

Disabled Adaptations Policy

1. MANAGEMENT INFORMATION

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3. INTRODUCTION

3.1 The provision of an effective adaptations service is essential in order to meet the needs of disabled persons.

3.2 There is no statutory responsibility upon Registered Social Landlords (RSLs) to provide adaptations for their tenants this is the responsibility of Liverpool City Council (LCC) and because South Liverpool Housing (SLH) is an Large Scale Voluntary Transfer after 31st March 1996 date it is unable to access funding from the Housing Corporation.

3.3 The Department for the Communities and Local Government, The Housing Corporation, The National Disabled Persons Housing Service and The College of Occupational Therapists have produced Good Practice Guides for RSLs carrying out adaptations and many of the recommendations contained in these guides have been adopted in this policy and the operational procedures

Demand for adaptations is rising and will continue to do so for several reasons:

- Life expectancy of older people has increased as has the numbers of frailer older people;
- Medical advances have enabled people to survive the consequences of severe illness or accident increasing the numbers of people with complex needs aspiring to independent living; and
- Care in the Community has resulted in many people continuing to live in their own homes who might previously have been forced into institutional care

4. POLICY STATEMENT

4.1 SLH is committed to and will provide limited adaptations to tenants and permanent members of their household in accordance with good practice.

4.2 This policy will apply to all social housing properties and premises owned by the Group.

5. AIMS OF THE POLICY

5.1 SLH's key objectives, in respect of this policy and associated procedures, are to:

- Set out the criteria by which SLH will assess requests for adaptations to its properties;
- Reconcile the expectations of tenants in need of adaptations and the company's requirement to manage its stock effectively;
- To achieve, in partnership with tenants, continuous improvement in the

provision of a high quality housing service; and

- To enable staff to implement this policy, this will be reviewed and updated on a biannual basis.

6. LINKS TO SLH GROUP VALUES

6.1 SLH has developed a set of organisational values designed to help provide an equitable, good quality service for its customers and meet the individual needs of the diverse groups within the community. The SLH corporate plan objectives are

- Solid and robust Business plan
- Together we'll deliver the future
- Attractive, inclusive neighbourhoods of choice
- Responsive, listening and learning organisation
- Superb services

7. POLICY AREAS

7.1 Adaptations are specialist equipment, fittings or minor alterations to enable older, frailer or disabled occupants and their families to overcome difficulties in their home and make them more suitable for their needs. The purpose is to restore independence, privacy, confidence dignity and improve quality of life to individuals. Adaptations should give individuals the ability to be in control of and make decisions about their own lives.

7.2 Minor adaptations are smaller non technical items or work which is usually fixed to a property and which is designed to meet a specific need costing less than £500.00. For example items such as grab rails, lever taps, widening of doorways, flashing light doorbells, kick plates, safety glass, level access thresholds and repositioning of switches. Most minor adaptation requests are accepted through self assessments

7.3 Major adaptations are those which combine more serious disruption to the householder and cost more than £500. Cost may be the more significant factor, so that an easily fitted adaptation which is expensive, For example, a stair lift, level access shower and track hoist. Major adaptations require a professional assessment from an Occupational Therapist (OT).

Eligibility for requesting an adaptation

7.4 Anyone who has held a tenancy with SLH for 12 months can apply for an adaptation for themselves or a member of their household. There is no age limit but there must be a proven need for the adaptation. Discretion can be exercised to lower the requirement for 12 month tenancy due to extenuating circumstances for example accidents or strokes.

- 7.5 Adaptations will only be carried out if there is a permanent disability and for a permanent member of the household. For request over 12 months old, SLH will need confirmation that the adaptation requirements of the client have not changed. All requests must be supported with an OT report stating the priority of the client condition e.g. 'urgent' or 'non urgent'. SLH will accept written/email/fax confirmation from OTs stating 'case closed' that circumstances have not changed and the original recommendation still applies.
- 7.6 Requests for central heating will not be considered under this policy but will form part of the SLH planned maintenance programme unless it is for low surface temperature radiators.
- 7.7 Prioritising referrals is done in date order then in accordance with professional expertise, through reviewing and on going changes with OT liaison and specialists.

Eligibility for Adaptations

- 7.8 SLH will consider a number of factors when evaluating whether or not to proceed with a request for adaptations. Mixtures of financial, technical and qualitative considerations are explored before a balanced decision is taken. Those eligible for adaptations may fall into the following categories:
- Occupants within a household who are permanent members of that household.
 - Occupants with a proven permanent or substantial disability. Occupants whose adaptations requests do not exceed £5,000 per household.
 - Occupants requesting adaptations that can reasonably be installed/fitted at the property in which they reside. Where this is not possible due to the structure of the building, suitable alternative housing options must be sought.
- 7.9 SLH Group meet with LCC OT's on a quarterly basis to discuss specific and urgent cases, general adaptation works continuous improvement suggestions. SLH provide a quarterly update of completed works at liaison meetings.
- 7.10 Each adaption will be assessed on its own merits and prioritised by the OTs as urgent or non urgent. Urgent adaptations will be carried out before any non urgent in date order

Non-Eligibility for Adaptations

- 7.11 SLH will not normally carry out any requests involving major structural alterations to properties or where total costs of adaptations may exceed £5,000. Those not eligible for adaptations will generally fall into the opposite categories to those above. The exception to this is as follows:
- 7.12 Occupants actively seeking a move. The Supported Housing Team (SHT) will ensure existing requests for adaptations are suspended where a suitable

move may be impending (within 2 years).

7.13 For practical reasons, SLH will not normally install a Level Access Shower above ground floor level due to potential structural problems. However, each referral will be assessed individually.

