

# Aids and Adaptations Policy

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## 1.0 SCOPE

### **Purpose**

- 1.1 All customer requests for aids and adaptations will be assessed against housing need and suitability of the property for their family needs. In some cases, re-housing will be the most cost effective and practical solution. whg will prioritise and support a housing move in preference to adaptations wherever possible. All requests will be considered on its individual merits.
- 1.2 whg provides a high quality Aids and Adaptations service to support customers to live an independent life regardless of disability or long term health problems.
- 1.3 An aid or adaptation is the provision of fixed equipment or a modification to a property that enables customers with an identifiable need to live safely and independently in their home. We will also provide, wherever possible, trained trusted assessors to assess and provide portable aids as needed.
- 1.4 This policy sets out our approach to managing adapted homes in the most prudent way. Demand for aids and adaptations is very high and assistance will always be considered in light of the availability of funding. Each case will be considered on its individual merits and in line with this policy.
- 1.5 This Policy also sets out how we will work in partnership with Walsall Council to deliver larger scale and Disabled Facility Grant (DFG) funded aids and adaptations. These aspects of the Policy only apply to homes that are located within areas served by Walsall Council. We will also work with respective local authorities on a case by case basis to deliver larger scale and DFG funded adaptations.

### **Legal and regulatory framework**

- 1.6 The Care Act 2014 - The Act offers an opportunity to improve local provision of home adaptations in line with the Act's aspirations and duties to integrate health, social care and housing, achieve efficiency savings and move from crisis intervention to prevention. Home adaptations are an excellent example of provision which enables wellbeing and independence and prevents need.

- 1.7 We will adhere to the Regulator of Social Housing's Tenant Involvement and Empowerment Standard, in particular 1.3.1 b, as we understand the different needs of our customers, including in relation to their additional support needs.

## 2.0 POLICY STATEMENT

### Eligibility

- 2.1 To receive the aids and adaptations services a customer must meet the disability criteria as set out within the Equality Act 2010. The criteria include customers with a physical or mental impairment which has substantial and long-term adverse effects on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities within their own home. Long term effect includes disabilities that have lasted for at least 12 months or likely to last for the remainder of a person's life.
- 2.2 A request for adaptations will only be considered if the disabled person is the tenant, or is another person living at the property and named on the tenancy as part of the household. It is the responsibility of tenants to ensure their tenancy occupancy details are up to date and that they have informed us of any changes, such as new immediate family members who have moved into or left the home. Where a tenant agrees to another member of their family moving into the property, they must ensure that this has not created a situation of overcrowding. Adaptations are not available to alleviate overcrowding.
- 2.3 Adaptations will not be funded by whg for homes which:
- have a live Right to Buy application
  - have a live Voluntary Right to Buy application
  - have a live Right to Acquire application
  - have a demoted tenancy
  - are leasehold
  - are shared ownership
  - are not owned by whg
  - are market or sub-market rental
- 2.4 Where a home has benefitted from significant investment in adaptations it will normally become exempt from the Right to Buy or Right to Acquire.

### Rent and service charge implications

- 2.5 The rent of a property may be reviewed following an adaptation if the works completed have resulted in an extra room.
- 2.6 Where a major adaptation proposes the loss of a bedroom we may not necessarily consent to the works. Each case will be considered on its merits including but not limited to the needs of the existing tenant and the availability

of alternative stock. Where consent is given it will not necessarily result in a reduction in rent payable.

- 2.7 A service charge may be introduced where adaptations require a maintenance contract to be taken out for the installed equipment. Customers will be made aware of this and their written consent to meet the service charge will be obtained before installation.

### **Warranties and repairs and maintenance**

- 2.8 Adaptations funded through DFG are usually covered by a 12 month warranty from the contractor which covers faults and defects that may result through normal use of the product. Inappropriate use or failure to arrange servicing can invalidate warranties. The customer must liaise directly with their contractor on these matters.

- 2.9 The adaptation is the customer's property and therefore their responsibility to maintain. The local authority will include a 12 month warranty for stair lifts and ceiling track hoists which includes the servicing of the equipment. After this 12 month period customers are encouraged to secure their own warranty to cover their adaptation. The local authority will obtain a signed agreement from the customer prior to installation of the equipment.

We will not fund:

- extended warranties
- replacement of defective equipment or adaptations.

- 2.10 We will not fund or arrange repairs or servicing to aids and adaptations such as lifts, hoists or any other electronic equipment where we did not provide the equipment.

- 2.11 We will exercise discretion to ensure vulnerable customers are not left without essential facilities in line with our repairing obligations. This will form the basis for any decision to undertake repairs, servicing or maintenance on aids and adaptations that are not our property.

- 2.12 To limit waste and reduce the environmental impact of this service, when equipment is no longer required and it is still in good working order, we will endeavour to recycle, reuse or return to the original provider.

### **Minor Adaptations**

- 2.13 Referrals for grab rails, hand rails, half steps and lever taps will be accepted direct from customers and provided free of charge with trusted assessors providing advice and guidance around installation. Such requests must cost less than £1,000 and are subject to the availability of funding from our budgets.

- 2.14 All other minor adaptations will be subject to a health care professional assessment of need and will be dependent on the nature of the work, costs and availability of funding.

### **Major Adaptations**

- 2.15 Major adaptations require more substantial and expensive works. They will only be provided following a professional assessment of need. We will permit such adaptations wherever practicable, reasonable and cost effective to do so. Whilst every case will be considered on its individual merits a key factor will be the long term letting prospects for a property.
- 2.16 For adaptations requested by customers that cost over £1,000 but under £3,000 we will carry out works and invoice Walsall Council or the respective local authority for any cost over the £1000 but under £3000 threshold. This will be on the basis of both us and the local authority having available funds to assist. In certain situations, customers may be able to contribute to assessed adaptations above the threshold if in accordance with the local authority policy.

