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# Aids & Adaptions Policy

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Housing Services

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Name of staff member/committee that has reviewed and/or approved the policy	E.g. consulted, reviewed, approved	Date of review or approval

# 1 INTRODUCTION

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## 1.1 Purpose and scope

- a) The Council are committed to ensuring tenants with a disability, mobility need, or health related challenges can live safely, independently and comfortable in your homes. We do this to help the continuation and improvement of your health and well-being to ensure that all tenants have the opportunity to live in a way that best meets your needs.
  
- b) 38% (1,855) of our tenanted homes have at least 1 tenant who is 65 or over (26% in general needs and 13% in Independent Living). This compares with 23% of residents within the Stroud District overall. The Council recognises the demographic shift highlighted in an Ark 'Independent Living' Report, which anticipates a significant increase in the ageing population of the District over the next 20 years.
  
- c) Data from the 2021 national census shows that for residents living in social rented housing in the Stroud District:
  - 34.5% of households have one person disabled under the Equality Act in the household
  - 16.5% of households have two or more people disabled under the Equality Act in the household
  
- d) Based on this information, it is expected that a growing proportion of our tenants will need some kind of aids and adaptations support over the next 5-10 years.

## 1.2 Eligibility

- a) You are eligible to receive aids and adaptation work if:
  - you live in a Stroud District Council home.
  - you do not have a notice of seeking possession.
  - you have been assessed by an Occupational Therapist and in need of an adaptation.
  - your home has been assessed by a Stroud District Council Officer as possible. to adapt

## 1.3 The Key principles of the Aids and Adaptions Policy.

- a) The key principles of the Aids and Adaptations Policy are to let you know:
  - what support is available through the aids and adaptations service and how to get it
  - the types of aids and adaptations we carry out
  - what we can't provide as part of the service
  - what our responsibilities are
  - what your responsibilities are

## 1.4 Relevant legislation and regulatory compliance

- a) We will ensure that we carry out our aids and adaptations service in accordance with best practice and relevant policy and legislation, including the following:

## **The Equality Act 2010**

- defines who should be considered as disabled
  - imposes a duty to make necessary and appropriate adjustments for a person where they would be substantially disadvantaged:
    - compared to another person who is not disabled
    - due to a physical feature
    - due to a lack of auxiliary aid
  - requires that when providing our services, we pay due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and advance equality of opportunity in respect of the nine protected characteristics.
- b) Please note our Aids and Adaptations service will be tailored to meet the needs of individuals: people may be treated differently to support their access to and experience of the service. All cases will be considered on an individual basis

**The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996** sets out the adaptations work that will be considered (See Appendix A) and who qualifies for the grant

- Someone who suffers from mental illness or disorders
- Someone who has significant hearing, sight or speech impediment
- Someone who is disabled as a result of an injury or illness
- Someone who is over the age of 18 and is a registered as disabled under section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948
- Someone who is below the age of 18 and registered as a disabled child under the Children Act 1989

**The Care Act 2014** contains provisions relating to adult care, support and health.

## **Stroud District Councils Constitution**

We will comply with the expectations of our regulator, the **Homes and Communities Agency (HCA)**.

- c) If we do not comply with this policy, you have the right to complain which you can do in writing (by post or e-mail), in person or by telephone. The details of our complaints procedure can be found in our SDC complaints policy:

<https://www.stroud.gov.uk/contact-us/complaints-and-feedback-policy/>

## **1.5 Best Practice**

- Exceeding best practice, we will aim to complete simple adaptations within 55 calendar days and major adaptations within 180 calendar days in line with the guidance from the DFG delivery guidance for local authorities.
- We will discuss options to meet your needs with you, including whether moving to accommodation that would be easier for you to manage. We will provide support to help you move by investigating available and suitable empty homes or directing you to the Housing Advice Service and Gloucestershire Home seeker.
- We will respect the fact that you may want to stay in the home that you live in now and provide a high-quality service to meet your needs, subject to a necessary and appropriate assessment by one of our Officers.
- When upgrading bathrooms, conversion to a shower tray or level access shower will be offered.
- We will work with the NHS Social Services Occupational Therapy Department to ensure joint working for better outcomes for you in accordance with legislative requirements.