7.14 Where occupants have requested the right to buy.

Budget Provision, Value Limits and Service Charge

7.15 Each year, SLH will set a budget as part of the annual budget exercise. This is based up on what SLH Group can afford within its business plan rather than on the basis of demand/need.

7.16 A service charge will levied where adaptations are installed in the property.

7.17 The weekly rent of a property will be increased if the adaptations works has resulted in significant property enhancements in line with SLH Rent setting criteria, for example the number of rooms has increased.

7.18 The maximum expenditure on any major adaptations for a single household is limited to £5,000.00 inclusive of VAT if applicable. Any adaption exceeding this £5,000.00 threshold will require prior approval from The Director of Operations.

7.19 Any Adaptation requests costing over £5000 will be signposted to Liverpool City Council to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). Any contribution to DFG will be limited to 10% or £5,000 which ever is the lesser of the total costs inclusive of VAT if applicable.

7.20 Where it is not reasonable, practical to implement adaptations or over the £5,000 limit, the SLH will actively pursue alternative solutions which meet the needs of the client. This may include:

- Re-housing to more suitable accommodation;
- Exploring less costly alternatives for meeting the needs of the client, in consultation with the client and OTs / medical specialists; and
- Seeking other forms of funding and grants such as those administered by local authorities (mandatory grants), occupational or charitable grants.

7.21 The demand for adaptations is increasing in the face of limited financial resources. Demand is likely to increase further as SLH proactively promotes awareness of adaptations to customers. SLH therefore will make best use of existing resources before agreeing to carry out new adaptations work

Void Properties

7.22 All void properties with an adaptation already in place should be referred to the SHT. A referral to ACCESS, Liverpool will be made who undertake to match a client to a property within 5 days otherwise the property will be allocated via the normal voids process.

7.23 Where properties that ACCESS are unable to match, are partially adapted and/or do not meet the criteria for ACCESS, the SHT will liaise with Neighbourhood officers to match clients to the property from SLH's medical and adaptations waiting lists.

8. STATUTORY AND LEGISLATIVE FRAMEWORK SURROUNDING THE POLICY

8.1 SLH recognises its duty to comply with current legislation and will operate this policy within the current statutory framework.

8.2 SLH also recognises its obligations to comply with current good practice guidelines and codes of conduct.

8.3 Set out below is the current statutory framework within which SLH will apply this policy:

- Housing Acts 1985,1988,1996
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Data Protection Act
- Human Rights Act
- Housing Corporation Regulation
- DCLG guidance
- Financial regulations

9. POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

9.1 The Board has corporate responsibility for ensuring that this policy reflects the group values of the SLH Group and that it contributes to the objectives of the Business Plan.

9.2 The Director of Operations will report annually to the Board on the effectiveness of this policy and recommending changes where necessary.

9.3 Senior Managers are responsible for ensuring that the staff in their teams receive adequate and continuous training to ensure that they understand the policy and procedures and that they are up to date on any changes in legislation. Any areas where specific training is required will be identified and Senior Managers will ensure that this training is delivered to staff.

9.4 All staff have a responsibility to make sure that they familiarise themselves with this policy. They should be able to raise any queries with their line managers over any unclear aspects.

9.5 This policy will be monitored for clarity and plain English and will be made available on the Intranet and on our website (www.slhgroup.co.uk). SLH ensures that copies of its policies and procedures are made available, upon request, in large print, Braille, audio tape and translates into the core community languages.

10. PERFORMANCE INDICATORS AND PERFORMANCE MONITORING

- 10.1 Performance regarding all aspects of the repair and maintenance service is reported monthly to the SLH Senior Management Team, across the Performance Indicator Group meetings. Headline key performance indicators are reported to the SLH Board at each quarter end.
- 10.2 The following indicators will be used to measure performance in adaptations:
- The total number of adaptations issued and costs, by neighbourhood;
 - Expenditure over the period due to adaptations; and
 - No of occasions and value of the use of discretionary powers.

11. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 This policy underpins the commitment of the SLH Group to provide equality in access and provision of, services offered to all residents regardless of race, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability or age.
- 11.2 SLH will ensure that all contractors employed by the organisation are aware of its Equality and Diversity Policy, operate a similar code of conduct and comply with current legislation surrounding equality issues.

12. RISK ASSESSMENT

- 12.1 In order to achieve its corporate objectives, SLH places a high importance on the effective management of risks. A risk management system has been adopted by the Group which looks at all risks facing the business including strategic and operational risks and those involving resources, project management and legal and financial risks.
- 12.2 All risks associated with provision of adaptations both strategic and operational level will be assessed, quantified and minimised. SLH is committed to being proactive to prevent risk rather than reactive to remedy it.

13. EFFICIENCY / VALUE FOR MONEY ASSESSMENT

- 13.1 The SLH Group aims to deliver high quality, cost effective housing services and had made a commitment to focus on its core services to address the recommendations made by the Audit Commission in 2006 and improve standards.

14. CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT ASSESSMENT

- 14.1 The SLH Group has a corporate commitment to continuous improvement and the Board has agreed a continuous improvement methodology which looks at keys areas and identifies both long and short objectives.
- 14.2 SLH will develop its approach to benchmarking and increase its focus on

performance comparisons with successful organisations to create a framework for continuous improvement. Staff are encouraged to seek out examples of good practice in order to improve the services offered to the organisation's customers.

15. ASSOCIATED AND LINKED POLICIES

- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Right to Repair and Right for Compensation for Improvements Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Maintaining Professional Boundaries Policy
- Confidentiality Policy