

Brentwood Borough Council

Aids and Adaptations Policy - Housing Services

September 2022

Introduction

The following policy covers the aids and adaptations placed into the Council's Housing Revenue Account (HRA) properties.

The Council provides funding each year for the provision of Adaptations to enable occupiers to remain in their home, for as long as it is safe and reasonable to do so. For Council Housing tenants this is solely funded from the HRA Revenue and Capital budgets.

For Private residents, Central Government provides a Disabled Facilities Grant that is administered by a different service within the Council. Although it is generally applicable to anyone regardless of their tenure, there are restrictions which prevent Council Housing tenants from accessing this fund. Therefore, all Aids and Adaptations in Local Authority properties are funded through the HRA.

Minor Adaptations

Minor adaptations are classed as a cost below £400 adaptation work. Such adaptations can be carried out after the Housing Service receives a referral from Social Care Services on the adaptation required and how it should be installed. The budget for minor adaptations comes from the HRA revenue account.

The following are examples of minor adaptations (this list is not exhaustive):

- Hand rails.
- Lever taps.
- Visual smoke detectors.
- Visual door bells.
- Half steps.
- Small Ramps.

Minor adaptations are also referred to as "reasonable adjustments", that can be made without removing or altering a physical feature.

Major Adaptations

All other adaptation work costing above £400 is classed as a major adaptation and will only be carried out once a referral has been received from Social Care Services, and a subsequent decision has been made on the suitability of the adaptation for the long-term and the value for money of completing the works at that property.

The following are examples of major adaptations:

- Level access showers.
- Major structural conversions.
- Stair lifts/ through floor lifts.

For large scale adaptations, such as extensions, lift shafts and other structural conversion works, an already adapted property will be sought through liaison with Social Care Services, including properties owned by other social housing providers. Only once this avenue has been exhausted consideration will be given to adapting the tenant's property.

Generally the Council does not install wet rooms in houses, or on the 1st floor or above. The Council will work with those households who have this an identified need, and look to explore alternative measures with the OT or source alternative accommodation.

Funding Major Adaptations

Before committing to expenditure for major adaptations and capital expenditure, the Council will review the circumstances of the household and consider the following factors:

- Look to place the tenant in a property which already has the adaptation required in the Borough through the Council and other registered providers.
- Where there are concerns about under occupancy, the alternative properties available will be discussed. The tenant may also be able to claim for an incentive to downsize.
- If the tenant's property is not deemed suitable for an adaptation, the adaptation will be declined. Reasons for refusal include layout, location and the property's future lettable should the adaptation go ahead.

Where alternative accommodation is being considered, the likely impact of moving to a new house will be assessed in relation to the customer's health/condition and circumstances. Medical information documentation may be requested from the tenant to allow the Council, in conjunction with a medical advisor, to assess the impact to a tenant's health.

Where suitable alternative accommodation can be offered, the tenant will be offered a cash incentive to take the property not exceeding the cost of the works, and not exceeding £1,000 in all cases. The level of offer will be made following agreement between the Service Managers for Housing Repairs and Housing Management.

Where large structural conversion works are required, providing an already suitable adapted alternative has not been found with other providers, the tenant will be offered a property suitable for minor conversion amongst the Council's stock in the Borough. In such cases, the tenant will be treated as a high priority to ensure that the person is able to move into the alternative property as soon as practicable.

Qualifying Conditions

We will consider each application on a case-by-case basis, but we will not usually carry out major adaptations or give permission for a major adaptation if the tenant:

- Has submitted a Right to Buy application.
- Is living in temporary accommodation provided by the Council.
- Is on the transfer list. In this case the Council will try to facilitate the transfer in preference to undertaking adaptations.
- Is pursuing a mutual exchange.
- Is unwilling to move to a more suitable home already identified;
- Has requested work that is un-economical. In this case moving the applicant to more appropriate accommodation should be considered.
- Is subject to an order of the court relating to their tenancy (i.e. Criminal Behaviour Order, civil injunction, community protection notice/order, Notice of Seeking Possession or possession proceedings, demotion of tenancy or injunctions are being pursued) for rent arrears or anti-social behaviour, or if another significant breach of tenancy has been served and is effective.
- Has an introductory or demoted tenancy.
- Has debts with the Council greater than the value of 4 weeks net rent, unless there is a repayment plan in place at the time of the applications and this plan is being maintained at the point of approval.

