

**Adaptation Policy**

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| Author: Andrea Pearce, Senior Specialist Asset Management |
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1. **Introduction**

Leazes Homes is committed to providing an excellent standard of services to its customers. We are committed to enabling our customers to live independently in the community by facilitating the provision of aids and adaptations to their homes or by supporting customers to move to a more suitable home.

This document sets out Leazes Homes’ policy on aids and adaptations. It gives direction on how we will deal with requests to adapt customers’ homes.

1. **Policy Statement**

Aids and adaptations are equipment or special fixtures and fittings which may restore or enable independence through improved access to a customer’s home, improve customers’ mobility in and around the home or help with daily living.

1. **Policy Scope**

This policy covers all property owned by Leazes Homes.

1. **Policy Detail**

In applying this policy, Leazes Homes seeks to demonstrate a commitment to funding and carrying out adaptations, both independently and in partnership with other agencies, to ensure that all our tenants can maintain independence in their home for as long as possible.

**To achieve this, we will:**

* ensure that properties meet tenants’ needs at the point of allocation;
* help our tenants to enjoy and continue their independence, privacy and dignity by helping to adapt their homes as their needs change;
* ensure that there is a consistent approach to carrying out minor and major adaptations to all our properties;
* recognise that some existing and new tenants have, or may develop, an impairment that adversely affects their day to day life and will require aids and adaptations to their homes as the property no longer meets their needs;
* liaise with tenants regarding minor works and major works before the work is done, provide support during the work itself, and provide aftercare when the work is finished. Wherever possible, the needs of tenants with a disability will be considered in planned maintenance programmes and new housing developments;
* Work closely with local authority partners to access the services of occupational therapists and funding, such as Disabled Facilities Grant, where appropriate

There are no requirements for the tenant to have lived in the property for a defined period before an adaptation can be requested, the property must be the tenant’s principal home and not of a temporary nature.

Leazes Homes will normally only consider a request for aids and adaptations if the

person with the disability is the tenant, or a person who is a permanent resident of the household.

1. **Definitions of Disability**

Leazes Homes supports the Social Model of Disability. This model views disability as being caused by ‘barriers’ or elements of social organisations which take no or little account of people who have impairments. This model makes the important distinction between ‘impairment ’and ‘disability’ and moves away from the view that it is an “individual” problem.

 “A social model approach states that people with impairments are disabled by

physical and social barriers. The ‘problem’ of disability results from social structures and attitudes, rather than from a person’s impairment or medical condition.”

*(Housing Association Guide to Disability Equality Schemes and Action Plans,*

*HABINTEG, 2007)*

The Equality Act replaced most of the Disability Discrimination Act (DDA). However, the Disability Equality Duty in the DDA continues to apply. In the Equality Act 2010, a person has a disability if:

* They have a physical or mental impairment; and
* The impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities.

For the purposes of the Act, these words have the following meanings:

* 'Substantial' means more than minor or trivial;
* 'Long-term' means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least twelve months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions);
* 'Normal day-to-day activities' include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping; and
* People who have had a disability in the past that meets this definition are also protected by the Act.
1. **Adaptations and Aids**

Assessment of need for adaptations is the responsibility of Newcastle City Council (NCC), through Social Care Direct (SCD) for adults, or the Children with Disabilities Service for children. SCD also installs minor adaptations, such as internal or external grab rails and installing lever taps.

All requests for an adaptation will first need to have been assessed by NCC’s Occupational Therapy (OT) Team. The OT will carry out a functional assessment in the customer’s home and seek to establish how someone is managing, by asking questions covering:

* Details of and confirmation of disability/illness via the referrer;
* Long term prognosis;
* Health and safety risk;
* The type of adaptation required to meet the identified needs, taking into account the religious, cultural and social needs of the disabled person; and
* The urgency of the work.

Leazes Homes considers all referrals received from SCD and supports the installation of adaptations to some property types if they have level access or easily ramped entrances e.g.;

* Bungalows;
* Supported housing schemes; and
* Ground floor flats.

