

ADAPTATIONS POLICY

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1. REVISION/REVIEW SHEET

Issue	Brief Description of Reason for Change	Document Owner	Date Issued
1	Changes recommended by the Ombudsman	ER	05/11/2014
2	Revised by Adaptation Policy Working Group	ER	May 2016

2. PURPOSE

- 2.1. CCG's Vision is:
- 2.2. To be a leading provider of quality housing – meeting the needs of customers, valuing communities.
- 2.3. To contribute to achieving its vision CCG provides an adaptations service. The purpose of this service, wherever practical within existing resources, is to enable our disabled tenants to live as independently as possible.
- 2.4. This policy governs how requests for adaptations should be managed:
 - to focus adaptations and support to those in most need
 - to aim to meet assessed needs
 - to be a fair landlord
 - to continue to invest in our properties
 - to effectively manage our properties, and
 - to seek new ways of collaborating with partners to share expertise and resources

3. SCOPE

- 3.1. This policy applies to all current or prospective tenants, and other qualifying persons, occupying properties owned by Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd (CCG) who are disabled (permanently and substantially). A qualifying person is a person who would qualify to succeed the tenancy as set out in CCG's TSpol05 – Succession of Tenancies Policy.
- 3.2. The policy is not relevant to persons whose need arises solely due to a temporary illness or condition.
- 3.3. This policy applies to accommodation that is, or is intended to be, a disabled person's only or main residence.

4. RESPONSIBILITIES

- 4.1. It will be the responsibility of the Director of Assets and Investment to ensure this policy is applied effectively and that staff are trained appropriately in the procedures associated with this policy.
- 4.2. It is the responsibility of the Adaptations Panel to use this policy consistently and fairly to decide and prioritise which adaptations are approved.

5. POLICY DETAIL

- 5.1. Any case where a major adaptation may be suitable must be referred to the Adaptations Panel who will consider each case on its merits.
- 5.2. The Adaptations Panel will not approve a request for major adaptations unless it is satisfied:

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- 5.2.1. That the relevant works are **necessary and appropriate** to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, **and**
- 5.2.2. That it is **reasonable and practicable** to carry out the relevant works having regard to the type of property and the environment in which it is located, **and**
- 5.2.3. That the relevant works provide **value for money** for CCG.
- 5.3. Gwynedd Council Social Services' Adaptations Criteria will be used to assess needs. Examples and guidance can be found in Appendix A.
- 5.4. In considering what would meet the assessed needs of a disabled occupant, the Adaptation Panel will include consideration of options to meet that need. These will include limiting the relevant works to those considered necessary to meet the assessed need, use of portable equipment to meet the assessed need, and give consideration whether or not it is reasonable to suggest a move to more suitable alternative accommodation.
- 5.5. More Suitable Alternative Accommodation**
- 5.6. When considering whether or not it is reasonable to suggest a move to more suitable alternative accommodation the adaptations panel will give regard to the tenant's circumstances and property turnover rates to evaluate the likelihood that such accommodation will become available within the following 6 months.
- 5.6.1. Where the Adaptations Panel considers that a move to more suitable alternative accommodation is reasonable, CCG will record the case on a register in order to match the tenant with suitable properties that become vacant. CCG will also work with the tenant to submit a transfer request to the relevant housing register.
- 5.6.2. If appropriate, CCG will provide the disabled occupant with minor adaptations and/or recommend portable equipment to reduce the risk of injury to themselves or their carers whilst waiting for more suitable alternative accommodation to become available.
- 5.6.3. CCG will work in partnership with other Housing Associations as appropriate to assist tenants to find and move to more suitable alternative accommodation.
- 5.6.4. The adaptations panel will review the applications for adaptations that are waiting for more suitable alternative accommodation within 6 months of the panel's original decision taking into account the turnover of properties during that period.
- 5.6.5. When a potential property is identified, the customer will be offered a joint visit with an Occupational Therapist and Adaptations Officer to ensure its suitability and agree which adaptations will be carried out before a formal offer of tenancy, or transfer of tenancy, is made. If the customer then accepts the property the agreed adaptations, where they remain reasonable and practical, will be undertaken.

5.6.6. If appropriate, a range of options will be offered to tenants to assist them to move. Options will be in accordance with CCG's ALLpol02 – Under Occupancy Policy.

5.7. Minor Adaptations and Portable Equipment

5.7.1. CCG will work with the tenant and Social Services to provide portable equipment and any minor adaptations that may assist them. The Adaptations Officer is responsible for approving requests for minor adaptations and for ensuring the correct process is followed from identification of need to completion of work. It is Social Services' responsibility to provide portable equipment.

5.7.2. CCG will follow the guidelines set out in the College of Occupational Therapists' 'Minor adaptations without delay' guidance. Appropriate front line staff employed by CCG will be trained to be able to assess disabled occupants in order to specify minor adaptations without the need for a visit from an Occupational Therapist.

5.7.3. Examples of minor adaptations can be found in Appendix A.

5.8. Dealing with Urgent Requests for Major Adaptations

5.8.1. When an urgent request for a major adaptation is received which clearly meets the criteria set out in paragraphs 5.2.1, 5.2.2 and 5.2.3, the request will be emailed to all members of the Adaptations Panel for their opinion.

5.8.2. If there is a cross-disciplinary agreement to the emailed request which includes: an OT, Technical Officer, Customer Facing Officer and Senior Manager, then, subject to resources being available, the adaptation will be arranged.

5.8.3. If there are insufficient responses to the emailed request, or if the request is challenged, the request will be placed on the agenda of the following Adaptations Panel for discussion according to usual practice.

5.8.4. If the request is agreed it will be placed on the agenda of the following Adaptations Panel to validate and document the decision.

5.8.5. Examples of suitable e-panel referrals can be found in Appendix A.

5.9. Funding Adaptations

5.9.1. Subject to availability of resources CCG will make provision in its business plan to fund Major and Minor adaptations according to the terms of its transfer agreement.

5.9.2. If the adaptations budget has been fully utilised, CCG reserves the right to defer the adaptation application until the following financial year.

5.9.3. If a major adaptation is refused or deferred on cost ground, tenants may exercise their lawful right to apply directly to Gwynedd Council for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), but such applications will have to be instigated by the tenants themselves and not by CCG. In such cases CCG will have to approve the works, as it normally does when tenants want to carry out their own improvements to their properties (see L&Fpol03 - Tenants Improvements and Alterations policy).

5.10. Complaining about the decision of the Adaptations Panel

5.10.1. Any complaint about a decision of the Adaptations Panel will be dealt with according CCG's CCpol01 – Complaints and Concerns Policy.

5.11. Improvement Programme

5.11.1. CCG will endeavour to integrate adaptations to kitchens and bathrooms within its Improvement Programme.

5.11.2. CCG employs an Occupational Therapist directly who makes referrals for Improvement Programme works. These referrals will be considered by the Adaptations Panel using the same criteria as detailed in the policy ensuring a consistent approach with adaptation referrals outside the Improvement Programme.

5.11.3. The funding of adaptations over and above the normal cost of Improvement Programme works (as set out in the business plan) will be funded directly from the adaptations budget

5.11.4. In cases where adaptations are refused, any Improvement Programme works that will be carried out will be undertaken in line with the standard property improvements (i.e. no adaptations).

5.12. Adaptations as Improvements

5.12.1. Requests may be made by Tenants who wish to self-fund adaptations either because the proposed adaptation does not meet the criteria laid out in this policy or for other reasons.

5.12.2. Such requests must be made in accordance with CCG's L&Fpol03 – Tenants' Improvement and Alterations policy.

5.13. Adaptations and Empty Homes

5.13.1. Properties with major adaptations that become empty will be matched to tenants on CCG's register of tenants awaiting more suitable alternative accommodation. If there is no match, a request will be made to the relevant housing register for a list of disabled applicants whose needs can be met in the property.

5.13.2. If no suitable tenant can be found the property will be referred to the Adaptations Panel who will decide whether or not it is suitable to be retained as strategic adapted stock or returned to general let as it is. The Panel may decide to raise awareness of the empty property with relevant professional colleagues.

