- 8.4. If suitable, alternative accommodation is found where the new property is smaller than the applicants existing home, the applicant will be given priority for re-housing and financial assistance to help with moving costs under the terms of the Council's [Downsize for Cash Scheme](#). Please note only existing Council

tenants moving to another Council home within the borough can apply for this Scheme.

- 8.5. The Council has the final decision on whether to carry out the adaptations.

9. UNDERTAKING THE WORK

9.1. The Council funds adaptations to its own housing stock. The undertaking of adaptations under this Policy is dependent on funding constraints, current legislation or other exceptional circumstances, such as where the Council is required to fund a civil contingency or emergency.

9.2. Where works cannot be completed, due to insufficient funds, works will be completed in strict date order, unless identified as critical by the Occupational Therapist.

9.3. Where it is deemed not reasonable or practicable to carry out the adaptation in a particular property, minor works to ensure the health and safety of the applicant will be considered.

9.4. Subject to section 9.1, providing all requirements have been met following assessment, the Council will:

- Arrange for all minor adaptations, i.e. those up to a value of £1,000, to be carried out within 12 weeks on receipt of the assessment.
- Complete all major adaptations in strict date order.

9.5. Work that is deemed critical by the Occupational Therapist will be prioritised and completed before other works.

Work may be considered critical if:

- It is essential to hospital discharge;
- There is risk to life or limb;
- There is a breakdown of the care system;
- The applicant is at risk in their current property and re-housing is required.

10. CIRCUMSTANCES IN WHICH ADAPTATIONS WILL NOT BE CARRIED OUT

10.1. If the Council deems that it is not reasonable and practicable to adapt the property, applicants will be asked to consider transferring to a more suitable property. The suitability of that property will be judged on the criteria contained in Part IV of Schedule 2 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended).

10.2. The decision as to whether or not it is reasonable or practicable to undertake

the work will take account of factors such as:

- The extent to which the existing home is capable of being adapted.
- The cost of the work in relation to the benefit.
- The availability of suitable alternative accommodation.
- The degree of occupation within the premises.
- The extent to which the tenant complies with the conditions of tenancy.

For example, it will be deemed as not reasonable or practicable for adaptation works to be carried out in the following circumstances:

- In a two or three bedroom family dwelling where under occupation exists and there is suitable alternative accommodation currently available. In exceptional circumstances, where a move would be detrimental to health; the application will be considered.
- Where the requirement is to provide an additional bedroom or living room and suitable alternative accommodation is currently available.
- Where parking bays and access ramps will adversely affect the safety and amenity of the area.
- Where the works would affect the ability of the Council to let the property in the future.
- Where a flush floor shower is requested to be installed on the first floor of a property.
- Where major alterations are required to a property already in need of major repairs.
- Where the Council is seeking possession of the property because the applicant or a member of the household is guilty of unacceptable behaviour which is so serious that it makes them unsuitable to be a tenant of the Council.
- Where an applicant is currently in rent arrears and who has not reached and maintained an agreement to repay the debt on a regular basis. Minor works to ensure the health and safety of the applicant will be considered.

The decision on whether works are 'reasonable or practicable' is a matter for the Council.

11. INSTALLING ADAPTATIONS AT YOUR OWN EXPENSE

- 11.1. Council tenants may organise their own adaptations at their own expense. In all cases, tenants must obtain written agreement from the Council before carrying out any alterations or adaptations to their property. Requests to carry out alterations to the property should be made by completing a '**Property Alteration**' [application form](#).
- 11.2. The Council will only refuse permission with good reason, such as where the work would interfere with any maintenance on the property, breach any regulatory requirements or where the work may cause a potential health and safety risk.
- 11.3. The written request will need to state what works and adaptations will need to

be carried out and who will be undertaking the works. Tenants must **NOT** start any works without first obtaining written permission from the Council. The Council may inspect the completed works to ensure they have been carried out satisfactorily.

- 11.4. Tenants will be responsible for the repair and maintenance of the adaptations that they have arranged themselves, for the duration of the tenancy. The Council will not be liable for any damage or injury caused by adaptations not installed by the Council.
- 11.5. Please note that tenants on Introductory Tenancies cannot carry out any improvements or adaptations to their properties.