For more complex referrals, or where multiple adaptations are required, we have adopted a panel approach to agreeing on the suitability of the property for the proposed adaptations to meet the customers’ long-term needs. The panel consists of senior housing officers, health professionals, including an occupational therapist, and other officers as appropriate.

Officers will arrange to visit customers to discuss housing options where it is considered that the proposed adaptations are not reasonable or practical for the property type, or due to the customer’s individual circumstances. This visit will provide information which will be taken into account when the officer reports back to panel for final decision.

1. **Types of Adaptations**

There are various ways in which a property can be adapted to help someone live independently and access essential facilities within their home. In many cases, these adaptations are straight forward, however, there are often more complex needs to be met, so there are a range of adaptations that can be requested:

**Removable adaptations** include metal ramps, shower units in spare bedrooms or bathrooms if no spare bedroom, stair lifts, and ceiling track hoists. These can be removed when no longer required.

**Permanent adaptations** reflect long term needs, and include concrete ramps, level access showers or wet rooms, widened doorways and wheelchair accessible kitchen units. These are not usually removed automatically when a property becomes vacant.

**Structural Adaptations** are only carried out where there is a very high level of need which cannot be met by re-housing and include through floor lifts, and reconfiguration of internal space for wheelchair circulation.

**Bathing**

* Unless the OT identifies a need for a level access shower specifically related to the customer’s disability, removable shower units will be installed in a bedroom where there is a spare bedroom- or in a bathroom (where there is no spare bedroom);
* Level access showers in family houses will not be generally be provided unless there is no alternative as this constitutes a permanent alteration to a family bathroom; and
* There may be individual circumstances where it is appropriate to alter a bathroom in this way; for instance, if the bathroom is on the ground floor of the property or the household composition would make it very difficult to relocate the family. All such cases will be considered by the Adaptations Panel.

**Mobility Scooters**

* Requests for property adaptations to accommodate mobility scooterswill not be considered. Any changes to the outside of a property such as improving vehicular access, hard-standings, pathways, shelters or charging points to accommodate a mobility scooter would need the necessary approvals and tenants would have to fund that work; and
* Where a tenant or household member requests permission to use or store a mobility scooter in a block dwelling we may consider this request and decide whether suitable storage space is available, and if not, whether reasonable adjustments can be made to accommodate the scooter.

(Leazes Homes extra care developments have a purpose-built scooter store and charging points)

**For all permanent and structural adaptations,** a feasibility study will be undertaken to establish:

* Whether the property is suitable for adaptation; and
* Whether it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the works (this includes consideration of the cost).

Where major adaptations are required and no suitable alternative rehousing options are available, the work required will be project managed by a specialist officer and occupational therapist. This role involves liaison with the customer, contractors, and health professionals to ensure the best possible outcome.

Securing alternative suitable accommodation for the customer can often be the most effective and cost-efficient way of meeting need. We keep up to date records of all properties with disabled adaptations on our property management system, and this is updated every time a property with adaptations becomes vacant.

1. **Minimum assistance policy**

There will be occasions where the adaptations requested are substantial and the property does not meet the long-term needs of the customer, or the property is unsuitable to adapt due to access but there is an urgent need for assistance. In these situations, minimum assistance will be provided to address the most pressing need – for instance, if bathing is difficult, then a shower cubicle will be provided in a spare bedroom on the understanding that if stair climbing became an issue there would be no further adaptations provided and the customer would have to consider rehousing to more appropriate accommodation, or a stair lift is provided for a customer who has support to bathe but struggles with stair climbing. Each case will be assessed on an individual basis to get the best option for the customer.

There will be cases that are extremely sensitive; in cases where adaptation requests come from customers in palliative care, Leazes Homes will consider each request on an individual basis.

1. **Funding Adaptations.**

Leazes Homes has made a commitment to directly fund adaptations up to a value of £1,000 any exceptions exceeding this will require Leazes Board approval. If the cost of an adaptation exceeds this funding cap, tenants will be advised to refer their case to the local authority for assessment for appropriate grant, which in most cases will be Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). It will then be the responsibility of the local authority and the OT to assess and make any application for funding on behalf of the tenant.

