

Aids and Adaptations Policy



Scope of the Policy

- 1.1 This policy sets out Oxford City Council's (OCC) approach to dealing with internal and external requests for aids and adaptations in its council tenanted homes.
- 1.2 The policy also clarifies the extent of the service, the limitations, other options and support we can offer and the conditions under which we might refuse to carry out the work requested.
- 1.3 This policy does not cover private tenants, homeowners or housing association tenants. Any enquiry relating to those properties should be referred to the Council's Home Improvement Agency with reference to its Housing Assistance Disabled Adaptations Policy <https://www.oxford.gov.uk/oxford-home-improvement-agency/housing-assistance-disabled-adaptations-policy> Though the Council has a statutory obligation to administer mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to provide aids and adaptations to enable disabled residents to live independently within their own homes, DFGs relate to the citizens of Oxford who do not reside in Council property.

Aims

- 2.1 The aims of this policy are to ensure that:
 - Wherever possible, the Council assists residents, to remain in their own homes and communities through the provision of aids and adaptations, ensuring that disabled people of all ages can build and sustain their independence. The purpose of any installation of an aid or adaptation is to modify the home environment to restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for individuals and their families
 - Residents applying for aids and adaptations are treated in a fair and equitable way

Objectives of the Policy

- 3.1 The Council will:
 - Provide clear information relating to its aids and adaptations process
 - Ensure that aids and adaptations are completed to the specifications included in an Occupational Therapist assessment
 - Process and install reasonable requests for minor aids and adaptations within published timescales for minor, major and complex tasks
 - Ensure aids and adaptations are regularly maintained

- Support and facilitate residents in obtaining suitable alternative housing where a transfer through the Allocations Scheme is considered to be the best provision in line with Occupational Therapist (OT) recommendations.
- Manage and allocate existing adapted properties efficiently to ensure that the impact on customers of the adaptations process is kept to a minimum.
- Provide adaptations which are reasonable, practicable and supported by an OT.
- Work wherever possible and/or relevant, in partnership with other agencies such as Health and Adult Social Care
- Ensure that appropriate servicing contracts are in place for any relevant equipment such as, but not exclusive to, track hoists, stair lifts and through floor lifts.
- Evaluate all requests for adaptations which are made on the basis of faith or cultural requirements, making suitable adjustments where reasonable and practicable.

3.2 Use information and analysis to drive strategy and action:

- Carry out equality analysis on all policies and significant change programmes to ensure they deliver equality objectives.
- Utilise data collected within our stock condition from 2026/27 surveying programme to ensure adapted properties are recorded within our stock condition database.

3.3 Have in place reasonable and accessible procedures and approaches to support the delivery of aids and adaptations:

Definitions

4.1 Aids and adaptations are alterations or improvements carried out to the home of a resident with a disability or to a communal area to enable them to continue to carry out day to day activities. This does not include responsive repairs. Adaptations are approved outside the responsive repairs service.

4.2 Adaptations are categorised as:

- Minor adaptations include but are not limited to, internal door threshold ramps, lever taps, grab rails, moving door handles and power sockets.
- Major adaptations include but are not limited to, provision of lifting aids, stair lift installation, level-access showers and installation of a wet room.

4.3 A disability is defined under the Equality Act 2010 as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.

4.4 Occupational therapists (OT) are health care professionals. Following receipt of a referral, the OT will carry out an assessment of the need for aids and adaptations in the resident's home. If an independent occupational therapist is used by the Council, they must be registered by the Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine and listed in the current Directory of Private

Practitioners, produced by the College of Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapists in Private Practice.

- 4.5 The defect liability period is the period following practical completion of a new development where the building contractor is responsible for dealing with identified defects.
- 4.6 The Allocations Scheme is the policy used to prioritise Council tenants (and other residents) needing to move to an adapted home better suited to their needs where it is determined it is not practical to adapt the tenant's existing home.

Minor and Major Adaptations

- 5.1 Requests for minor adaptations may be received from residents, relatives, friends, carers, occupational therapists, hospital or clinical doctors, GPs, Council staff, social workers and other specialists.
- 5.2 The Council aims to provide a fully funded fast-track service for minor pre-approved adaptations for residents and to complete these within 30 working days of approving a request. In extenuating circumstances that set back this timescale, the Council will maintain open communication with the resident, provide regular updates, and do the best to complete the work as soon as possible.
- 5.3 Where relevant, requests for minor adaptations may need to be supported by appropriate evidence, such as a letter from a medical practitioner. However, in most cases, if the resident's needs are simple to assess, we consider a qualified contractor as being a sufficient person to assess what adaptation is needed and they can make the adaptation – subject to seeking normal approval from the Council - without an assessment from an occupational therapist.
- 5.4 Examples of minor adaptations include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Grab rails
 - Additional banister rails
 - Floor to wall / ceiling rails
 - Half steps
 - Adjustments to door handles / window latches
 - Lever taps
 - Flashing doorbells
 - Key safes
- 5.5 If the tenant is funding the adaptation themselves, they will need to ask for the landlord's permission before making any major adaptations to their home.
- 5.6 Examples of major adaptations include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Level-access showers

