

**The Highland Council
ADAPTATIONS POLICY**

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1. What are Adaptations?

- 1.1 Adaptations describe a broad range of changes to the fabric of a building that enable people of all ages to carry out ordinary activities of daily life that have been affected by impairment, ill health, traumatic injury, or the effects of ageing.
- 1.2 Adaptations range from smaller adaptations such as a grab rail, to ramps and level access shower facilities, to the occasional provision of major adaptations such as an extension to a house.
- 1.3 Adaptations are distinct from pieces of equipment which can also be provided to help maintain people's independence, although the process for provision of both equipment and adaptations should be seamless for the people receiving them. Adaptations generally involve changes to the fabric or structure of a building, or fixing something to the building. Equipment describes a range of products that are used in the property but do not generally involve structural changes or alterations to the building.

2. Background & Context of the Adaptations Policy

- 2.1 Adaptations are an important part of an integrated community care service. They are often a cost effective model of intervention and can help to enable people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.
- 2.2 The provision of adaptations is an important part of meeting the needs of people in their own homes: by enabling people to return to their homes from hospital or other care, or to remain in their own homes and prevent hospital admission.
- 2.3 However, there will be circumstances when adaptations are not the most appropriate solution to meet a person's housing needs and alternative housing is the most appropriate solution. In these circumstances Community Care Teams and other services or agencies will work together with the client and their families to provide a solution to meet assessed needs.
- 2.4 Expectations about adaptations and what they can achieve can often be very high. The balance of peoples' aspirations and how to meet assessed need must be maintained from the outset and people properly informed of what can, or can not, be achieved to meet their aspirations or needs.
- 2.5 This Adaptations Policy covers adaptations provided across Highland, including across public and private housing sectors. Where it is necessary to distinguish between adaptations in different housing tenures, this is clarified.
- 2.6 Detailed Adaptations Procedures have been developed to allow staff to implement this policy.

3. Principles of the Adaptations Policy

The following principles will underpin The Highland Council's Adaptations Policy:

- 3.1 Person Centred – the Council is committed to ensuring the Adaptations Policy puts people at the centre of provision, treating all service users and any others affected by the policy with courtesy, dignity and respect, and being open and honest about what can be achieved to meet their needs;
- 3.2 Equality – the Council will act in a manner which seeks to ensure that all

individuals affected by the Adaptations Policy to be treated fairly, equally and without prejudice. The Council will seek to ensure that information on the Adaptations Policy is accessible to all and implemented in a manner consistent with equal opportunities; this includes the completion of an Equality Impact Assessment on the service;

- 3.3 Openness – the Council will provide relevant and necessary information on the Adaptations Policy and service, having due regard to any issues of confidentiality and data protection;
- 3.4 Legality – the Council will ensure the Adaptations Policy is in accordance with any legal duties or constraints and reflects good practice; this includes guidance and practice issued by the Scottish Government;
- 3.5 Best value – the Council will seek to ensure that its Adaptations Policy takes into account the principles of Best Value;
- 3.6 Adherence to wider policy context – the Adaptations Policy will be consistent with the wider policy context of Equipment and Adaptations, both at a national and Highland level. This includes:
- Scottish Government Equipment and Adaptations Guidance (currently draft)
 - Highland Single Outcome Agreement, The agreement between the Highland Community Planning Partners and the Scottish Government
 - Strengthening the Highlands, The Programme of The Highland Council – 2009-2011
 - The Housing (Scotland) Act 2006
 - Highland Housing Strategy & Scottish Housing Quality Standards
 - Joint Community Care Plan (Highland Council / NHS Highland) (currently being developed)
- 3.7 Consistency – the Council will seek to ensure that this Adaptations Policy promotes a consistent approach in the assessment for, and provision of, adaptations, within the context of the different funding streams involved.

4. Funding of Adaptations

- 4.1 How an adaptation is funded depends on whether the property is:
- a) Private sector housing (owned and rented)
 - b) Housing association housing
 - c) Council housing
- a) Private sector housing (both owner occupied and private rented)
The Highland Council may make funding available for adapting private housing. The Council is required by law (the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006) to set out how people can obtain adaptations in the private sector. This is known as a 'Scheme of Assistance' and clarifies what adaptations assistance will be available to help people adapt their own homes.
- b) Housing association housing
Housing associations fund adaptations through Housing Association Grant (HAG) which they receive from the Scottish Government. This is usually based on annual funding allocation which is established through housing association's Strategy & Development Funding Plans. Housing associations can also use income from tenant's rents to fund minor adaptations.

c) Council housing

The Council funds adaptations to Council housing through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA); the main source of HRA funding is income generated from Council housing tenants rents.

