

Aids and Adaptations Policy



Policy Reference:

Policy/PS007 Issue 3.3

Approved by:

Senior Management Team

Date approved:

24th August 2017

A Scope and Objectives

This policy applies to disabled persons who are permanent residents of bpha social rented housing and who require aids and adaptations within their home. Procedures are in place to support the implementation of this policy.

The key objectives of the Aids and Adaptations Policy are:

- To ensure that the needs of disabled residents are prioritised and met accordingly, subject to the provision of available funding.
- To set out the criteria by which the association will assess all requests for adaptation work and identify limitations to the service.
- To maximise all local authority grants, bpha's own funding and other available resources for adaptations, having high regard for Value for Money (VFM) at all times.
- To manage the expectations of residents who require adaptations with the association's duty to manage its housing stock effectively through the Growth and Asset Management Strategy.
- To ensure there are clear channels of communication and established joint working practices with our partners from the local authorities in the areas where we operate.
- To comply with legal and statutory requirements in relation to the provision of disabled adaptations.
- To comply with good practice guidance, including 'Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People: A Detailed Guide To Related Legislation, Guidance And Good Practice' Issued by The Home Adaptations Consortium 2013.

B Policy Statement

bpha is committed to providing a high quality aids and adaptations service to enable disabled residents of the association to live safely and more independently within their homes, through efficient management of resources and funding.

1. Definitions

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions will apply:

- Using the social model of disability, an **adaptation** is a modification to a disabling environment or structures in order to restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for individuals and their families – providing an individualised solution to the problems experienced by people in a disabling environment.
- Adaptations are split into two categories – **minor** and **major**. These distinctions are based on the nature of the work required in order to implement the adaptation and do not correspond to the impact the adaptation will have on the individual requiring such work. It is understood that both minor and major adaptation work can impact significantly on an individual's quality of life.
- The **Disability Discrimination Act 1995** defines a **disabled person** as: 'Someone with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his / her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.' This adverse effect is both substantial and long term.

Below are examples of the types of work categorised as either minor or major:

Minor adaptations (typically under £1,000) an example of works include:

- Lever taps
- Grab rails
- Half step
- Mopstick rails
- Drop down Devon rails
- Electronic window openings

Major adaptations (Over £1,000 but capped at £3,325) require more extensive and complex work. An example of works includes:

- Straight stair lifts
- Over bath showers
- Electronic door openings
- Ramps
- Hoists

All aids and adaptations work undertaken by bpha will only be carried out as a result of an assessment by the Occupational Therapist (OT) to determine eligibility and both short/long term medical needs. If the resident does not have an OT, they will be advised to contact their Local Authority, as an assessment of their disability is required.

bpha will work with Social Services to ensure timely and accurate information is communicated to residents.

The OT's assessment will determine the urgency of the adaptation work required. Whilst guided by this, bpha will also work to ensure a balance between both priority need and time spent on the waiting list.

1.1 Financial Considerations

The financing of bpha funded adaptations will be capped at £3,325, which will be subject to review annually. The current cap is for the financial year 2018/19. The association will seek to maximise funding through the Local Authority Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) for adaptations that cost more than £3,325. Applications will follow the principles of best practice, in regard to DFG and Value for Money.

Subject to availability, funding for aids and adaptations work will be met from the following sources:

Minor aids and adaptations

Aids and adaptations costing £1,000 or less will be funded by the association's own annual aids and adaptations budget. A means test does not apply to minor aids and adaptations. bpha will aim to ensure that minor works are completed within 6 weeks from receipt of the Occupational Therapist's report.

Major adaptations

Adaptations costing over £1,000 but not exceeding £3,325 will be funded by the association's own major aids and adaptations budget. bpha will ensure that all major adaptations are completed within 12 months from receipt of the Occupational Therapist's report. A means test does not apply to bpha funded adaptations.

Adaptations exceeding £3,325 will be funded through the Local Authority Disabled Facilities Grant. Adaptations funded through the Local Authority Disabled Facilities Grant are subject to means testing by the Council. They are also subject to landlord approval from bpha.

Some residents in need of adaptations may also be eligible to apply for other sources of funding, for example ex-forces personnel. The association will ensure that residents are signposted to appropriate governing bodies if those bodies might be able to assist with the resident's contribution, or may be able to provide aids and adaptations more quickly.

2. Feasibility Assessment

bpha will undertake a feasibility assessment in exceptional cases, for example, when the resident's circumstances are of a complex nature and/or the proposed adaptations may have a very significant impact on the property itself. Upon receipt of the OT referral, the feasibility assessment will be carried out in consultation with the OT along with our Home Team. The feasibility assessment will seek to establish:

- If there is a possibility for the tenant to be moved to more suitable accommodation.
- The implications of the adaptation work when the property becomes available to re-let, in particular the impact on future allocations and under occupancy issues.
- If the adaptation works are suitable for the tenant.
- The feasibility of the adaptation in relation to the layout and structure of the property.
- Whether the estimated cost of the adaptation work is likely to exceed the Local Authority's maximum grant provision.