The Council will look into each case on its individual merit when making a decision not to implement a major adaptation of giving approval to a tenant. If the tenant's property is not deemed suitable for an adaptation, the adaptation will be declined. Reasons for refusal include layout, location and future lettable should the adaptation go ahead.

Another reason for refusal would be if a property is under occupied. Whilst we understand that tenants may not want to move from their property, we have to explore this avenue to see if an alternative property that is more suitable for the individual's needs, could be sourced. Tenants reserve the right to remain in their property, but this will mean that the adaptations requested will be declined as they may not be appropriate for the size of the property or future lets.

Portable and temporary equipment

Portable or temporary appliances such as bath or shower seats, temporary ramping etc. are provided by Social Care Services and they should be contacted for assistance.

Tenants installing their own adaptations, and managing existing adaptations

For all adaptations installed by the tenant or household member at their own expense, the tenant is required to obtain written permission from the Council before carrying out any works. The Council will only refuse permission with good reason, such as if the work:

- Would interfere with any maintenance to the property.
- May cause a potential health and safety risk.
- Would breach any regulatory requirements.

The written request will need to state what works and adaptations the tenant requests to carry out and include a plan of the required works. Completed works may be inspected to ensure they have been carried out to a satisfactory standard.

The tenant will be responsible for obtaining the necessary planning permissions and/or building regulations and any costs incurred by doing so.

The Council will not be responsible for maintaining, servicing or repairing any aids or adaptations installed by the tenant or household member.

At the end of the tenancy, the tenant may be required to remove any approved aid or adaptation they or their household member have fitted and make good any damage to the property. Alternatively, if the Council agrees to take responsibility for the alterations, the tenant or household member will be required to sign over ownership free of charge.

The Council will not fund any alterations or adaptations that may be required to interior or exterior of the property following the purchase of a mobility vehicle. If the tenant needs to make changes to the property such as vehicle access, hard standings, pathways or shelters or electric charging points, these will need to be funded by the tenant or household member unless a statement of need is received from an Occupational Therapist making the recommendation. The tenant will be required to obtain written consent from the Council for carrying out such works.

If adaptations have been carried out at the tenant's or household member's expense without written permission, then the Council may:

- Agree to take over the ownership of the adaptations.
- Ask the tenant to seek retrospective consent.

- Ask the tenant to remove the adaptation and make good any damage to the property; or Recharge the tenant for the removal of adaptations or repair any damage after a tenancy has ended and the former tenant will be liable for any costs incurred for such works.

Removing adaptations

If a tenant moves, any adaptations fitted by the Council are to remain at the property. Any adaptations fitted by the tenant are to be removed unless agreed otherwise by the Council.

Where adaptations have been carried out to a property designated for elderly or a person with a disability, these will normally not be removed, for example where a bath has been replaced with a level access shower. Every effort will be made to re-let an adapted property to a person who has a need for that type of property adaptation.

Where this is not possible, and the incoming tenant accepts an offer of an adapted property, adaptations such as level access showers will not usually be removed. The Council reserves the right to remove the adaptation if they consider it to be unsuitable for the property.

Recycling adaptations

Where the Council has reserved their discretion to remove adaptations from the property, they will recycle adaptations where possible, for example stair lifts, hoists or through floor lifts. However, they will not remove structural adaptations that have been carried out to a property, such as door ramps, level access showers and widened doors.

Servicing and Maintenance

Where the Council installs an aid or adaptation that requires servicing or maintenance, the arrangements for these will be agreed at the time of the installation with the tenant. This also includes any arrangements for repairs that are required and the timescales that will apply to these.

Complaints and Appeals Process

The priority given to tenants seeking an adaptation cannot be appealed against because it is based on the professional opinion of the Occupation Health Therapist. However, if a customer believes that the procedure has not been properly applied in reaching the final decision they should request re-consideration to Social Care Services.

If there are any other complaints in relation to the Adaptations Service these will be dealt with in line with the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure.