

Policy on Adaptations For Disabled People



1) AIM

Co-op Homes is committed to providing an adequately resourced, transparent and efficient disabled adaptation procurement and management service that addresses the needs of its customers and the requirements of the Disability Discrimination Act 1995.

We recognise the special needs of our tenants with disabilities and will work with local authorities to secure available grant funding to enable suitable adaptations to be carried out. This policy explains how we will address the special needs of our tenants with disabilities.

2) OBJECTIVES

The key objectives of this policy are:-

1. To put the needs of disabled tenants first in our decision-making about adaptations.
2. To widely promote our Aids & Adaptations policy.
3. To carry out works with advice from, and in liaison with local authority social services departments where we own and manage properties.
4. To ensure all works undertaken help to achieve our targets set for:
 - i. Decent Homes
 - ii. Improvements in Energy Efficiency
5. To maximise grants and other resources available for adaptations, ensuring value for money at all times.
6. To work within the framework of our asset management strategy, having regard for the longer term 'lettability' of our properties.
7. To comply with all statutory and regulatory requirements in relation to disabled adaptations.
8. To seek and comply with good practice guidance.
9. To be consistent with other Co-op Homes policies and procedures, for example policies on equality and diversity, tenancy management, repairs and maintenance.

3) DEFINITIONS

1. For the purpose of this policy and accompanying procedures, the definition of a 'disabled adaptation' is an alteration or addition to any aspect of a dwelling to make it easier or safer for use by a disabled person.

2. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines a person as disabled if they have:

- a mental or physical impairment, and:
this has an adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities,
- the adverse effect is substantial, and:
the adverse effect is long term (meaning it has lasted for 12 months or is likely to last for more than 12 months or for the rest of the person's life.)

A person with a progressive condition, which will affect the ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities in the future, is classed as disabled.

At least one of these areas must be badly affected:

- mobility
- manual dexterity
- physical co-ordination
- continence

- ability to lift, carry or move everyday objects
- speech, hearing or eyesight
- memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand
- understanding of the risk of physical danger

3. Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a local council grant to help towards the cost of adapting a tenant's home to enable them to continue to live there. A grant is paid when the council considers that changes are necessary to meet a tenant's needs and is happy that the work is reasonable and practical.

Eligibility to a DFG application by the tenant is means tested. It is also possible to make a landlord's application for DFG. This is not means tested.

4) LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

The legislation relevant to this Policy is:

- the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 – this requires Social Services to assist people with disabilities to obtain aids and adaptations to make their home suitable for their needs.
- S.23 of the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 - provides for Disabled Facilities Grants, available from local authorities for carrying out 'works that are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of a disabled occupant provided that it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the works having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling'. Mandatory grounds are available for some works but authorities also have powers to make discretionary grants. (See Appendix A for a list of the grounds under S.23)
- the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 ('the DDA') – part 3 imposes duties on service providers to make 'reasonable adjustments' to services without which it would be 'impossible or unreasonably difficult for the disabled person to use the service'. From 1 October 2004 where a physical feature makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to access goods or services, the organisation is required to take reasonable steps to:
 - remove the feature, or alter it so it no longer has that effect, or
 - provide a reasonable means of avoiding the feature, or
 - provide a reasonable alternative method of making the service available

These provisions refer to public space and services offered by Co-op Homes including our offices and the communal areas in flats. They do not require works to the inside of tenants' homes which would be funded by disabled adaptations' budgets and Disabled Facilities Grants. However, we will work within the spirit of the DDA in creating accessible homes for all our tenants.

5) KEY POINTS OF POLICY

1. Our Operations Manager is responsible for the overall implementation of the Aids & Adaptations policy.
2. We will endeavour to ensure all disabled adaptation works carried out represent value for money, are of good quality, meet the needs and aspirations of our tenants and minimise future maintenance costs.
3. If a tenant wishes to transfer we will assess the likelihood of a more suitable or more easily adapted property becoming available. We will encourage a move, where the necessary adaptation works are extensive or where there is difficulty complying with part 7 of the Building Regulations. We will consider the area where the resident needs to live for support services.
4. We will carefully consider the options of recycling different types of aids and adaptations,

and develop clear protocols. In particular we will participate in disabled housing registers in our areas of operation. This will provide us with a detailed database of adapted properties and disabled applicants in order to recycle adaptations.

5. We will record all major disabled adaptations on our stock condition database. Whenever practical, we will use this information to ensure that full use is made of existing facilities by targeting suitable adapted properties or applicants with matching mobility or other needs.
6. We will assume responsibility for the maintenance of all equipment installed and work carried out as part of disabled adaptations, unless otherwise agreed with the tenant and local authority social services.

6) FUNDING

Funding for disabled adaptations will be met mainly from Local Authority Disabled Facilities Grants or funding by ourselves.

We will provide an annual budget for minor aids and adaptations for tenants in our rented homes, to supplement available local authority grant funding.