5.14. Transfer and Mutual Exchange requests from Tenants in adapted properties

- 5.14.1. Following a major adaptation, CCG would normally expect the tenant to remain in the property for a minimum of five years. Accordingly transfer and mutual exchange requests will be refused during this time other than those considered under point 5.14.2.
- 5.14.2. There may be exceptions where the Tenant's needs have changed. In such cases the application for transfer will be considered by the Adaptations Panel who will decide whether or not the proposed transfer is necessary. The transfer application should highlight any adaptations required in the new property, and how the proposed transfer addresses the hardship being experienced and benefits the tenant requiring the adaptation.

5.15. Service Charges and Adaptations

- 5.15.1. CCG will arrange to service and repair specialist equipment as necessary to meet relevant regulations and standards. A Service Charge will be raised to cover the cost of servicing and maintaining all specialist equipment installed.
- 5.15.2. CCG will consult with and advise the tenant of the potential cost of maintaining specialist equipment before the request is considered in the adaptations panel. Information will include whether or not the costs may be eligible for Welfare Benefits.

5.16. Removal and Recycling of Adaptations

- 5.16.1. Where the recipient of the adaptation no longer resides at the property, the remaining Occupants or Tenants may be requested to move to another property so that another disabled tenant can benefit from that adaptation. CCG will support any such tenants who are required to move in accordance with options outlined in CCG's ALLpol02 – Under Occupancy Policy.
- 5.16.2. Where minor or major adaptations have been carried out to a property these will not normally be removed e.g. where a bath has been replaced with a level access shower. CCG may ask the prospective tenant to sign a disclaimer that they accept the property with the adaptation. CCG may also refuse to grant permission for the new Tenant to remove the adaptation at their own expense.
- 5.16.3. Where general needs accommodation has had a major adaptation and CCG has been unable to find an applicant suitable for the property a Senior CCG Manager may decide to remove the adaptation if it is considered to be unsuitable for the family moving in.
- 5.16.4. Whenever possible CCG will recycle any specialist equipment provided should it no longer be required and make every effort to use it for future adaptations, e.g. stairlifts, hoists etc.
- 5.16.5. If specialist equipment which incurs a Service Charge is removed, the service charge will no longer be applicable.

5.17. Hospital Discharge

- 5.17.1. CCG will consider referrals from hospital Occupational Therapists and, where reasonable and practicable, may undertake minor adaptations to facilitate the early discharge of Occupants from hospital.

6. RISK FACTOR

- 6.1. The risk that CCG does not prioritise the use of its resources allocated to adaptations resulting in delays due to lack of funding for those tenants who would benefit most from having their homes adapted.
- 6.2. The risk that CCG does not make the most of its existing assets resulting in additional costs of installing and then removing inappropriate adaptations.

7. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

- 7.1. Through its Adaptations Service CCG aims to reduce inequality introduced through the design of some of our homes.
- 7.2. CCG will endeavour not to introduce new inequalities in delivering this service, for example by ensuring that information about the service is available in a format that is accessible and easily understood by our service users.
- 7.3. In considering each case individually CCG avoids providing standard solutions that may not meet an individual's needs or may not be culturally acceptable.

8. DEFINITIONS AND ACRONYMS

- 8.1. For the purposes of this policy the definition of an adaptation is an alteration or addition to any aspect of a dwelling to make it easier or safer for use by a disabled person.
- 8.2. Statutory Overcrowding is defined in the Housing Act 1985.
- 8.3. Minor adaptations are defined as "inexpensive aids to assists tenants move about their home safely and independently". They include rails, small ramps, steps, door entry systems, lever taps, external lights and additional electric sockets, but not portable items of equipment. Minor adaptations are inexpensive items (generally up to about £1000) that don't require a lot of planning and can be provided very quickly. They can be requested by authorised colleagues by completing a simple referral form.
- 8.4. Major adaptations are defined as either a single adaptation or a package of adaptations that meet more complex needs, require a specification brief by an Occupational Therapist, and detailed planning by the Adaptations officer. A package of major adaptations may include some minor adaptations as well.