Prioritising and funding of adaptations is dealt with in more detail in **Section 6**.

5. Assessment for Adaptations

5.1 There are two main routes for assessment of an adaptation:

- Through self assessment;
- Through an expert assessment

These are dealt with in turn below:

5.2 Self assessment

Self assessment means that an adaptation can be carried out directly, without an expert assessment. This usually means that, where funding allows and there are no other factors which need further consideration, because a person meets certain pre-determined eligibility criteria, they may automatically qualify for a particular adaptation.

5.2.1 Self assessment has been adopted in order to:

- a) Provide a more efficient service to people who require certain types of adaptations;
- b) Speed up the delivery of adaptations;
- c) Free-up an Occupational Therapist's time – to allow them to deal more efficiently with other cases that require a full 'expert' assessment.

5.2.2 Adaptations that can be self assessed are:

- a) Minor adaptations that can be provided directly by the landlord or through the Handyperson Service in Highland (see **Section 8** for more details);
- b) Level access showers (see **Section 9** for more details), where the client does not have more complex needs and the house and external environment are suitable (e.g. the person can access the house).

5.3 Expert assessment

There are two types of expert assessment and recommendation:

- a) An assessment by the Medical Assessor provided by NHS Highland. This applies to heating changes in Highland because a change of heating is related to the person's medical condition;
- b) An assessment by an Occupational Therapist; Occupational Therapists are employed by the Council's Social Work Service, and by NHS Highland.

5.4 In keeping with the principles established in Scottish Guidance and with good practice, an assessment of a person's need for an adaptation should always be:

- a) Integral to an assessment of their wider community care needs; i.e. an adaptation is one of a series of options being considered to meet the person's needs;
- b) Long term, i.e. where possible, it is based on meeting the person's long term needs and ability to remain in their home. If this is not achievable, alternative solutions should be considered and discussed (e.g. a change in housing rather than adaptations).

6. Prioritising Adaptations

- 6.1 Where adaptations require an assessment by Occupational Therapy or the Medical Assessor, they will be prioritised using priority categories and target timescales.
- 6.2 Assessment for an adaptation and priorities and timescales will be consistent with Social Work eligibility criterion which is currently (2009) being revised.
- 6.3 Funding of any adaptations will continue to be subject to the availability of funding. This is particularly the case for lower priority adaptations.
- 6.4 Where a lower priority adaptation is unable to be funded, a person will be advised of any appropriate alternatives to the adaptation. This might include:
- Applying for a housing transfer to more suitable accommodation in the public sector or advice on moving to a suitable privately owned or rented house;
 - Installing the adaptation themselves;
 - Discussion with the Occupational Therapy/ Health colleagues regarding any suitable equipment or other minor adaptations that could assist the person;
 - If there is a change in circumstances and possible increase in need, a reassessment of the person's needs should take place.
- 6.5 Where funding is available for some lower priority adaptations, these will be dealt with:
- Generally in date order (i.e. using the date the assessment was carried out and the priority category was awarded);
 - If there are other reasons to carry out the adaptation over and above the person's assessed needs (e.g. programmed works to Council housing, meeting the Scottish Housing Quality Standards, etc.);
 - If there is a change in circumstances and a persons needs are re-assessed as a higher priority.
- 6.6 Where an Occupational Therapy assessment is undertaken, an adaptation must be fairly prioritised based on this professional assessment of a person's needs. Public sector housing landlords or staff dealing with private sector grants should have regard to the expert assessment of an Occupational Therapist and the priority recommended. This should ensure that people with the highest needs receive the adaptations they require.

7. Provision of Adaptations

- 7.1 Once an application for an adaptation has been assessed, the responsibility for provision of the adaptation is as follows:

Housing tenure	Funding for adaptations	How is the adaptation provided?
Private sector	Care & Repair & private sector housing grant administered by the Council	Through Council Grants Officers and Care & Repair Agents
Council housing	Housing Revenue Account (income from tenant's rents)	Through the Council (Housing & Property Services)
Housing associations	Housing Associations Grant (HAG) from the Scottish Government	Through the housing association

7.3 The adaptation should be provided having regard to:

- a) Occupational Therapy recommendations and any specification (see **Section 6**);
- b) Priority category awarded and target timescales for the adaptation (see **Section 6**); these will reflect broader Social Work eligibility criteria (to be clarified by end of 2009);
- c) Any further information / discussion, e.g. regarding suitability of house for adaptation, person's medical details etc.;
- d) Meeting a person's long term housing needs;
- e) Availability of funding (see **Section 6**).

