

ALBYN HOUSING SOCIETY LIMITED

TITLE: Adaptations to Existing Properties Policy

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| Authorised by the Board | September 2013 |
| Next Review Due By | September 2018 |
| 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.

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ADAPTATIONS TO EXISTING PROPERTIES PROCEDURE

1 Purpose

- 1.1 The purpose of this procedure is to make sure that requests for Medical Adaptations to our existing properties are processed in an equitable and consistent manner, within financial regulations and in accordance with our associated policy guidelines.

2 Requests for Adaptations

- 2.1 Any request for an adaptation must be passed to the relevant Customer Services Assistant in the first instance, who will be responsible for providing initial information to the applicant.
- 2.2 Usually a request will be for the benefit of our tenant, but it may also be for any other permanent member of their household.

When a request is received, the Assistant will obtain permission from the tenant to make a referral (if this has not already been given), by using standard letters AD1 and AD2 and the Self-Assessment Form (see **Appendix** for standard letters). This will be done within one working week of receiving the initial request. If necessary, the relevant Tenancy Sustainment officer will also be informed so that an additional assessment for other assistance or equipment can be made by them if required.

- 2.3 Once a referral is made to the local Health and Social Care Partnership (see below), the Assistant will open an individual folder for each adaptation request and allocate it a unique reference number. All papers relating to the request will be kept in this folder, with a procedure check-list pinned inside the front cover. Individual case files will be held by the Assistant until the specification has been received.
- 2.4 The Assistant will also input relevant information onto UH and any other relevant database.

3 Referral for Assessment

- 3.1 A referral will be made to a suitably qualified person for a formal assessment of needs and a written recommendation and priority grading where funding conditions require this or specialist expertise is needed. This will usually be an Occupational Therapist (OT) but may also include other relevant health or social care professionals or specialist agencies. The Assistant will refer the request to the appropriate specialist using the form included at *Appendix 1* and include a copy of the completed Self-Assessment Form
- 3.2 The Occupational Therapist or other specialist assessor will usually visit the tenant and assess their needs.

4 Processing the Specification

- 4.1 At this point, we may also need to clarify any further details with the Occupational Therapist. This might include such things as recommended makes of showers, gradients of ramps, materials for handrails etc.

If necessary a further visit will be made to the tenant by the relevant Housing Services Officer and/or the Occupational Therapist, to further assess the work to be carried out and clarify any technical queries or particular requirements as required. At this stage, we will clarify with the assessor which works are necessary and which are desirable if we need to, so that they can be prioritised accordingly.

The tenants will be included in discussions and their choices and preferences will be taken into consideration where reasonable. But we will only do works that are required to meet the tenants' particular needs, and choices may be limited to styles and finishes of equipment where there are technical or budgetary limitations. Any resulting amendments will be noted on the file and we will make sure the tenant is kept up to date about any material changes to the specification.

- 4.2 When the specification is received back from the Occupational Therapist, the Assistant will contact relevant contractors to ask if they are willing to submit prices, and will obtain 3 competitive quotes for the work and progress the request. Once prices are returned, the Assistant will produce a 'Quotations Returned' memo for approval by the relevant Officer or Manager.
- 4.3 Once quotes or tenders have been returned and a contractor agreed, the Assistant will use a standard specification (usually provided by the OT or other specialist assessor) and will email the details to the successful contractor. Whilst the work is on progress the contractor must ask the tenant to sign the Annex D form so that VAT may be claimed back by the contractor and not be charged to Albyn.
- 4.4 If the works are extensive likely to cost over £10,000, the relevant Officer will need to prepare tender documents in accordance with current procedures.
- Adaptations estimated at up to £500 will be processed by a Works Order (Quotations not required). There may be not always be grant funding available for these adaptations.
 - An Adaptation estimated at between £1,000 up to £15,000 will require either a quote or a tender, as required and detailed in our current Financial Procedures.
 - Adaptations which classify as "major works" will require a specific request to the Scottish Government as detailed in their current guidance. Major works may include:

- Extensions or alterations to provide suitable bedroom or bathroom for a disabled person
 - Vertical through floor lift
 - Re-design of existing kitchen
 - Creation of hard standings or other extensive external alterations
- 4.5 When the work is ordered, contractors must be given the following timescales within which to complete the work, subject to availability of specialist equipment:
- ◆ Priority A – Within 2 working weeks
 - ◆ Priority B – Within 4 working weeks
 - ◆ Priority C-E within 6 working weeks
- 4.6 The Assistant will arrange a quality assurance inspection of completed works by the relevant Officer within 10 working days, for any structural works (e.g. showers ramps or garden alterations, but not minor works such as handrails)
- 4.7 Once the work has been completed the works invoice received from contractor goes directly to Finance. The invoice is then processed in accordance with the usual works order invoice procedures
- 4.8 Claim forms and monitoring workbooks will be completed in accordance with relevant grant funding requirements and our current financial regulations by our Finance / Customer Services Assistants as required.
- 4.9 The Assistant must keep the tenant up to date with progress at all relevant stages, including where there may be any delays progressing the work.
- 4.10 The Assistant will advise the Occupational Therapist of completion of the work by email and will update all relevant records