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- 8.5. An Occupational Therapist (OT) is a registered health professional who is trained to evaluate clients to determine the impact of health issues on their daily activities. Occupational Therapists can design and provide assistive equipment and adaptations that can improve the quality of daily life for clients. CCG employs its own Occupational Therapist mainly to assist with assessments related to CCG's Improvement Programme. Cartrefi Cymunedol Gwynedd also works closely with Occupational Therapists who are employed by Cyngor Gwynedd.
- 8.6. Adaptations Officer - a technical person who manages adaptations works and who works closely with the OTs, housing officers and tenants to agree the most appropriate design solutions; and prepare and administer the adaptations to completion.
- 8.7. Allocation Officers are responsible for managing tenancies and reletting empty properties.
- 8.8. Tenancy Service Officer – responsible for the welfare of tenants.
- 8.9. The Adaptations Panel will consist of Occupational Therapists, Allocations officers, Adaptation Officers, Tenancy Service Officers, and Cyngor Gwynedd Social Services and Housing departments as appropriate to the cases being considered.

9. REFERENCES

- 9.1. Cyngor Gwynedd Social Services Adaptations Criteria
- 9.2. WHQS standard
- 9.3. Home Adaptations Consortium 'Home Adaptations for Disabled People A Detailed Guide to Related Legislation, Guidance and Good Practice'
- 9.4. The College of Occupational Therapists 'Minor Adaptations Without Delay'
- 9.5. Housing Act 1985
- 9.6. Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- 9.7. Equalities Act 2010

10. RELATED DOCUMENTS

- 10.1. L&Fpol03 Tenants Improvements and Alterations policy
- 10.2. CCpol01 – Complaints and Concerns Policy
- 10.3. TSpol03 Assignment of Tenancy and Mutual Exchange Policy
- 10.4. TSpol05 – Succession of Tenancy Policy
- 10.5. ALLf25, ALLf26, ALLf27, ALLf28, ALLf29 CCG Tenancy Agreements

11. REVIEW

- 11.1. This policy will be reviewed every two years.

12. APPENDIX A: Examples and Guidance

12.1. Examples where relevant works would **not be necessary and appropriate**:

- Where the adaptations will not meet the assessed need or will introduce other overriding risks
- Providing adaptations where it may be difficult to facilitate access for the disabled occupant to those adaptations due to, for example, steep flights of stairs or narrow doorways etc.
- Where current adaptations meet Cyngor Gwynedd Social Services Adaptations Criteria
- Where overcrowding is the principal reason for the adaptation.

12.2. Examples where relevant works would **not be reasonable and practicable**:

- Where there are concerns about the type, age and condition of the property.
- When the architectural and structural characteristics of the dwelling may render certain types of adaptation inappropriate or impracticable e.g. in certain high level flats, or where access is difficult or limited
- Where works would require planning permission or building regulation approval that would not be approved.
- Where the adaptation is likely to create a nuisance or annoyance to other occupants or to adjoining neighbours.
- Where the environment in which the property is located makes it difficult for the disabled occupant to live in and take part in the community e.g. hills, steep steps

12.3. Examples where the relevant works would **not provide value for money**:

- Where the property is subject to a preserved right to buy or right to acquire application.
- Where the Tenant is awaiting transfer and a suitable transfer is likely within 6 months
- Where CCG is taking possession proceedings against the Tenant
- Where there will be costly works to re-adapt the home to meet the needs of the next occupants following the end of the current tenancy

12.4. Examples of **minor adaptations**:

- Rails such as grab rails or stair hand-rails
- Internal or external threshold ramps
- Door entry intercom or flashing doorbells

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- Lever taps, cupboard handles or locks, window opening equipment

12.5. Examples of urgent requests that may be decided by **e-panel**:

- Request for ceiling hoist to reduce the risk of injury to carers in a property that is already adapted
- Request for straight stair lift to reduce risk of injury to the disabled occupant or to carers