- We will consider innovative adaptations and products where current adaptation options will not be suitable or meet your long-term needs.
- We have increased the total cost of the works requiring Financial Assessments from £1,000 to £2,000.

## 1.6 Restrictions

- a) If it is not necessary and appropriate in line with current Building Regulations to carry out adaptation works, in our opinion, we will refuse your application. This test refers to the following four areas. (7)
  - Architectural and structural characteristics which make adaptation inappropriate
  - The practicalities of adapting properties with very narrow doorways, halls, stairways and passages or properties with very steep flights of stairs either internal or external
  - Conservation considerations and planning constraints which would prevent these works
  - The impact on other people in the property where works would reduce or limit existing facilities or amenities
- b) We reserve the right to refuse to adapt a property which you have chosen to move to, which you were informed did not meet your needs at the time that you moved.
- c) If you choose to give up a home which met, or had been adapted to meet, your needs, we will not provide support for you to move, or adapt a property that you have chosen to move to, without reasonable justification.
- d) Adaptations will only be provided at the main place of residence of the service user i.e. this may affect students living away from home and children who stay at another property with a non-resident parent. Subsequent applications for works at separate addresses will not be agreed.
- e) In the event of your death, we will consider and support your successor to move to another property, if more than £5,000 has been spent adapting your property. This will be subject to our Housing Allocation policy and only apply if your successor is eligible for Council housing and they do not have an adaptation need.
- f) You may be required to pay some money towards the cost of your adaptation work. (See section 6.)
- g) We reserve the right to decline requests for alterations where you accepted an adapted property on an 'as seen' basis. Special consideration may be given to family homes where there is a clinical need to bathe supported by an Occupational Therapist referral and Doctor's letter.
- h) The future repair or replacement of all adaptation work we undertake will be completed in line with our repairs policy including the recharge process.
- i) Where there is an active Right to Buy application on the property, only emergency repair works will be carried.

## **2 ASSESSMENT CRITERIA**

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### **2.2 There are two parts to the assessment:**

- An Occupational Therapy assessment will determine whether you are able to live safely, independently and comfortable in your home. You will need to contact Occupational Therapy direct to arrange this assessment.
- Upon receiving a referral from Occupational Therapy, an assessment of your home by an SDC Officer will be arranged, to look at whether it is necessary & appropriate to make the changes that they have recommended i.e. can the property be satisfactorily adapted to meet your needs.

### **2.3 Occupational Therapist's Assessment**

- a) As part of this assessment the Occupational Therapist will look at the following:
- Risk to you if the adaptation is not done
  - How often you need to do the activity that requires the adaptation
  - Whether the adaptation will enable you to manage independently or in conjunction with a care package
- d) As a guide, your disability must be affecting your ability to carry out at least one of the following essential daily activities:
- Facilitating access to the home and garden
  - Access to the principal family room or bedroom
  - Access to a bath or shower
  - Access to a toilet
  - Access to a wash hand basin
  - Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food
  - Better Heating
  - Control of power, light and heat

### **2.4 Stroud District Council's Assessment**

- a) As part of the assessment, Stroud District Council's Officer will look at the property type and its future use, along with consideration for Building Regulations and Occupational Therapy best practice:
- Property type i.e. bungalow, flat, house
  - Build type i.e. traditional, non-traditional
  - Primary access space available
  - Width of primary door to property
  - Access for wheelchair within property
  - Width and style of stairs
  - Bathroom location
  - Structural issues
  - Room dimensions
- b) We will consider each case individually and, if a case for a future cost saving can be made, consideration will be given to an enhanced solution or adaptation.

- c) If it is necessary and appropriate to adapt your home, a financial assessment (“means testing”) will be completed prior to the works being issued to a contractor.
- d) If it is not necessary and appropriate to adapt your home, we will provide support to help you move by investigating available and suitable empty homes or directing you to the Housing Advice Service and Gloucestershire Homeseeker services.

### **3 AREAS OF RESPONSIBILITY**

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- a) We will not carry out a necessary and appropriate assessment or any adaptations work without an Occupational Therapists assessment confirming that you are registerable as disabled and require an adaptation due to a clinical condition and/or need.
- b) We are not responsible for any adaptations work or equipment which is not fixed or secured to the property i.e. screwed or bolted down. Community Health and Social Care carry out the installation of any aids like of this type.
- c) We will provide an adaptations service (“major adaptations”) in line with Government best practice. This will meet the same standards as set out in the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Framework up the value of £30,000- See Appendix A for a list of adaptations that we will carry out.
- d) We aim to provide a fast-track service for minor adaptations which are considered to be urgent after a recommendation by Occupation Therapy via e-mail or letter, up to the value of £2,000, within 2 weeks. This could include adaptations such as grab rails, internal or external handrail, or other small aids or adaptations to enable someone to return home from hospital.
- e) Under this policy, the Council may choose to provide additional non statutory services if necessary and appropriate, however as discretionary services, the Council reserves the right to withdraw these services provided it is not our legal responsibility.

### **4 CONSULTATION**

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- (a) All policies have been developed jointly by Councillors, tenants, tenant groups and members of staff. The Occupational Therapists' team based within the Stroud District were also consulted as part of the development of this policy. Best practice has also been sought from other organisations responsible for delivering an Aids and Adaptations service.

### **5 TRAINING**

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- a) We will work with our staff and contractors to raise awareness of this policy and the Aids and Adaptations Service Standard. All relevant staff and contractors will be provided with a copy of this policy.
- b) We will work with our staff and contractors to raise awareness of different people's needs and ways in which they may need to adapt the services provided to ensure that all people get a fair, equitable and accessible service; this includes our Repairs Service

## 6 FINANCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

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- a) The financial responsibility is calculated based on the Disabilities Facilities Grant “means testing”.
- b) The value of the adaptation and your personal circumstances impacts who takes financial responsibility for the work. Please see the table below for information:

<b>£0-£2,000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Test of Resources Application not required.</li><li>- Paid via Stroud District Council (Housing Revenue Account, Funding would be provided by Community Health and Social Care if we withdraw money for this service).</li></ul>
<b>£2000-£30,000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Test of Resources Application is required.</li><li>- Stroud District Council, in line with DFG limits (Housing Revenue Account)</li></ul>
<b>Over £30,000</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>- Funding for adaptations costing in excess of this amount would need to be sought from another source other than SDC</li></ul>

- c) We own the adaptations equipment in your home. If you are assessed as having to contribute to the adaptation work, this will not be repaid to you if you move to another property or pass away. This means that we are responsible for all servicing, maintenance and repair for the adaptation.
- d) Test of Resources Application: ‘Means Testing’
- An application for Disabled Facilities Assistance will need to be completed by you; an Officer will provide these and offer assistance with this if required.
  - If you receive a qualifying benefit a financial assessment is not required.
  - These are subject to change in accordance with DFG legislation and the Welfare Reform Act. Stroud District Council's Officer will let you know which benefits qualify at the time of your application.
  - The amount of contribution is usually based on a financial assessment – a 'means test' — of average weekly income in relation to outgoings. You will need to declare all income and savings for this assessment, however the first £6,000 of savings will be disregarded as part of the calculation. If you have a partner, your combined average weekly income will be assessed jointly.



- A financial assessment where the adaptations are required for families of disabled children under 19 is not required.
- The outcome of a financial assessment will determine the amount of contribution required which could vary from nil to the full cost of the adaptation. A range of premiums and allowances is used for all essential outgoings, for example, rent and personal expenditure; actual outgoings are not taken into consideration.
- If your income is less than your assessed needs, you will not normally need to contribute to the costs of the works.
- If your income is more than your assessed needs, a proportion of your income will be used to calculate how much you will need to contribute towards the costs of the works.
- If you need to contribute towards the cost of the adaptation, we will arrange with you to make this payment before work begins.

## **7 VALUE FOR MONEY**

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- In line with best practice, if you have been assessed as needing adaptations to your current home which exceed £5,000, we will consider an application to move to a property which is more manageable for your needs.
- If your application is agreed based on the Gloucester Homeseeker Policy, we will help facilitate your move; dependent on circumstances you may be eligible for moving grants.
- Where more than £5000 is spent on adaptations for you, we will ask you to sign a Certificate of Future Occupation. This certificate confirms that you intend to stay living in your home for the next 5 years and if you vacate your home within
- 10 years after completion, you may be liable to repay the cost of the adaptation work except where health or other relevant circumstances do not permit this.
- Consideration will be given to cases where a move results from the impact of changes made under the Welfare Reform Act.
- If you move during the time covered by the Future Occupation Certificate, you will be expected to repay up to £10,000 of the cost of adapting your home as follows:

Up to £5,000	You will not be asked to repay any money
Between £5,000 and £30,000	You will be asked to repay the cost of the works above £5,000, up to a maximum of £10,000 (e.g. if the total cost of the work was £18,000, you would pay a maximum of £10,000). The percentage of costs that you will be asked to pay will reduce depending on how many years it has been since the adaptation work was

- g) To maintain best value for money, we will follow our procurement and financial regulations when awarding aids and adaptations work.
- h) We will endeavor to make savings through economies of scale.
- i) Where tenants take advantage of the support offered to help them move to a property which meets their needs, savings will be made as adaptations to their original property will not be needed. Better use can also be made of the housing stock by having the right people in the right homes.

## **8 REVIEW OF THE AIDS AND ADAPTIONS POLICY**

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- a) We will review this policy on a three-year rolling programme, unless there is a change in legislation or regulation.

## 9 APPENDIX 1: WHAT WORK WILL BE CONSIDERED

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### What adaptations work will be considered

Based on the Disabled Facilities Grant Framework, we will:

#### a) Facilitate access by the disabled occupant:

- to and from the dwelling
- to a room used or usable as the principal family room
- to a room used for or usable for sleeping
- to a room in which there is a lavatory
- to a room in which there is a bath or shower
- to a room with a wash hand basin

#### Such works may include:

- Ramping and/or handrails to the main external door. This could be a rear door instead in the case of a rear access. Only one access point will be allowed for each dwelling.
- This could include modular 'Lego style' ramps kits, where there is no need to increase the width of a door opening.
- Widening the main entrance door and the doorways to the bedroom, bathroom and living room to facilitate wheelchair access. Access to other rooms may be considered, where the disabled person is a carer.
- Stair-lifts or vertical lifts in some cases, where this is necessary to allow access to the living room, bathroom and disabled person's bedroom.
- Installation of a hard standing and dropped kerb provided the necessary criteria is met.
- Installation of an external light to the primary entrance to the property where access is not illuminated
- Suitable access from one primary entrance to a hard standing previously installed by SDC, or as part of installing a new hard standing by SDC
- Walkways to and from garages, unless that garage is part of the property and the only parking space
- Scooter storage areas.
- Drop kerbs, hard standings, and ramps for those who can safely access the public highway.
- Ramps for scooters

#### b) Facilitate access to the garden - such works may include:

- Only one access will be provided to a garden area
- Generally, one access will be sufficient to access both the house and the garden
- Making safe the existing access for the disabled occupant to use

#### The following works may not be considered:

- Provision of secondary access from dwelling house. e.g. creating a side access so a person can also go around the side of a house
- Where homes have communal gardens served by a single access, individual access to the garden from the disabled person's home will not be provided unless it can be demonstrated that their condition makes the travel distance excessive and unreasonable.
- Landscaping gardens to make them more suitable for the disabled person
- Formation of patios, garden paths etc.
- Creating a "safe play area" i.e. secure boundary fencing, unless there is an evidenced clinical need.

