

ALBYN HOUSING SOCIETY LIMITED

TITLE: Adaptations to Existing Properties Policy

Authorised by the Board	September 2013
Next Review Due By	September 2018 (under review)
Staff Affected	Tenancy Sustainment Officers and Assistants Customer Services Assistants and Co-ordinators Finance Assistants Asset and Investment Manager
Lead Officers	Policy: Customer Services Director Operation: Customer Services Managers

ADAPTATIONS TO EXISTING PROPERTIES POLICY

Purpose

The key objectives of this policy are:

- ◆ To make sure that tenants, prospective tenants, or immediate members of their household, who have a physical disability or an on-going medical problem affected by their housing conditions are able to sustain or take up tenancies.
- ◆ To increase the choice and options available to meet the needs of people with disabilities; and to make sure our customers have access to up to date and relevant information on the availability of equipment and adaptations
- ◆ To make best use of the financial resources available for carrying out adaptations to our stock.
- ◆ To make best use of our available housing stock.
- ◆ To promote partnership working and good practice in relation to equipment and adaptations for our tenants, prospective tenants and members of their households.
- ◆ To recognise and support the value of housing adaptations in preventing requirements for more costly health and social care services for many clients

Scope

This policy and its associated procedure deals with adaptations to completed properties for rent, (that is: all those that have been formally handed over to the Society from the developer), previously known as *Stage Three Adaptations*. Further definitions are included at **Appendix A**

Procedures for of adaptations to properties still under development (often known as *Stage Two Adaptations*) are dealt with separately under - *Developing Adapted Housing (New Build/Rehab) or appropriate development grant funding guidelines*.

Framework

In developing his policy, reference has been made to procedural guidance notes issued by the Scottish Government all other relevant legislation and good practice guidance.

Related Policies and Procedures

This policy is directly relevant to the following objectives within our Business Plan:

- Addressing the shortage of affordable housing within the Highlands
- Maintaining a sustainable housing stock
- Achieving successful tenancies
- Assisting communities to thrive

The following policies and procedures and good practice guidance are also directly relevant to this document and have been taken into consideration in its development.

- Successful Tenancies Strategy
- Successful Communities Strategy
- Asset Management Strategy
- Sustainability Strategy
- Allocations (Highland Housing Register) joint policy and procedures
- Alterations and Improvements by Tenants procedure
- Void Management procedure
- New Development Design Brief

- The Scottish Social Housing Charter
- The Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- The Equality Act 2010

- Guidance issued by the Scottish Government, the Joint Improvement team and the College of Occupational Therapists

In adopting this policy, we aim to meet the following element from the Scottish Social Housing Charter:

- Tenants can get adaptations and the equipment they need to help them stay in their home where this is appropriate.

General Principles

- We will make information available on the procedure for application and assessment of adaptations on request.
- All requests must generally be supported by an appropriate assessment and written recommendation from a suitably qualified person that details the work required and its priority rating, before funding can be allocated. An exception to this may be where self-assessment criteria have been agreed with the local health and social care partnership and grant provider.
- Where funding is not immediately available or where the request is for a major alteration to an existing house and requires a detailed options appraisal, we will make sure that applicants are kept up to date about the progress of their request, and will explore all available options available with our partner organisations as required.
- We will directly fund the costs of small adaptations (to the value of £500), repairs and replacement and removal costs (subject to conditions below) from our own resources, only where grant funding is limited, not available, or the criteria for it cannot be met..
- We will also front fund the cost of other adaptations where grant is to be paid retrospectively up to a maximum of the pro rata grant funding available for the period in question.
- We will take the future needs of disabled people into account through our specifications for investment programmes wherever resources allow.
- Where adaptation needs are higher than the funds available from the above grant and internal resources, we will also directly fund adaptations from our planned maintenance budgets within a limit to be agreed annually by the Executive team as part of our usual

budget review processes. This will generally be limited to meeting urgent (A and B priority) referrals within the year.

- Where the adaptation proposed is not possible because of significant technical or financial constraints; where it will not address long term needs; where the tenant has an active transfer application; or where substantial costs (over £5,000) we will follow a 'case conference' approach including our own staff, the tenant and any representative and the Occupational Therapist to review all options. Each set of circumstances will be considered on its own merits and within the resources available to us.
- We will not normally consider the removal of permanent adaptations unless there has been an exceptional change in circumstances for the existing household; or where the type of adaptation in place is preventing us from re-letting a property within a reasonable timescale and there is no clear future demand for the adapted property.