Funding for disabled adaptation works will be met from the following sources, subject to availability:

Disabled aids

Disabled aids are generally small access ramps, handrails, grab rails and lever taps, etc. If the cost of disabled aid is less than £500 it will be funded by Co-op Homes' own adaptations budget. We will complete disabled aid works within 30 working days from when the need for the adaptation is identified.

Minor disabled adaptations

Minor adaptations are generally works valued between £500 and £2,500, such as over bath showers, straight stair lifts and concrete ramps. These minor adaptations will be funded through Local Authority Disabled Facilities Grants.

Tenants may be asked to make a contribution to the cost of the works. We will aim to get minor adaptations completed within 6 months from when the need for the adaptation is identified.

Major disabled adaptations

Major adaptations will generally be for works that cost over £2,500. Major adaptations will be funded through a combination of either Local Authority Disabled Facilities Grants or Housing Corporation Grant. Tenants may be asked to make a contribution to the cost of the works.

We aim to get major adaptations completed within 10 months from when the need for the adaptation is identified. This timescale may be extended if planning permission or building regulation approval is required, or if we need to tender for the works.

Eligibility for funding

Tenants will be eligible for DFG if they receive at least one of the following means tested benefits:

- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Job Seekers Allowance (income, not contribution based)
- Working Tax Credit
- Disabled Persons Tax Credit

- Pension Credit

If a tenant is not in receipt of a means tested benefit but needs works carried out we will help them to apply for funding by supporting a landlord's application for local authority DFG. We will also seek and apply for alternative sources of funding if available e.g. Housing Corporation grant funding for aids and adaptations.

7) STAFF SUPPORT

We will provide a nominated person:

- To liaise with other Co-op Homes staff and local authorities to secure grant funding.
- Liaise with local authority Social Services departments and work closely with the Occupational Therapists to minimise waiting times for assessments.
- Provide our tenants with general advice and guidance about Disabled Facilities Grants and what works we can fund.
- Assist tenants with applications for Disabled Facilities Grant funding.
- Keep our tenants informed throughout the whole process.
- Project manage all in-house designed disabled adaptation works through to completion.
- Submit grant claims and monitor grant income.
- Manage grant claims against confirmed grant budgets.
- Ensure all appropriate guarantees and extended warranties are in place upon completion.
- Ensure all relevant servicing dates are recorded and maintained.

8) CUSTOMER INFORMATION

We will inform our tenants about our Aids & Adaptations policy.

We will publish our policy on our website and produce a tenant information leaflet.

We will ensure that when we tell our tenants about our policy we are clear and concise.

9) CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

We will carry out an annual review of our disabled adaptations waiting list and the work we have carried out to ensure that we maintain a level of service that is adequately funded.

We will ask our tenants for feedback on disabled adaptations works carried out to their homes.

10) MONITORING

We will continually monitor the service we provide to ensure that no individual or group of individuals receives less favourable treatment.

Regular monitoring will take place to ensure that we are meeting tenants' needs for disabled adaptations.

Performance reporting will be monthly to the Senior Management Team and quarterly to the Board. This will include monitoring of the length of waiting lists for adaptations, the take-up of available grants and budgets, and the level of successful transfers for tenants with disabilities to more suitable properties.

11) STAFF TRAINING

The success of the Aids & Adaptations Policy and proper implementation of the supporting

procedures depend to a large extent on the knowledge and diligence of the staff implementing them.

Staff will be well trained and encouraged to work closely with their colleagues in local authorities.

12) AFFILIATED ORGANISATIONS

Co-op Homes will offer the same service to tenants of affiliated organisations, where the Co-op has agreed to the adaptation.

Funding will not be provided by Co-op Homes for adaptations for tenants of affiliated organisations. The responsibility for any costs not met by grant will remain with the affiliated organisation.

The cost of administration is covered by grant funding if available. If grant funding is not available the charge for administration, surveying, and supervision costs will be at the normal hourly rate or any rate agreed as part of the Management Agreement.

13) REVIEW

The policy on aids and adaptations will be reviewed every three years by our management, tenants and Board. The review will ensure that the policy takes into account changes in statutory guidance and developing good practice.

APPENDIX A

Under S.23 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, the adaptations required must fall into the following categories:

Mandatory Grants

- facilitate access to and from the dwelling or to a room used as the main family room
- facilitate access to, or provide the disabled person with, a room used as the main family room
- facilitate access by the disabled person with, a room used or usable for sleeping
- facilitate access by the disabled person to or provide a room with a lavatory, bath, shower or wash basin, or facilitate the use by the disabled person of the facility
- facilitate the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled person
- improve or provide a heating system to meet the needs of the disabled person
- facilitate the use by the disabled person of light and heat by altering the means of access to, or source of control of the power source
- facilitate access and movement by the disabled person around the dwelling to enable him or her to care for a person who normally lives in the dwelling and is in need of such care
- make the dwelling safe for a disabled person and anyone living with him or her.

Discretionary Grounds

- Make the dwelling suitable for the accommodation, welfare or employment of the disabled person.