### **DFG Funded Adaptations**

- 2.17 Requests for adaptations funded by statutory DFGs, are assessed by occupational therapists who seek permission from the landlord to approve the proposed adaptations. We consider each and every case on its individual merits. Currently we have given Walsall Council a 'block' approval to carry out the following works without asking for consent:
- straight stair lifts
  - curved stair lifts

This permission is based on Walsall Council informing us of the installation, providing an agency service and using their contractors to undertake the works. The customer will also need to inform us that they are making this adaptation in line with their tenancy agreement. Where the adaptation is connected with a second further major adaptation, such as a wet room, the works will require specific agreement from us. Customers wishing to install their own lift independently of Walsall Council must also obtain consent from us. We will manage requests from other local authorities on a case by case basis.

### **Approval for works**

- 2.18 DFG funded adaptation works must not be carried out until we have authorised any proposed works. We will complete approvals as soon as practicable, normally within one month of receipt, and inform the Council of the outcome. In addition we will inform the customer of the outcome and in the event consent has been refused then we will offer alternative options. The local authority is

not permitted to approve a DFG without our consent and if we do not give consent they will close the case.

2.19 For complex works there are two stages of approval:

Stage 1 - An initial agreement stage (known as permission in principle) to the overall principle of adaptations. This will often be before detailed drawings and specifications have been produced. We retain the right to refuse consent at Stage 2.

Stage 2 - A formal detailed approval will only be issued when we are fully satisfied and agree to the works proposed.

2.20 For adaptations funded through DFG and where the local authority does not provide agency services, customers will be provided with a pack outlining the procedure and containing details of their allocated contractor.

2.21 We will provide a list of our approved contractors and the customer will commission them to undertake the works. The customer will liaise directly with the chosen contractor who will provide warranties and service plans for new adaptations. Upon completion of the works and to the satisfaction of the customer, local authority and ourselves. The local authority will release the funds directly to the contractor. The local authority will provide the landlord with a completion of works certificate.

2.22 We have the right to refuse permission for a number of reasons including:

- Where there are no records of the subject of the application being resident in the relevant home.
- Where the adaptation appears to be principally to reduce an overcrowding situation caused by the customer's change in circumstances since being granted their tenancy.
- Where the needs of the household could be more reasonably satisfied by the customer transferring to more suitable accommodation provided by us or another registered provider.
- Where the works are not appropriate for the structure of the property or appear unreasonable.
- Where the works are to be undertaken by the customer or the customer's contractors and not by the local authority or our nominated contractors.
- Where the customer is actively seeking re-housing or where there has been a serious breach of tenancy resulting in a legal notice being served.

- Where substantial works are required either through a combination of adaptations or through a single one off expensive adaptation.
- Where the home is scheduled for demolition.

2.23 We must consider the long term implications of requests for adaptations that require structural or more substantial works. A request may be refused if the adaptations could make the future letting of the property problematic or uneconomical. When making a decision, we will consider whether the proposal offers a long term solution.

2.24 In all refusal situations, we will support the affected customer to identify more suitable accommodation by way of providing a re-housing priority. For customers downsizing to release a family home, support may also include financial assistance with removal costs.

#### **Future allocations of adapted homes**

2.25 Every effort will be made to reallocate a previously adapted home to a new applicant who can fully benefit from the features. This will include making direct matches where appropriate. whg aims to reallocate adapted homes in the most cost effective manner and avoid removing adaptations wherever possible.

#### **Alternative options**

2.26 For applicants who choose to move, we will not automatically agree to any further adaptations to their next home but will consider their needs as part of a new assessment.

#### **Access to adapted or ground floor accommodation**

2.27 We have recognised that ring fencing certain property types for particular age groups affects the amount of housing opportunities for people with disabilities irrespective of age. Ground floor, level access accommodation and bungalows will not be ring fenced against age criteria.

#### **Mobility scooters**

2.28 We have separate mobility scooter guidelines to advise customers in relation to the storing, parking and charging of scooters within their home. Where this is not possible we will work with the customer to try and provide a solution. Communal areas within blocks of flats must be kept clear of obstacles in line with our Fire Risk Assessment Policy.

### **3.0 PERFORMANCE MEASURES**

- 3.1 All feedback from customer satisfaction surveys will be reviewed by the Health and Wellbeing team annually and is the responsibility of the policy holder.
- 3.2 We will ensure compliance with the HCA Consumer Standards.

#### **4.0 MONITOR AND REVIEW**

- 4.1 This Policy will be monitored by the Head of Health and Wellbeing and reviewed every three years by the Customer Services Committee.
- 4.2 Asset Management will set and monitor an annual budget for the provision of both minor and major aids and adaptations. We will ensure investment in our housing stock via DFGs is consistent with our approach to housing management.
- 4.3 Asset Management will ensure all asset management records are kept up to date as aids and adaptations are made to our properties.

#### **5.0 ASSOCIATED DOCUMENTS, POLICIES AND PROCEDURES**

- 5.1
  - whg Allocations Policy
  - whg Rent and Service Charge Policy
  - whg Tenancy Policy
  - whg Equality and Diversity Policy
  - whg Asset Management Strategy
  - whg Fire Risk Assessment Policy
  - Mobility Scooter Guidelines
  - Walsall Council DFG Policy
  - Equality Act 2010

## Version control

<b>Version</b>	3
<b>Document author</b>	Connie Jennings Head of Health and Wellbeing
<b>Document owner</b>	Head of Health and Wellbeing
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<b>Corporate Plan aim</b>	Promote health and prosperity where we can make a difference
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<b>Key changes made</b>	Recycling / reusing equipment where possible added.