Responsibilities for Actions

- The management of requests for adaptations and all expenditure is the responsibility of our tenancy sustainment team in Customer Services. Application for grant funding will be made to the Scottish Government or successor grant funding bodies each year by the Director, taking into account historic requirements and anticipated levels of need within the overall resources available.
- Various members of our Customer Services and Finance teams also have a direct role to play in the delivery of this policy. These are detailed in the associated procedures.
- Our Board have ultimate responsibility for agreeing the policy and for monitoring its effectiveness through regular performance reports presented to them by the Customer Services Director

Performance Monitoring

- We will report performance on progressing adaptation requests within available budget resources to the performance committee on a quarterly basis or as otherwise required
- We will report performance to our regulator through regular programme review updates and as otherwise as required
- We will publish our outcomes at the end of each financial year in our annual report

Review

We aim to review this policy at least once over a five-year period. We reserve the right to change or amend the policy or procedure at any time within this review period if required, subject to the necessary approval of our Board.

Definitions

Scottish Government guidance describes equipment and adaptations as a range of products and changes to a home that enable people affected by ill-health, traumatic injury, disability or the effects of ageing to carry out the ordinary activities of daily life. It includes assistive technology, but not any personal care or anything invasive to the body. It could be provided on a short or long term basis depending the person's assessed needs.

Permanent Adaptations are those that are intended to remain in the property and that relate to structural alterations to the property. They can be major or minor, and are arranged and maintained by us within the funding resources available.

- A minor adaptation does not affect the overall structure of the property, and might include handrails, lever tap handles or over-bath showers.
- A major adaptation is a permanent structural change to the property such as widening doors, installation of lifts, kitchen adaptations, wet-floor bathrooms and extensions.

Temporary Adaptations are those that may be removed from the property or redeployed when no longer required for the person for whom they were provided. They included temporary ramps, track hoists and stair lifts, and are provided through Health and Social Care.

Telecare Services may be explored in partnership with Health and Social Care where they will assist someone to live independently for longer within their own home and community

Equipment is provided, installed and maintained through Health and Social Care for the personal benefit of an individual. It might include raised toilet seats, bath seats and bed or chair raisers.

Full lists of the types of work included under each list are included within the procedures associated with this policy.

Our Context

The Scottish Government estimates that around a third of all households (34%) contain at least one person with a long-standing illness, health problem or disability. Just over a third of this population already use equipment or have adaptations in their homes. (*Scottish Household Survey 2005/6*). This proportion is generally higher amongst social rented tenants.

They also expect that between 2013 and 2023 there will be an increase of over 20% in pensioner households that include someone with a life limiting disability or illness.

The most common adaptations expected to be required are level access showers; followed by ramps; then handrails and over bath showers. Our client groups most commonly receiving adaptations are older tenants and families with disabled children

Referrals for adaptations through the Occupational Therapists service remains persistently high each year.

Projections

In our regular resident satisfaction surveys, around one in five of those responding routinely assess that they may need an adaptation to their home within the next five years.

43% of respondents said that they, or another member of their household, had a disability. Of these respondents, two thirds 64% (118 people) had a disability relating to mobility, 12% (22 people) relating to hearing and 11% (22 people) relating to vision.

31% (58 respondents) said they had some 'other' disability, most of which relate to mental more than physical health.

(2010 Resident Satisfaction Survey: Note – we get proportionately higher responses to this survey from tenants in the older age brackets)

Our profile is not significantly different to the national picture. Scottish Government statistics estimate that around one third of all Scottish households contain at least one person with a long standing illness or disability, with the prevalence increasing in social sector households to over 56%.

Our tenants profile now is reasonably young. Around 21% of tenants are age 65 or over and 8% age 75 or over. But we expect this proportion and requirements for adaptations to increase as the population generally becomes older and whilst alternative housing options remain restricted. We have therefore made provision from 2010/11 for our adaptations grant funding to be 'topped up' by a contribution from our own resources by up to £50,000 per annum if required.