8. Minor Adaptations

8.1 Minor adaptations cover a range of adaptations, from those that are non-structural and can easily be removed from the property (such as grab-rails), to adaptations that are likely to involve permanent changes to a person's home, for example, a toilet or bathroom modification, door alteration, or installation of a level access shower.

8.2 Some minor adaptations can be directly provided to the person who feels they have a need for them. These are adaptations that are non-structural and temporary, such as grab-rails, hand-rails, main entrance support rails, small access and door alterations, bathroom lever taps etc. A list of these is provided in **Appendix 1**.

8.3 The responsibility for direct provision of these minor adaptations is as follows:

Housing tenure	Who provides?
Private sector	Handyperson service, administered by Housing & Property Services
Council housing	The Council (Housing & Property Services) Handyperson service also available if necessary
Housing associations	Housing associations to their own tenants Handyperson service also available if necessary

8.4 Where a person is likely to have more complex needs that might require a full expert assessment, there should be no direct provision of minor adaptations and a full Occupational Therapy assessment should take place.

8.5 Minor adaptations that are more substantial and involve permanent or structural changes to a person's home will usually require an Occupational Therapist or other professional assessment (such as heating changes requiring an assessment by the Medical Assessor). The exception to this is level access showers which are dealt with below.

9. Level Access Showers

9.1 Level access showers are a 'minor adaptation' but do not always require an assessment by an Occupational Therapist. This is because in some instances they can be self assessed. They can generally be self assessed if:

- a) The person requiring the adaptation does not have any other, more complex needs which might require a full expert assessment;
- b) There are no other accessibility issues to consider to ensure the property is suitable for long term occupation.

- 9.2 Installation of level access showers above the ground floor will also be subject to self assessment. However, there will be greater scrutiny of these applications by housing staff. First floor level access showers will be appropriate:
- a) Where access to the first floor is not a long term issue for the person (i.e. mobility is not an issue);
 - b) Where the house is already fully adapted to meet the person's long term housing needs;
 - c) Where there can be shown to be other needs for a level access shower on the first floor and no other reasonable alternatives (including re-housing) can be achieved.
- 9.3 Approval for first floor level access showers is the responsibility of:
- The relevant Area Housing & Property Manager for Council housing or private sector;
 - The relevant Housing Manager/ Director in a housing association.
- In both cases account will be taken of any other recommendations from relevant professionals.

10. Major Adaptations

- 10.1 In accordance with Scottish Government Equipment and Adaptations Guidance, it is acknowledged that adaptations are only one of a number of possible solutions to meet a person's needs. For example, housing support or re-housing might also be of benefit.
- 10.2 Where a major adaptation has been requested, the best solution to meet the person's long term housing needs should be considered, which may not necessarily be carrying out a major adaptation to their current home.
- 10.3 A major adaptation is defined as an adaptation which requires significant structural alteration to the house. It is likely to include:
- a) An assessment by an Occupational Therapist or other professional;
 - b) A professional view on the impact of the adaptation on the integrity of the property;
 - c) Architect drawings and Building Warrants;
 - d) Planning permission;
 - e) Where the cost is likely to have a significant impact on the organisational budgets to the detriment of the wider client base.
- 10.4 A major adaptation may be granted if it is shown to meet a person's long term assessed needs, taking into account the suitability of their current home, including location, local services and facilities that are of benefit, carer networks, current care package etc.

However, an application for a major adaptation may be refused where:

- a) It will not meet the person's or household's long term housing needs and a reasonable alternative solution can be offered. This can include an offer of alternative, suitable housing;
- b) Where funding of the project is prohibitive and alternative solutions can be delivered;
- c) Where a tenant (housing association) doesn't agree to possible increase in rental costs as a result of housing adaptation / improvements.

- 10.6 Approval for major adaptations is the responsibility of:
- The relevant Area Housing & Property Manager for Council housing or private sector;
 - The relevant Housing Manager/ Director in a housing association.

