

Adaptations Policy

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1 Policy information

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2 Policy Statement

Adaptations Policy

SLH is committed to providing high quality Aids and Adaptations to assist tenants to live independently and safely in their home.

This Adaptations Policy is in place to provide clear and concise guidance on how SLH will support tenants by providing alterations to their home. The policy applies to SLH tenants and household members of our tenants.

The Adaptations Policy makes clear the types of adaptations SLH will complete, the service tenants can expect to receive as well as what happens if an adaptation cannot be completed. The policy outlines the responsibilities of the Liverpool City Council and how we work in partnership with them to assist in meeting their statutory obligations.

The policy has been designed to address the needs of tenants as well as engaging with them throughout the adaptations process making sure their voice is heard and that they are fully involved in the decisions taken about their home.

Whilst the statutory obligation to complete adaptations rests with the local authority, SLH as a housing association is expected to fund adaptations in some way. We are committed to this and set aside an annual budget to fund adaptations.

3 Policy aims

The aims of this policy are:

- To ensure that the needs of our tenants are prioritised and met accordingly, subject to the provision of available funding.
- To maximise Local Authority Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and SLH Adaptations budget, whilst achieving value for money.
- To fully utilise our available housing stock by matching residents needs with already adapted properties. And to ensure that our existing assets are adapted appropriately.
- Establish joint working practices with our partners from the local authorities in the areas we operate
- Support the local authority to comply with their legal and statutory requirements in relation to the provision of disabled adaptations

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4.1 What is an adaptation?

An adaptation is an alteration or addition to a home which is provided to make it easier and / or safer for a tenant to use their home. An adaptation is provided based on a tenants need which could be caused through their age, disability or faith / cultural requirements.

SLH carry out two types of adaptations: a minor adaptation and a major adaptation.

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4.2 Minor adaptations

Minor adaptations are small non-technical repairs which cost less than £500 to complete and are funded from our responsive repairs budget. Examples of minor adaptations are grab rails, lever taps and repositioning of switches, alarm beacons, vibrating pillows.

Medical assessments are not required for a minor adaptation, however there are some installations that do require professional assessment and recommendation. Minor adaptations will be processed and completed within 28 calendar days.

4.3 Major adaptations

A major adaptation is works which cost over £500 to complete or those of a complex nature. They will require a formal assessment from an Occupational Therapist (OT), this service is provided by Liverpool City Council. The OT will provide a report to SLH on what the tenants need is and advice on the type and level of works required. Once a tenant has made an enquiry to SLH about a major adaptation they will be advised to contact Liverpool City Council and request an OT Assessment.

SLH understands that the waiting time for an OT assessment can affect the tenants' ability to access their home and have a detrimental effect on their wellbeing. To address this, SLH may use its discretion and employ our own private OT to carry out the assessment. This will only be done for works without the need for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) as the local authority will not accept an application with a private OT assessment.

Only when SLH receives the OT report will an application for an adaptation be added to our waiting list. When the O.T assessment is received. SLH will arrange to visit within 28 days. This will be a joint visit with the Tenancy Support Team and the Asset Surveyor.

The purpose of this visit is to understand the tenants needs and expectations. To explore whether rehousing would be a more suitable alternative and to check whether the structure/size of the property is appropriate for the alternations that have been requested by the OT.

The Tenancy Support Officer will (where appropriate) complete a transfer application form and DFG application, to add the applicant to SLH rehousing waiting list and to apply for DFG funding if required. If the property is suitable for the adaptation, it will be added to the adaptation waiting list. Within 10 working days a letter will be issued to the tenant confirming the outcome of the visit, and give an approximate waiting time for the adaptation to be carried out.

This section needs to be included in the procedure. Requests for adaptations up to £2500 (including VAT) will be processed through to works on site without DFG approval. Works exceeding this amount will be referred to Liverpool City Council under the DFG for a 50% contribution of the cost of the works. The DFG grant is for disabled tenants only and will not be applicable for faith or cultural related works.

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SLH contribution to cultural and faith adaptations is limited to £500.00 as these adaptations are not eligible for DFG and should be considered under this policy's discretionary powers.

SLH will support the tenant to complete their DFG application and will fund 50% of the cost of works, up to a maximum of £15,000. The tenant will also be informed of any rent or service charge implications that may arise from completion of the works.

4.4 Why a request for a major adaptation may be rejected?

In some cases, major adaptations cannot be completed. This is because:

- The home is not suitable for the works required
- There is alternative accommodation available that suits the tenants' needs
- A right to buy or acquire application has been submitted
- If the tenant is on the transfer list
- The home is scheduled for demolition or major refurbishment within one year of the request for the adaptation
- The adaptation fails the test of resources review carried out from LCC as part of the DFG approval process
- The property is unsuitable for the tenants e.g. too large or too small for their household (statutorily overcrowded).
- Where the request is for the communal parts of buildings
- The request is for storage facilities or charge points for scooters or other electric mobility aids
- A suitable, alternative or already adapted property is offered and refused
- The adaptation requested is unlikely to meet the needs of a progressive condition or on-going health needs.
- Where a tenant is in breach of their tenancy agreement or are in rent arrears of 4 weeks or more and there is no repayment plan in place,

4.4.1 Appeals process

SLH understand that tenants may find the decision to reject the request upsetting and may wish to appeal the decision. In this instance, an Adaptations Panel made up of a member of EMT and the Head of Assets and Delivery will meet to review the decision. A full outcome of the panel hearing will be provided to the tenant.

4.5 Prioritising adaptations

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Through this policy and supporting procedure we want to limit the waiting time for all tenants who have requested adaptations as well as improving the communication during the time they spend on the waiting list. Often lack of communication and uncertainty over works will cause increased anxiety and distress to tenants, SLH want to reduce this by talking to tenants and keeping them informed.

We will also provide advice and support to the tenant during their time on the waiting list which will include discussing referrals to appropriate and relevant agencies for additional support and identifying ways the wait can be minimised through reorganisation of furniture and belongings in the home.

Whilst we want to reduce time for all tenants and will primarily prioritise applications on date order, we recognise that in some cases the waiting list is not appropriate therefore this policy provides flexibility to bring forward works based on the following principles:

- Where a tenant cannot be discharged from hospital until works are completed
- Where it has been identified it is not safe for a tenant to continue to live in their home without the adaptation being completed

4.6 Funding adaptations

As detailed within the introduction, SLH state our commitment to completing adaptations with two designated budgets for minor and major adaptations. The maximum financial contribution that SLH will make toward an adaptation is £15,000 per property.

These budgets are set annually taking into account demand for previous years as well as the changing demographics of our tenant groups. Demand for adaptations has continued to grow with SLH anticipating that this will continue for the foreseeable future.

We also recognise that due to demand for this service, the waiting time may be too long for some tenants and their families who may wish to bring works forward by paying for the adaptation(s) works themselves. In this instance SLH will complete works using their own designated contractor but will require full and complete payment before works begin.

DFG funding from the Local authority also have a ceiling that they are willing to contribute, in those instances the tenant would be required to pay the differential in costs.

4.7 Changes to rent and service charges

Adaptations will not increase the rent charged to a home unless the works result in an additional room. In these instances, before works start, an affordability assessment will be carried out with the tenant by Neighbourhood Services.

Service charges will be applied where on-going maintenance of an adaptation is

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required. An example would be a stair lift that will require an annual service. The charge covers the annual service and safety check, insurance and repairs. An affordability assessment will be carried out with the tenant before any works requiring a service charge are agreed. A tenancy change notice will also be issued by Neighbourhood Services.

4.8 Requests from new tenants

Through our Allocation and Tenure Policy, SLH will ensure that homes are let according to the tenants need therefore adaptations should not be required in the first year of tenancy unless the tenant has suffered deterioration in their medical condition and wellbeing. Cultural or faith related adaptations can be requested at any time and will also be considered in accordance with this policy.

Tenants who have a shorthold tenancy/license or Rent to Buy tenancy will not be able to request an adaptation to their home.

4.9 Empty homes with adaptations

Where empty homes are identified as having suitable working major adaptations, they will be allocated in line with the Allocations Policy however to maximise the use of the home, the adaptations waiting list will also be reviewed to see if the home meets any of the needs of the tenants on this list.

4.10 Recycling adaptations

If someone leaves a home where non-static adaptations have been installed, we will inspect the adaptations and make sure that they are still in good working order; this includes a full service of equipment. We will then recycle the adaptation and use for a tenant on the waiting list. A recipient of a recycled adaptation will be informed and provided with relevant servicing information before installation.

5 Right to Buy & Succession of Homes with Major Adaptations

In accordance with housing legislation, SLH reserve the right to claim back homes with major adaptations in the event that the person requiring the adaptation did not take up occupation or the occupants are no longer making full use of the adaptations. For example, if the home was acquired through succession or the resident making use of the adaptations found alternative accommodation.

SLH reserve the right to refuse an application for Preserved Right to Buy or Right to Acquire from tenants living in sheltered accommodation or other properties that may be suitable for elderly or disabled persons (regardless of any adaptations that may have been installed).

SLH will not process any new requests for aids and adaptations where a current application for Right to Buy or Right to Acquire is active. If applications for Preserved Right to Buy or Right to Acquire are received from general needs accommodation, that has had major adaptations, SLH will either:

- Make reasonable offers of alternative accommodation for purchase if the adaptation is no longer required and re-let the adapted property (matching

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incoming tenant(s) needs to the existing adaptations)

- Where the adaptations are required by the tenant seeking to purchase, SLH will ensure the cost of the improvements will be reflected in the property valuation

In all circumstances where Preserved Right to Buy or Right to Acquire applications are received, SLH will advise tenants of the procedures and make them aware of any additional costs they may incur.

If there is failure to reach agreement on alternative accommodation SLH may seek to gain possession of the property using grounds 7 or 9 of the Housing Act 1988 but each case will be reviewed on its merits.

6 Standards and Performance Monitoring

The following promises are in place and will support in monitoring the aims of this policy:

- Minor adaptations will be completed within 28 calendar days
- Carry out a home visit within 28 days of receiving the OT recommendation and confirm in writing within 10 working days the outcome of the visit.
- All installations will be a quality inspected by the Asset Surveyor within 14 days of the works being completed.
- A tenant satisfaction survey will be completed at the end of the works to assess satisfaction with the service from application stage through to completion of works.

7 Policy Review Considerations

Equality Analysis

An equality analysis was completed on the impact of this policy review on tenants. Any recommendations have been built into either the policy or supporting procedure.

Tenant Influence

Tenants have influenced this policy through the Customer Services Committee and from lessons learned from complaints received.

Statutory and Legislative Framework

The statutory responsibility for the funding of adaptations is the duty of the Local Authority. SLH residents are entitled to apply for Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) through the Local Authority under the terms of the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

SLH has developed this policy in line with the regulatory framework and legislative framework, which includes:

- Regulatory Framework which sets out that "Registered providers shall co-operate with relevant organisations to provide an adaptations service that
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Equality Act 2010.
- UK Building Regulations Act 1984, 2012

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- meets tenants' needs";
- Housing Acts 1985, 1988 and 1996;

- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- Data Protection Act 1998

Links to other policies

- Allocations
- Tenancy Management
- Health & Safety
- Compliance
- Equality and Diversity
- Safeguarding
- Tenant Feedback
- Repairs & Maintenance
- Decant
- Chargeable Repairs
- Service Charges