12. REMOVING ADAPTATIONS

- 12.1. At the end of a tenancy, the Council may require the removal of adaptations that have been installed by tenants themselves, and the making good of any damage to the property. The costs associated with removal will be the responsibility of the tenant.
- 12.2. Where adaptations have been carried out by the Council to a Council property and a new tenant moves in, the adaptations will not normally be removed. For example, where a bath has been removed and replaced with a level access shower.
- 12.3. The Council advertises available adapted properties through its choice based lettings scheme via Kent Homechoice and will make every effort to let these properties to tenants who require adapted properties.
- 12.4. Consideration will be given to the removal of stair lifts by the Council if they are not required by the new tenant. Where stair lifts are removed, the cost will be paid for by the Council.

13. MOVING OR BUYING A PROPERTY AFTER ADAPTATIONS ARE COMPLETE

- 13.1. Following a major adaptation, the Council would normally expect tenants to remain in the adapted property for at least five years. However, the Council recognises that in some circumstances, tenants may need to move because their circumstances have changed. This will be considered by the Housing Maintenance Manager in consultation with the Occupational Therapist.
- 13.2. Transfers will be considered in line with the [Allocations Policy](#).
- 13.3. Mutual exchanges will be considered in line with Schedule 3 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended), 'grounds for refusing a mutual exchange'. Therefore, the Council may refuse permission for an exchange to take place if:

- A property owned by the Council has been adapted or has features that make it suitable for a person with disabilities and the exchange would mean a person with disabilities would no longer live there;
- A property is owned by a landlord who lets to particularly vulnerable people and the exchange would mean a vulnerable person would no longer live there;
- A property owned by the Council is, as a result of the adaptations, categorised as a priority for disabled persons or persons with special needs (i.e. supported housing) and as a result of a mutual exchange, the adaptations are not required by the incoming tenant and/or immediate family.

13.4. Applications to exercise the Right to Buy by tenants who have had adaptations carried out may be refused in line with Schedule 5 of the Housing Act 1985 (as amended) 'Exceptions to the Right to Buy'. All applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

13.5. In circumstances where tenants need to be permanently moved out of their home due to works such as demolition, redevelopment or refurbishment, the Council will arrange for adaptations to be carried out to their new home in accordance with the [Decant Policy](#). Housing needs assessments will be done at the earliest possible stage for affected tenants moving to another council or rented housing association property to establish whether adaptations need to be made to their next home.

14. APPLICATIONS FALLING OUTSIDE OF THIS POLICY

14.1. The Council acknowledges that there may be circumstances that warrant exceptions to this Policy. Applications that fall outside the scope of this Policy will be considered by the Housing Maintenance Manager and where appropriate and reasonable to do so, exceptions to this Policy will be agreed.

15. COMPLAINTS

15.1. If tenants are not satisfied with the service they have received, the Council's [Corporate Complaints Procedure](#) can be followed. Complaints leaflets are also available from the Council offices.

15.2. The [Housing Ombudsman](#) can be contacted if further advice and support is needed on making a complaint to the Council.

16. DATA PROTECTION

16.1. The UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 regulate the processing of information relating to individuals, which includes the obtaining, holding, using or disclosing of such information.

16.2. The Council needs to collect and use certain types of information about its tenants in order to carry out its everyday business and to fulfil its objectives and its statutory functions.

16.3. The Council's:

- [Data Protection Policy](#) sets out how it will protect special category and criminal convictions personal data;
- [Housing Services \(Landlord and Tenant\) Privacy Notice](#) explains that the Council collects personal information to administer its housing (landlord and tenant) services.

17. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

17.1. The Council is committed to welcoming and valuing diversity, promoting equality of opportunity and tackling unlawful discrimination in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. The Council, in delivering this Policy, will have regard to the Public Sector Equality Duty and ensure that no individual is discriminated against based on their sex, sexual orientation, marital status, pregnancy and maternity, gender reassignment, race, religion, belief, disability or age.

17.2. The Public Sector Equality Duty is a duty on the Council and that responsibility cannot be delegated to a contractor/service provider and is a continuing duty.

17.3. This Aids and Adaptations Policy has been subject to a [Customer Access Review](#), to assess the impact it will have on equality. The review concluded that the Policy will have an overall positive impact as it provides a transparent, proportionate, fair and consistent approach to the adaptations service, which will be tailored to meet individual needs and ensure accessibility for all.

18. MONITORING AND REVIEW

18.1. The Council will continue to monitor the number and types of adaptations requests received to ensure the adaptations service is providing the support and assistance that tenants require.

18.2. This Policy will be reviewed every three years, or sooner, in the event of major legislative or operational changes.

If you or anybody you know requires this or any other council information in another language, please contact us and we will do our best to provide this for you. Braille, Audio tape and large print versions of this document are available upon request.



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