11. Recording and Allocation of Adapted Properties

- 11.1 It is the responsibility of the landlord in public sector housing (Council and housing associations) to ensure that a permanent adaptation to a property is properly recorded on housing systems/ databases.
- 11.2 Recording adapted properties in the public sector will allow, where possible, sensitive future allocation and effective use of the property, i.e. allocating an adapted property to a person with the appropriate housing need.
- 11.3 This should also ensure that adaptations resources are used more efficiently, i.e. adaptations are re-used appropriately.
- 11.4 Wherever possible, adapted housing should be utilised and allocated to people with appropriate needs.

12. Financial Implications

- 12.1 The Council has a current commitment to invest £4.7 million annually in equipment and adaptations.
- 12.2 This investment covers Social Work equipment, Council housing adaptations, and private sector adaptations.
- 12.3 Housing associations have their own individual funding budgets for adaptations which is based on their Strategy & Development Funding Plans and received from the Scottish Government (see also 4.1 b)).
- 12.4 This Policy proposes fair prioritisation of adaptations in order that current resources are fairly distributed and target those most in need.

13. Management Information

- 13.1 In accordance with the Scottish Government Equipment and Adaptations Guidance and with principles of good practice, performance management systems will monitor adaptations processes.
- 13.2 The main reasons for this are:
- a) People can be properly informed about the progress of their adaptation;
 - b) Any waiting times can be properly monitored;
 - c) Problems and delays are accounted for and can be targeted;
 - d) Achievement in adaptations can be reported;
 - e) Improvements to the service can be planned;
 - f) Reasons for refusal in certain cases can be recorded and monitored.
- 13.3 It is the responsibility of Social Work Managers to record and monitor requests for adaptations and screening and assessment processes. This should include:
- a) Number of people waiting for an Occupational Therapy assessment;
 - b) How long people are waiting for an Occupational Therapy assessment;
 - c) Whether the target timescales for priority categories have been achieved.
- 13.4 It is the responsibility of the landlord in public sector housing or Council staff

involved in the private sector grants process to ensure that adaptations processes are properly monitored. This includes for both directly provided and Occupational Therapy assessed adaptations. This should include:

- a) Number of people awaiting adaptations in each priority category, or for directly provided adaptations;
- b) Whether the target timescales have been achieved;
- c) Number of adaptations unable to be funded.

13.5 Information from recording and monitoring adaptations should be shared with relevant partner agencies (e.g. between Social Work and public sector landlords) to monitor over all performance of adaptations and plan and implement any necessary improvements.

14. Complaints, Comments & Appeals

14.1 People wishing to make comment or suggestions or complain about any aspect of the adaptations service can do so by contacting the relevant local Council office or housing association, or by using the Council's complaint procedures or the relevant housing association complaint process in the case of a housing association tenant.

14.2 If a person wishes to complain, or appeal against the decision regarding an adaptation, this should be done in the following ways:

14.3	Complaint/ Appeal against:	Complaint to:
	OT assessment (e.g. priority category)	Social Work Services.
	Private sector adaptation	Housing & Property Services
	Council housing adaptation	Housing & Property Services
	Housing association adaptation	The relevant housing association
	Decision on major adaptation	The Council, Housing & Property Services Or the relevant Housing Association

15. Adaptations Information

15.1 Information for people who would like to know about obtaining adaptations in Highland will be made available. This will be clear and accessible to potential service users.

APPENDIX 1

Minor Adaptations that can be directly provided by a public landlord	
The following are examples of types of adaptations that could be installed directly into a property by a public landlord, without an assessment by an Occupational Therapist.	
<u>Visual Impairment needs:</u> Staircase applications (e.g. changes to colour, stair edges, skirting etc.) External lighting	
<u>Hearing Impairment needs:</u> Flashing doorbells Smoke alarm alerts	
<u>Rails:</u> Main entrance support rail Grab-rails Newel rails (designed to turn through 90 degrees around a stair post) Hand-rails Stair hand-rails	
<u>Access:</u> Internal door threshold ramps Improved access and widened pathway to main entrance Door entry intercom Ramps	
<u>Kitchens and bathrooms:</u> Window opening equipment Kitchen lever taps Kitchen cupboard handles Bathroom lever taps W.C. level flush handles	
<u>General needs:</u> Door and wall protectors Alter heights of electric faceplates	
<u>Safety matters:</u> Safety glass	
<u>Highways:</u> Drop kerbs (Please note: these should be referred to Transport, Education and Community Services at the Council)	
Minor Adaptations that can be directly provided by the Handyperson service	
Fit grab rails Fit temporary ramps External handrails	Bannister rails (stair handrails) Levelling thresholds on doors Removal of obstructions for wheelchair access