Disabled Facilities Grant is the main form of assistance from the local authority to allow a person with a disability to live independently or to be cared for at home. The provision of the grant is subject to a test of the tenant’s resources.

1. **Refusing Adaptations**

There will be situations where we cannot agree to the request for adaptations, particularly to family homes where the accommodation does not meet the long-term needs of the customer or where a request for adaptations is not reasonable, practicable, or necessary.

We can also refuse adaptation requests in circumstances such as:

* The tenant has moved from a property already suitably adapted to meet their needs and there has been no change in their circumstances or condition;
* Installation or use of the adaptation would put the tenant or carer at risk;
* The adaptation is deemed unsafe;
* The structure or design of the home cannot accommodate the adaptations;
* A property is available which is already adapted to meet the identified needs of the tenant;
* Adaptations can be refused where another suitable property has been refused by an applicant requiring adaptations;
* The cost of the adaptation requested means it is not reasonable and practicable to install;
* The customer’s weight exceeds the safe operating limit of the adaptation;
* Where an extension to a property is required;
* Where an applicant for adaptations is a tenant who has submitted an application through the Right to Acquire scheme**;**
* If the application is withdrawn; Where tenants with adaptations are transferring to another property which is not adapted to meet their needs;
* Where someone who currently has adaptations due to an assessed need opts to transfer or exchange to an un-adapted property, they are unlikely to get further adaptations at their new address. Similarly, if someone waiting for adaptations transfers to a less suitable property, adaptations at the new address might be refused;
* Where the tenant is under-occupying or overcrowding their home; and
* The resident does not hold an assured tenancy and is occupying the property under licence.
1. **Rehousing**

An alternative to providing adaptations, particularly where the adaptations required are substantial or not reasonable or practical, is to identify more suitable accommodation for our customers This could be a move to a more suitable property type, or to an empty property that already has suitable adaptations installed for a previous occupant. In these circumstances, customers will be awarded a priority banding for rehousing and they will be supported by a named officer to obtain alternate accommodation that better meets their needs.

1. **Shared ownership and Leaseholders**

We will not fund adaptations to leasehold properties or shared ownership properties. Leaseholders will still require Leazes Homes’ permission to undertake the works. Leazes Homes aims to grant permission for leaseholders to make adaptations if they can provide a copy of a report and associated recommendation from an OT.

Leaseholders may be able to access financial assistance from their local authority to assist with the cost of the adaptation.

1. **Service standards**

As detailed in this policy, adaptations can cover a range of interventions and alterations to a property. Some of these alterations can be relatively easy to undertake and some can be difficult and challenging.

For minor adaptations, those alterations that cost less than £1,000, we will:

* Acknowledge requests within 2 working days;
* If further investigation of the request is required e.g. an assessment by an OT, then this will be concluded within 20 working days of the request;
* A tenant/leaseholder will receive the outcome of our decision within 10 working days of the request or OT assessment

For major adaptations, those alterations that cost more than £1,000, will be advised to refer their case to the local authority for assessment for appropriate grant, which in most cases will be Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

1. **Complaints and appeals**

We want our customers to be happy with the service we provide to them**,** however sometimes things can go wrong. If this happens, we aim to resolve the situation to the satisfaction of the customer as appropriately as possible.

If the customer is not satisfied with the decision they can make a general complaint through Leazes Homes' Complaints Procedure, which can be accessed from the Leazes Homes Website at :<https://www.leazeshomes.org.uk/how-we-can-help/complaints/>

1. **Key contacts**

If a Leazes Homes tenant wants to apply for an adaption to their property they should contact Social Care Direct by telephone on: 0191 278 8377 or email: **scd@newcastle.gov.uk**

Alternatively, they can contact the Your Homes Newcastle. The details are provided below.

Your Homes Newcastle

YHN House

Benton Park Road

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE7 7LX

Contact: 0191 278 8600

yhn@yhn.org.uk

There is also an enquiry form on our website at:

<https://www.leazeshomes.org.uk/how-we-can-help/contact-us/>