**c) Facilitate the use of washing facilities – adapting the bathroom and/or toilet facilities to suit the disabled person’s need.**

Such works may include:

- Over bath, shower trays or level access showers (first floor bathrooms will be clinically assessed alongside consideration of the individual long-term ability to access the first floor)
- Lever taps
- Specialist WCs, (Closomat or Gerbit etc.) provided there is a proven clinical need.
- Height adjustable wash hand basin- if the only basin is in the main bathroom and shared by other family members
- Conversion of a WC to wet room (if structurally possible), where there is no other alternative and the property will meet the long term needs for the user.

**The following works may not be considered:**

- Height adjustable baths will not be provided to meet carers needs
- Sockets for Shaver/Electric Toothbrush
- The adaptation or provision of more than one bathroom to a property e.g. additional ground floor WC, separate wet room, and family bathroom, will not normally be considered unless evidenced by functional need.

#### **d) Facilitate the preparation and cooking of food and drink**

Such works may include:

- Lever taps
- If the disabled person is the principal food preparer in the household, then the kitchen will be made wheelchair accessible, with worktops and sink at a fixed height plus oven- housing unit if necessary and food storage in an accessible position, lowered light switches and accessible power points.
- Where the disabled person is NOT the principal food preparer in the household it may be possible to carry out minor adaptations to allow them to prepare light meals or hot drinks.

#### **The following works may not be considered:**

- Provision of kitchen appliances i.e. white goods, oven, hob etc.
- Major adaptation to the kitchen where someone other than the disabled person does and will continue to do the cooking and preparation of meals.
- Extensions or enlargement to kitchens is necessary to provide turning space for a wheelchair and suitable space cannot be achieved by rearrangement of the existing facilities and all other options have been explored.

#### **e) Other works:**

##### **Additional rooms and extensions**

- Additional bathrooms or bedrooms may be allowed where they are specifically for the disabled person, and it can be demonstrated that adaptation of other rooms or space or access to those rooms in the property is unsuitable. Extensions will only be allowed following a detailed cost/benefit analysis of alternative options and are subject to the £30,000 cap on costs. This will take longer than standard adaptation requests.
- Requests are sometimes received to provide separate bedrooms where disabled children with behavioural difficulties share a room with other siblings and disturb their sleep. This will only be considered where it can be demonstrated that the child is prone to violent outbursts and there is risk of physical harm to the child or to the other siblings.

##### **Heating**

- Additional heating to the rooms that are in everyday use by the disabled person, where a clinical need can be demonstrated will be considered; this does not include repair to existing systems. Changes to the type of heating system or permanent boxing in of the heating system will only be allowed if evidenced by clinical need.

##### **Electrical**

- Adapting the height of electrical sockets for wheelchair users, where there is no other able person living in the property or modern voice control technology isn't suitable. Changes to the electrical system (e.g. lights and sockets) will only be allowed if evidenced by clinical need

## **Children's Safety**

- In exceptional circumstances we may carry out adaptations to a child's bedroom, so it is a safer environment for them to be left unattended evidenced by a clinical need\*, for example, a child with disabilities in their bedroom during the night. This could include relocating light switches to the hall, upgrading electrical sockets to a heavy-duty tough socket, full size timber safety gates and more at SDC's discretion.
- Where areas of the property are segregation via additional locks/ keypads on internal doors, a multi-agency discipline approach must be evidenced to ensure fire safety and risk is appropriately assessed.

All works required will be assessed on a case- by-case basis comparatively with our legal responsibilities and evidenced by clinical need.