3. Transfer to Suitable Alternative Accommodation

Adaptations will not be carried out to a property where it is under-occupied by two bedrooms or more. bpha will look to transfer residents to a more suitable property. Couples who need separate bedrooms for medical reasons will not be adversely affected by this rule and bpha will seek advice from medical professionals in such cases.

It may be decided that the resident's needs are best met through a managed move. This decision would be made by the Tenant Services Manager and Occupational Therapy Manager in consultation with the tenant. A priority transfer within the association's stock would be approved under the bpha Allocations Policy and/or a priority move to another Registered Provider may be arranged. The Occupational Therapist will be consulted on the suitability of a proposed property.

In general, the association does not purchase adapted properties or properties suitable for adaptations on the open market.

Where it has been identified that a move to a more suitable property is both reasonable and practicable, the association reserves the right to refuse approval for the adaptations requested for the original home. The Head of Housing Operations or Head of Property Services or the Commercial Head of Retirement Living will make this decision and such decisions will be final. The OT will be consulted on the suitability of the proposed alternative home.

4. Completed Aids and Adaptations Work

All aids and adaptations work completed in a property will be recorded as part of the property details. Wherever practical, this information will be used to ensure that any future allocations are made to applicants requiring such adaptations.

The association will work with Local Authorities wishing to develop a Disabled Housing Register, either locally or sub-regionally, to facilitate the matching of disabled residents with properties suitably adapted for their needs.

Information on the needs and requirements of disabled applicants will also be utilised to inform any subsequent development programmes.

5. Maintenance Obligations

Clos-o-Mat toilets and through-floor lifts are maintained by bpha and are subject to a service charge. Service charges may or may not be eligible for payment under Housing Benefit or Universal Credit.

Stairlifts and hoists are gifted to tenants because gifting proves to be more cost effective. Following the 12 month warranty period the repairs and maintenance of a stairlift or hoist will be the responsibility of the tenant.

If Housing Benefit or Universal Credit do not cover a service charge, or if repairs and maintenance of a stairlift or hoist are a concern, tenants will be referred to bpha's Financial Inclusion Team.

6. Future Transfers and Mutual Exchanges

If residents for whom the association or local authority has undertaken adaptations wish to transfer or mutual exchange to another property it is at the association's discretion to determine whether such a move can take place. This decision is taken by the Allocations Manager in accordance with relevant housing legislation. Each case will be reviewed individually to take into account personal circumstances and will include consultation with the resident.

We will advise residents for whom we undertake adaptations that we may refuse to carry out adaptations to successive dwellings unless there is an overriding need to move, for example overcrowding.

7. Claiming Back an Adapted Property

In accordance with housing legislation, the association has the right to claim back properties 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 property was acquired through succession or the resident making use of the adaptations found alternative accommodation.

C Regulatory and Legal Considerations

Equality Act 2010 (Section 36(1)(a), Paragraph 2, Schedule 4, and Section 190)

A controller of let premises (e.g. landlord) may have to make reasonable adjustments in response to a request from a disabled tenant or occupier of those premises (and paragraph 2, Schedule 4, EqA 2010). Reasonable adjustments include to change how things are done and to provide an auxiliary aid, and these are subject to exclusions. Disabled tenants of residential properties can also apply for their landlord's consent to make improvements to their property (Section 190).

The following Acts apply to Local Authorities, who manage Social Services and the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). bpha do not manage Social Services or the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG):

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (sections 1 and 2)

This places a duty on Social Services to assist disabled persons in obtaining suitable adaptations within their homes. Requests for adaptations can be made through Local Authority Social Services.

The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (Section 23)

Provides for the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) administered by local authorities. This is mandatory for certain adaptations and means tested.

D Monitoring, Reviews and Evaluation

In order to monitor the quality of the overall service, we will periodically ask residents who have benefited from the aids and adaptations service to complete a satisfaction survey.

The Tenants Services Manager is responsible for the aids and adaptations budget. Performance against budget and target timescales will be reported to the ELT on a monthly basis.

E Associated Documents and Procedures

The delivery of the Aids and Adaptations service has operational links to the policies below:

- bpha Allocations Policy
- Bedford Borough Allocation Scheme
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Health and Safety Policy
- Online Repairs Guide

Status	Version – Issue 3.3
Responsible	Head of Property Services
Next review date	August 2018