- Wet rooms
- Over bath showers
- Ramps
- Stair lifts / through-floor lifts
- Wash / dry toilets
- Specialist baths
- Extensions and/or Structural Alternatives

5.7 Further detail relating to definitions and expected timescales for delivering adaptations are as follow:

| Type of work | Cost of work | Desktop assessment | Delivered once accepted | As an example of work – includes but not limited to |
|--------------|--|--------------------|--|---|
| Minor Works | Less than £1000 | 4 weeks | 20 working days | Temporary ramps Half steps Hand rails Grab rails Sanitary ware |
| Minor Works | More than £1000 | 4 weeks | 12 weeks | Over bath shower The installation of stairlifts and special purpose equipment Ramps |
| Major Works | More than £1000 | 4 weeks | 52 weeks | Bathroom and kitchen adaptations, ground floor WC conversions, garage conversions, and access |
| Complex | More than £1000 involving planning consent, building control | 4 weeks | Dependent on complexity and involved third parties | |

- 5.8 With Major and Complex works, if the recommendation for such works is accepted a technical feasibility and financial viability survey will be undertaken.
- 5.9 In line with the disabled adaptations legislation this policy will consider the maximum level of assistance towards eligible works as £30,000. The Council is not required to fund additional works over this amount. However, in line with Government Guidance the Council has the discretion under this policy to provide up to an additional £20,000 to cover eligible works. This approach will only be taken in exceptional cases and for complex cases, each case will be determined on its own merits and the final decision would be made by the Director of Housing.
- 5.10 The Council will work with the Occupational Therapist to look at other alternative cost-effective solutions within the £50,000 limit. If this is not possible the Council will look for alternative suitable accommodation, recognising that in some circumstances, suitable alternative accommodation may not be available within the Council's housing stock.

Communal Area Adaptations

- 6.1 A request for an adaptation located in a communal area will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- 6.2 Examples include, but are not limited to, the following:
- Handrails
 - Ramps
 - Stair lifts
 - Extensions

Works

- 7.1 The Council will use approved contractors who specialise in carrying out adaptation work. The Council may require a tender process for major adaptation work.
- 7.2 The Council will monitor all equipment under warranty, to make sure the Council can promptly undertake repairs or replace the adaptations if required. Repairs to equipment installed by contractors will be undertaken.
- 7.3 Contractors are responsible for rectifying any defects that appear during the defect liability period. During this time, the Council can notify the contractor(s) of defects, and the contractor(s) is obligated to fix them.

Asset management and record keeping

- 8.1 The Council will maintain accurate and up-to-date asset management data with relevant information about major aids and adaptations. These details are

available to inform the management of allocations and lettings, and the maintenance of the adaptation itself. Inspection and repairs.

Repairs and Maintenance

- 9.1 The Council will inspect all major aids and adaptations once complete. Where a completion inspection has not occurred despite this policy, the Council will contact the resident so that any defects can be reported.
- 9.2 The Council will carry out repairs to aids and adaptations equipment, except where a defect liability period still applies.
- 9.3 The Council will maintain the adaptations fitted in properties after the warranty period.

Retaining and utilising adaptations

- 10.1 The Council will adopt a flexible approach as to whether or not to retain minor adaptations and major adaptations, such as permanent ramps and wet rooms, when an adapted property is vacated and becomes void dependant on the needs of residents moving into the affected properties subject to the Council's Voids Standard.
- 10.2 The Council will remove aids and adaptations in a void property if they are beyond economical repair subject to the Council's Voids Standard.

Processing applications

- 11.1 Where necessary, the Council will also work with the resident to explore alternative options such as re-housing.
- 11.2 The timescales will depend on the urgency and complexity of the adaptations required. High priority cases, as defined by the occupational therapist on the referral, will be prioritised for action, but major and complex schemes will take longer to complete. In cases where planning permission or other regulatory elements are required, the Council cannot guarantee the timescales will be met.
- 11.3 The Council will operate a triage system to make an initial assessment of the complexity and urgency of referral to help the person understand the likely timescales for delivery of the work.
- 11.4 The Council will complete a desktop assessment within 4 weeks of receipt of the referral, the resident will be updated on further timescales following that assessment. The Council will keep the resident updated on progress at all stages, from acknowledging receipt of the referral and expectations, up to the completion.

