

Aids and Adaptations Policy

Scope of Policy

This policy sets out the approach of Platform Housing Group (the Group) to the provision of aids and adaptations in its existing housing stock. Its purpose is to:

- set out the criteria by which the Group will assess all requests for aids and adaptation work where requested by a third party or carried out by ourselves; and
- ensure consistency, clarity and fairness in approach when dealing with requests.

Applicability

This policy applies to all residential rented, leasehold and shared ownership properties owned by the Group.

1. Policy Statement

- 1.1 We are committed to providing a high-quality aids and adaptations service to enable our customers to live safely and more independently within their homes.
- 1.2 For the purpose of this policy, aids and adaptations are defined as items of equipment or special fixtures and alterations which improve access to a customer's home, improve a customer's mobility in and around their home, or help with daily living.
- 1.3 A customer guide and operational procedures are in place to support the implementation of this policy.

2. Context

- 2.1 We understand the impact of disability on affected customers and the importance of meeting our legal and moral responsibility to support customers with disabilities to live safely and independently in their homes.

We invest heavily in both the design of our new build properties and existing stock and seek out adaptable and resourceful incorporation of accessibility and other design features that support independence and mobility.

3. Aims and Objectives

- 3.1 The aim of this policy is to:
 - Ensure the reasonable needs of disabled and/or elderly customers are prioritised and met accordingly, subject to the provision of available funding.
 - Clarify eligibility requirements.
 - Set out the criteria by which we will assess all requests.
 - Clarify funding routes including statutory Disabled Facilities Grants.

- Balance the expectations of customers requiring adaptations with our duty to manage our property portfolio effectively.
- Ensure compliance with legal, planning and regulatory requirements and adopt best practice guidance where it is prudent to do so.

4. Policy Outline

4.1 General Approach

We will set aside a financial provision each year to enable adaptations to be undertaken to the homes of customers who have disabilities.

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, rehousing will be the most cost effective and practical solution. We may consider supporting a housing move to a suitably adapted property or a property that could more easily be adapted in preference to substantially adapting an existing property in line with our Managed Move Policy.

We will actively seek to understand any specific needs in respect of adaptations to ensure that the correct standard and type of home is offered. We will not offer a tenancy if a property is unsuitable or if it cannot be adapted reasonably and practically to meet the needs of the proposed new customer.

We may take action against any new customer who knowingly conceals information about a medical condition in order to secure the tenancy of a property that is unsuitable for their needs.

We will offer a range of routes by which customers can learn more about the aids and adaptations service including the publication **A Guide to the Adaptations Service (Appendix A)**.

4.2 Eligibility

We will consider requests for aids and adaptations from customers who live in rented, leasehold and shared ownership properties owned by us.

Adaptations will not be funded by us for homes which:

- have a live Right to Buy, Voluntary Right to Buy or Right to Acquire application.
- have a demoted, starter tenancy or Assured Periodic tenancy (*see below).
- are leasehold.
- are shared ownership.
- are market or sub-market rent.
- are not owned by us.

- * We will only approve minor adaptations for customers on these tenancies. In the case of major adaptations being required (usually funded via a local authority Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)). We will, in exceptional circumstances, approve these if they are fundamental in improving the household's current circumstances (we would require a full Occupational Therapist's report with supporting evidence) but reserve the right to not carry out works where no DFG is available and/or local authorities are not meeting statutory responsibilities.

Where a home has been built with, or subsequently benefitted from, significant investment in adaptations, it will normally be exempt from purchase by the customer through the Right to Buy or Right to Acquire scheme.

We reserve the right to refuse to fund or provide permission for adaptations for a number of reasons including:

- Where there is no record of the person requiring the adaptation being formally recorded as 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 the tenancy.
- Where the needs of the household could be more reasonably satisfied by the customer transferring to more suitable accommodation being provided by us or another housing provider.
- Where the works are not appropriate for the property or appear unreasonable.
- Where the customer is actively seeking rehousing.
- Where there has been a serious breach of tenancy resulting in a legal notice being served.
- Where the home is scheduled for demolition or disposal.
- Where the works requires planning or listed building consent and such consent for works is refused.