5 Funding

- 5.1 Repairs to existing adaptations and any requests for new adaptations likely to cost under £500 may be funded directly by Albyn where grant funding is not available or likely to be limited. The area Customer Services Manager is responsible for this budget, which will be reviewed annually with the Director as part of the overall budget review.
- 5.2 We can to apply to the Scottish Government for grant funding for all other adaptations that meet the criteria set in current regulations.
- 5.3 It is the responsibility of the Customer Services Director to make sure that any of the information required for any funding bid is provided. This is likely to include but may not be restricted to:
- ◆ Assessment of the current year's adaptation requests by number, type and priority within programme

- ♦ Numbers of HHR applicants, (including transfer applicants) who require wheelchair accessible or specially adapted properties
 - ♦ Items of equipment that we know need replacing.
 - ♦ Any other details required by the funding body
- 5.4 Our information about current requests, committed and actual spend will be monitored on a regular basis by the CS Manager so that up to date information for the Scottish Government and our Performance Committee as required.

6 Options Appraisal

- 6.1 Where an adaptation request is received for major works (see above) or which will require significant funding (generally over £5,000), an Options Appraisal should be carried out by the Tenancy Sustainment Officer to assess if the tenant's housing needs can be best met by an adaptation or by the provision of alternative housing.
- 6.2 The needs and wishes of the tenant must be taken into consideration when looking at the options, as well as time-scales and the availability of funding.
- 6.3 All relevant parties must be involved during an appraisal including the tenant/s, their carers and/or family and the Occupational Therapist.
- 6.4 The various housing options must be explained carefully to all parties to allow the right decision to be made that best suits the needs of the tenant/s in balance with the best use of available housing stock and available funds.
- 6.5 If it is decided that major works to the current property are the best way to meet the tenant's need, and funds are available, the Assistant will liaise with relevant Officers to arrange for the relevant grant forms to be submitted to the Scottish Government along with the Occupational Therapist's report and an estimated cost of the works.
- 6.6 If, in exceptional circumstances, the tenant needs to be decanted whilst major works are carried out, refer to the relevant decant procedures.

7 Cancellation of Adaptations

- 7.1 At any point during the process there may be a need to cancel the adaptation.
- 7.2 Where the tenant has transferred to another Albyn property then the request for the adaptation may be still necessary. The Assistant will ask the Occupational Therapist to re-assess whether the existing specification is appropriate, and if not a further recommendation from the assessor will be required.

- 7.3 Where the tenant has moved to a house which is not an Albyn property or has died, the Officer should note from the comments on the computer system that there is an outstanding adaptation request and inform the Assistant as soon as possible for the work to be cancelled. The Assistant will also inform the Occupational Therapist.
- 7.4 On some occasions the Occupational Therapist or the tenant will inform us that work is not required. This is usually where items of equipment have been provided by another agency cancelling out the need for the adaptations.
- 7.5 In all cases, the Assistant must ensure that the relevant records are updated accordingly.

8 Repairs and Replacement of Adaptations

- 8.1 The repair of adaptations will be funded from our own budget, except where it can be shown that previous adaptations have now reached the end of their useful life and require replacement.
- 8.2 No Occupational Therapist specification is generally needed for the repair of an adaptation unless there has been a change of tenant or a change in the tenant's needs since the adaptation was first installed. However the Occupational Therapist may request or inform the Society that works need to be carried out. A new referral will generally be needed where an existing adaptation has come to the end of its useful life and needs replacement, to make sure that the tenants needs are still being met.
- 8.3 We will keep a record of items of equipment that have a pre-determined lifespan so that they can be replaced through our normal cyclical maintenance programmes wherever possible.

9 Re-use and recycling of Adaptations

- 9.1 It is good practice to ensure that items of equipment are re-used where possible once they are no longer required.
- 9.2 Once a tenant moves on or no longer requires the adaptation installed, removable adaptations should be returned to the provider where possible for further use.
- 9.3 Where the adaptation is permanently fixed, we will aim to allocate the property to a housing list applicant who would benefit from the adaptation available wherever possible (*see HHR Allocations Policy*)

10 Monitoring and Review

- 10.1 We will obtain feedback from tenants on their experience of the adaptations process and the quality of work completed by issuing short satisfaction surveys within 6 months of an adaptation being completed.

- 10.2 The Director will provide regular reports to our Performance Committee on the number of requests for adaptations received, the number of adaptations completed, expenditure against budget and any other information as may be required.
- 10.3 These procedures along with the policy on Stage Three Adaptations will be reviewed and updated every five years or as otherwise required.

Appendix One

Adaptations Procedure for Existing Properties – Standard forms and letters

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| AD1 | Request for Adaptation – permission to refer |
| AD2 | Permission Form |
| | Self Assessment Form |
| AD3 | Request for Assessment |
| AD4 | Request acknowledgement to tenant |
| AD5 | Low priority letter |
| AD6 | Funding unavailable letter |
| AD7 | Progressing application letter |
| AD8 | Referral reminder |

File checklist

Self-Assessment form for Change of Heating
Self-Assessment form for Level Access Shower
Tenant Satisfaction Form