Reasons for Refusal

12.1 There are a number of reasons why the Council may refuse to carry out all or some of the work requested. The list below provides examples of reasons why the Council might decline a request for adaptations. This list is in no way exhaustive:

- The property is unsuitable for adaptations due to overcrowding, except where minor works can be carried out to provide benefits until a suitable alternative property is found
- In the opinion of the Council, the work is not necessary, appropriate, reasonable, and practical.
- The work is not technically feasible or could be achieved in a different way.
- The application does not meet the eligibility criteria.
- The referral is not via the Occupational Therapist (OT) service.
- The Council reserves the right to seek an OT's report on aids and adaptations requests on a discretionary basis, to ensure the proposed works meet the resident's individual needs in the most effective way.
- Where work for the individual is to a communal area but will negatively impact communal space for other residents or be prohibitively expensive
- The tenant has a Right to Buy Application

12.2 If a request for aids and adaptations is refused for any reason the tenant will be supported in alternative solutions. These solutions may include:

- Assistance with joining the housing register for an alternative move.
- Providing information and support with registering for a Mutual Exchange
- A discussion with OT and tenant about alternative solutions which could be more necessary, appropriate, reasonable, or practical.

12.3 A resident can request a review of any reason for refusal. A request for a review should be received in writing within 28 days of the decision to refuse is communicated to the resident. The review will be conducted by the Director for Housing.

Transfers and adaptations to new tenancies

13.1 For some tenants a transfer to alternative housing on the ground floor or already with adaptations to meet their needs may be the best solution if their home is no longer suitable, and an adaption is not possible or has been declined. This might be another council home, or a social tenancy provided by a different registered provider.

13.2 If a tenant wishes to be considered for a move, a health and housing assessment will be completed using the protocols set out in the Allocations Scheme and a tenant may be awarded additional priority to reflect their housing needs and priority to move to a home with the level of adaptations they require, as outlined within the Allocations Scheme.

| No award – no additional priority | A moderate health and disability award – Band 4 | A significant health and disability award – Band 3 | An urgent health and disability award – Band 2 |
|---|---|---|--|
| <i>The health problem is not related to the person's current housing conditions and cannot be improved by alterations or moving to other accommodation.</i> | <i>A health problem is exacerbated directly by the current housing conditions and requires some priority over a person living in the same circumstances whose health is not affected.</i> | <i>The current accommodation cannot be altered or improved to resolve the health problem and there is considerable risk of deterioration in the person's health that can only be resolved by moving to other accommodation.</i> | <i>There is a very high risk to the health of the person that makes the current accommodation totally unsuitable and they need to move to other accommodation as soon as possible.</i> |

13.3 In the most urgent complex cases for tenants with very specific needs a direct offer of accommodation may be made when a suitable home becomes available - outside of the usual bidding process through Choice-Based Lettings, as outlined in the Allocations Scheme.

13.4 Housing applicants who have been offered a tenancy have a right to request adaptations to be made to a property ahead of them moving in before they accept the property. If the requests are reasonable, the Council will adapt the property, in line with this policy.

13.5 Examples of reasonable changes are:

- Remove or replace, furnishings, materials or equipment (so long as it would not become a permanent fixture when installed)
- Replace or provide signs or notices
- Replace taps or door handles
- Replace, provide or adapt doorbells or door entry systems
- Change the colour of any surface, such as a wall or a door

13.6 Reasonable adjustments only pertain to auxiliary aids and services as defined by the Equality Act 2010. That means the Council is not legally obliged to make structural changes to the property, although the resident can request an adaptation.

13.7 In some case housing applicants in high priority need wait for long periods of time due to a lack of suitably adapted properties. In these cases where the applicants are in greatest need, the Council may offer a property that can be adapted to meet their needs with the work agreed and carried out before they move in to the property, in line with the wider policy.

Funding for major adaptations

- 14.1 This policy relates to funding directly aligned to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The needs of Council tenants who are affected by this policy are supported via funding from the HRA.

Equality, diversity, inclusion, and vulnerability (including most at risk groups)

- 15.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been carried out in compliance with the Council's Public Sector Equality Duty under the Equality Act 2010 in order to determine whether the policy would have an adverse impact on persons with protected characteristics.

- 15.2 Whilst the EqIA has identified that there are no adverse impacts anticipated by this policy on any person with protected characteristics, nevertheless, it is identified that there are certain groups who may be affected by this policy. These groups are:

- children
- adults with learning difficulties
- oxygen users
- people taking certain medication
- those suffering the effects of drugs and alcohol
- adults aged 65 and older
- people with disabilities
- Individuals being supported by the Community Safety team and related support services

Legislation

- 16.1 The following acts are relevant to this policy:

- The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- Children Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Care Act 2014
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002
- The Housing Act 1985
- The Housing Act 2004 - Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Home Adaptations for Disabled People 2013
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) delivery: Guidance for local authorities in England