4.3 **Types of Aids and Adaptations**

We categorise requests for aids and adaptations as either **minor** or **major** with the distinction being based on the nature and complexity of the work required.

4.3.1 **Minor Aids and Adaptations**

Requests for minor fixed aids and adaptations, such as grab rails, handrails and lever taps, will be accepted directly from customers and provided free of charge with trusted assessors available to provide advice and guidance around suitability and installation. To satisfy the minor aids criteria, any work will generally cost less than £1,500, although this limit may vary according to the local authority within which the property is located.

We will establish a dedicated annual budget for undertaking minor aids and adaptations and, subject to the availability of funding within the year, will aim to complete work falling into this category within 21 days of receipt of request.

4.3.2 Major Adaptations

Requests for major adaptations, expected to cost over £1,500 (this amount may vary depending on the local authority), will be referred to the local authority Adult or Child Social Care team for an Occupational Therapist assessment of need and recommended works.

The customer will be required to make a direct claim to the relevant local authority for the works to be carried out through the DFG scheme.

Under the DFG scheme the local authority will be required to seek the approval from us to undertake the works, which shall not be unreasonably withheld.

4.4 Funding

We will set an annual aids and adaptations budget. This is cost limited, but demand led. We will seek to maximise funding through the local authority DFG scheme whilst ensuring the provision of aids and adaptations to meet the needs of our customers is consistent and equitable.

We will consider partial funding major works up to a £10,000 (ten thousand pounds) limit only where the local authority DFG threshold has been exceeded but reserve the right to reject funding requests when we consider our finite resources are being disproportionately spent on a property or where the annual budget has been exhausted.

4.5 Prioritisation

Where the number of applicants exceeds the available budget, a list will be maintained and worked through in date order i.e., work will be undertaken to the home of the applicant whose application is dated the earliest. However, in exceptional circumstances, and where the Occupational Therapist or hospital doctor recommends that work should be completed as a matter of urgency in order to address an acute medical priority or to accelerate discharge from hospital, then that applicant's case may be placed above all others on the list.

4.6 Transfer and Mutual Exchange

It is our discretion to determine whether such a move can take place.

Following a major adaptation, we would normally expect the customer to remain in the property for a minimum of five years. Customers who choose to undertake a mutual exchange with another customer and in doing so move from an adapted

property to one that needs adaptation would be expected to fund any adaptations themselves.

We will not compensate customers who have carried out works at their own cost and may require the property to be returned to its pre-adaption condition at the end of their tenancy if this was set out in the consent for works.

4.7 Maintenance, Repairs and Service Charges

We will maintain and service all equipment and adaptations covered by this policy which have been installed by us or through the DFG scheme.

Sometimes we will need to charge for this through a service charge. We will also replace such equipment at the end of its useful life, subject to confirmation of a continuing requirement and the availability of further funding; for example, if the original adaptation was paid for by a DFG the customer will normally be required to seek a further DFG.

Where such works have resulted in a reduction or addition to the number of bedrooms in the property then we will rebase rents on the re-letting of the property.

5. Equality and Diversity

5.1 We are committed to fairness and equality for all regardless of colour, race, ethnicity, nationality, gender, sexual orientation, marital status, disability, age, religion or belief, family circumstances or offending history, as referred to in our relevant Group policies. Our aim is to ensure that our policies and procedures do not create an unfair disadvantage for anyone, either directly or indirectly.

5.2 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in respect of this policy and which identified no negative impact on any person/group with a protected characteristic.

6. Complaints

6.1 We aim to meet the needs of our customers by providing an excellent service. However, it is acknowledged that occasionally things go wrong and customers may wish to complain. Should the need arise to make a complaint, please refer to our Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy.

7. Monitoring and Review

7.1 The Group will monitor the effectiveness of the policy and recommend policy changes to improve service delivery.

7.2 This policy will be reviewed every three years or on the introduction of new legislation or best practice guidelines, whichever is the sooner.

- 7.3 Approved documents are valid for use after their approval date and remain in force beyond any expiry of their review date until an updated version is available.

8. Associated Documents

- 8.1 List of documents - associated policies, procedures and publications:

- Disabled Facilities Grant Application Process (Local Authority Specific)
- A Guide to the Adaptations Service
- Equality Act 2010
- Care Act 2014
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- Complaints, Comments and Compliments Policy
- Managed Move Policy
- Lettings Policy
- Tenancy Management Policy
- Tenancy Fraud Policy
- Mutual Exchange Policy
- Regulator of Social Housing - Consumer Standards:
 - Safety and Quality
 - Transparency, Influence and Accountability

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A Guide to the **Adaptations Service**



What is an adaptation?

Long term illness or disability may mean that you or a family member need a few changes to your home. An adaptation could make a big difference to your comfort or quality of life.

An adaptation is a piece of equipment or alteration including:-

- Grab rail
- Hand rail
- Access Ramps
- Walk in shower
- Lever taps
- Wheelchair access kitchen
- Special bathroom equipment
- Stair lifts and lifting equipment

Our Commitment means that we will:

- Make the application process as simple as possible
- Set aside money each year to provide aids and adaptations
- Aim to process requests quickly
- Work with local authority partners to secure Disabled Facilities Grant where needed
- Fast track requests for small aids and adaptations through our repairs service
- Service stair lifts and hoists every 12 months (there may be a charge for this)
- Not refuse permission for major works to be carried out without good reason

How to apply

You can apply for an adaptation by contacting us at **0333 200 7304** or email **info@platformhg.com**

We will acknowledge receipt within 7 calendar days.

If there is a lot of work needed usually costing over £1,500 you will need to contact your local authority to request a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and an Occupational Therapist assessment.

The £1,500 limit varies by local authority and if you need to know what applies in your area or contact details of your local authority department please contact us at **0333 200 7304** or email **info@platformhg.com**

There is usually a high demand for this service and the average waiting time varies by local authority. Typically it can be a few months or up to a year.



How we can help

We want to meet your needs and make your home as suitable as possible and need to consider several things before making a decision to go ahead or give approval for major works

Sometimes we may not be able to approve your request for a number of reasons including the unsuitability of your home to accommodate the work that is required. In these circumstances we will help you find a more suitable home and do our best to make sure you are happy with your new home.

What we won't be able to do

- Install aids and adaptations in homes where there is a live application for the Right to Buy or Right to Acquire Schemes
- Install equipment in shared ownership or market rented properties
- Pay for medical evidence
- Progress requests where there has been a serious breach of tenancy
- Undertake adaptations to alleviate overcrowding
- Install equipment that is unsuitable or impractical
- Install equipment in homes that we are planning to sell or demolish
- Allocate homes that are unsuitable for a customer's needs

What Happens Next?

This depends on the type of adaptation. Requests are given priority, size, urgency and cost. Hospital discharge is given the highest priority.

Minor adaptations

These are simple aids and adaptations that cost less than £1,500 per property for PHG to complete. Examples include hand rails, grab rails and small access ramps. Requesting a minor adaptation is a simple process and can be started by contacting **0333 200 7304** or email **info@platformhg.com**



Major Adaptations

These are adaptations that cost over £1,500 such as adapted kitchens and bathrooms. Because of differing funding arrangements, requests are a little less straight forward as they may need to be referred to your local authority for funding through a Disabled Facilities Grant. Demand for this type of request is very high with hospital discharges given priority. Other types of request are generally undertaken in date order.

For those eligible requests only in the Worcester City Council area which are funded by PHG you can expect the **5 steps** below:

Step 1

We receive an Occupational Therapist referral. We will write to you within 7 calendar days confirming we have received it.

Step 2

We will contact you to talk to you about your needs and options available. We will do this within 7 calendar days of sending the letter in step 1.

Step 3

We will carry out a survey to assess the nature, suitability and cost of the work. Your request will then be added to our waiting list and we may want to offer you options if there is suitable alternative accommodation available. Depending on demand it may be quite a while before you hear anything from us.

Step 4

You will receive a letter confirming the name of the contractor and planned start and finish dates. Once started one of our technical staff will visit regularly to ensure you are satisfied with progress and answer any queries you may have.

Step 5

After the work has been completed we will ask you to complete a satisfaction survey, the results of which are used to further improve our aids and adaptations service.



Frequently Asked Questions

Do I have to pay for the minor adaptation work to be completed?

No, minor adaptations up to £1,500 will be paid for by us, subject to meeting our criteria. Some minor adaptations can be agreed over the phone, for example lever taps.

Do I have to pay for major adaptation?

Once assessed and approved, major adaptations will usually be funded through a Disabled Facilities Grant dependant on whether you meet the eligibility criteria and pass their financial assessment.

How do I request a minor adaptation?

You can request a minor adaptation by contacting PHG on **0333 200 7304** or email **info@platformhg.com**

Will I need to be referred to an Occupational Therapist before I can have the adaptation work completed?

For major adaptations you will need an Occupational Therapist referral, or if the request for minor adaptations is complex you may need to get an Occupational Therapist to assess you.

How long will it take for a minor adaptation to be completed?

We aim to complete all our minor adaptations within 21 calendar days from your request. More complex jobs may take longer.

Will I need an occupational referral for a major adaptation?

Requests for a major adaptation will always need to be accompanied by an Occupational Therapists assessment.

Will I have to pay for an Occupational Therapist assessment?

No, this assessment is free of charge.

How long will it take for a major adaptation to be completed?

The whole major adaptation process can be very long due to high demand on this service. We have no influence on how long it can take the Local Authorities to process Disabled Facilities Grant Funding, some are quicker than others. We say it takes up to 12 months to fit a major adaptation.

Frequently Asked Questions (continued)

How can I find out what's happening with my request for a major adaptation?

Most major adaptations are part funded by Disabled Facilities Grants therefore you can call the Local Authority direct for an update or you can call PHG on **0333 200 7304** or email **info@platformhg.com**

How will I know when the adaptation is being fitted?

Where the LA is carrying out the adaptation, they will keep you informed. Where the work is being managed by PHG either we or our contractor will keep you informed.

Will you always be able to meet my request for an adaptation?

No, sometimes it is not practical for us to carry out adaptations to your home, because of its size, construction, location or the amount of adaptations required. In these situations, we may encourage you to move to a property more suited to your needs, or one that is more easily adapted.

Are there any aids platform housing group are not able to help with?

Yes, we are unable to provide bathing aids, commodes, toilet frames, chair raisers these are provided by social services. We will let you know if this is the case and will be able to direct you to your local authority or health authority who may be able to assist.

What happens if my request for a disabled facilities grant is refused?

If your request for a Disabled Facilities Grant is refused, PHG may be able to fund the adaptations for you, subject to available budget and specific approvals.

Do I need to ask for permission to platform housing group to adapt my property if I am funding the adaptation myself?

Yes, you must ask for permission before making any major adaptations to your home by calling **0333 200 7304** or email **info@platformhg.com**

Will I be asked for feedback following completion of my adaptation work?

Yes, a member of PHG staff will call you to carry out a satisfaction survey to obtain feedback to improve our services. These surveys are optional.

If I am in rent arrears will my major adaptation be approved?

This will be dependent upon the amount of rent arrears and if you have been issued with a formal notice.