



Aids & Adaptations Policy

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MONITORING, APPROVAL AND REVIEW	
Lead Officer / Author	Susan Claxton, Business Change Manager
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Approval date	< TBC >
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AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS POLICY

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1. Purpose of the Policy

1.1 First Choice Homes Oldham (FCHO) is committed to promoting choice for independent living for its existing customers and new applicants for housing that meets their current and future needs. The aims of the Policy are to:

- Assist customers to live independently, whilst making best the use of FCHO's existing adapted stock.
- Focus on the needs of the customer and ensure that customers are communicated with effectively to promote accessibility and choice.
- Meet our statutory, regulatory and compliance requirements.
- Ensure that applicants in need of adaptations are prioritised in line with our Lettings Policy.
- Work in partnership with the Community Occupational Therapist Team (COTT) to ensure that the specific needs of the customer are identified and met.
- Deliver an active asset management approach that provides value for money and homes fit for the future.

2 The Policy

2.1 The policy applies to all properties owned and managed by FCHO. It sets out the way in which FCHO manages requests and delivery of aids and adaptations.

2.2 Minor Aids and Adaptations

2.2.1 Minor aids and adaptations are defined as non-structural alterations or additions to a home up to the value of £1,000. Customers are able to request minor works directly through the Disability Living Service (DLS) or via the COTT. The COTT will then pass the request to the DLS.

2.2.2 The Disability Living Service will order all minor adaptations which will be delivered by the Property Care Team.

2.2.3 Minor adaptations will be installed by a Trusted Assessor (a specialist in installing minor adaptations). FCHO aim to complete these within 20 working days of the order being raised on the repairs system. Examples of minor adaptations include:

- Grab or hand rails.
- Lever taps.
- Small ramps or small steps to entrances.
- Moving power sockets.
- Changing door and window catches.
- Lowering of locks.
- Adjustments to or additional lighting.

2.3 Major Adaptations

2.3.1 Major adaptations involve structural alteration to a property or cost over £1,000. Major adaptations may include, but are not limited to the following:

- Providing ramps, widening doors, shallow steps.
- Adapting or providing suitable washing, bathing or toilet facilities.
- Installation of a stair lift, through floor lift or ceiling track hoist.
- Adaptations to the kitchen (e.g. lowering counters).

2.3.2 Requests will be made through the DLS and all major adaptations will be supported by an assessment and recommendation by an Occupational Therapist. Where appropriate, rehousing will be explored when major adaptations are requested.

2.3.3 The requests will be considered by the FCHO Aids and Adaptations Panel and if approved passed to the Local Authority in order to access Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). The DLS will liaise with the Local Authority and keep the customer updated on the progress of their adaptation request.

2.3.4 Once the DFG application has been approved, FCHO will undertake the works and ensure that all major adaptations have been installed to the appropriate standard.

2.4 Aids and Adaptations Panel

2.4.1 The panel is an internal FCHO group that manages all major adaptation requests where applications for Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) or other funding streams have been approved.

2.4.2 When evaluating a request for major adaptations, the panel will consider the needs of the customer, if there are technical requirements recommended and other relevant factors to enable a balanced decision to be made.

2.4.3 The panel is facilitated by the DLS and attendees are as follows:

- Housing and Advice
- Neighbourhood Services
- Asset Investment Strategy
- Asset Investment Delivery

2.4.4 The panel will also:

- Work with Local Authorities on larger, more complex adaptations.
- Review adapted stock within FCHO's asset base
- Monitor performance against the KPI's detailed in section 3
- Identify and implement improvements to the customer experience
- Consider cases where FCHO may wish to fully fund an adaptation

2.4.5 FCHO has the right to refuse a request for major adaptations. The following provides some examples of where this may apply:

- The adaptation is requested in a property that is due for demolition or major refurbishment.
- The property is under occupied by one or more bedrooms. FCHO may waive this condition where no other suitable housing is available.
- The property is unsuitable for the customer i.e. statutory over-crowded
- A customer has recently (e.g. within two years) transferred from one FCHO property to another unless the customers' circumstances have changed significantly since the move.
- The property is unsuitable for adaptation.
- The request is for storage facilities or charge points for scooters or other electric mobility aids.
- The customer is not intending to stay in the property for at least five years.
- The major adaptation has reached the end of its operational life and requires replacing. In this instance, FCHO and the DLS reserve the right to request a new Occupational Therapist report.

2.5 Right of Appeal

2.5.1 If an adaptation is refused, the DLS will advise the customer within five working days following the panel meeting.

2.5.2 Customers have the right to appeal and request a review of the decision except where the request has been refused due to the adaptation not being technically feasible.

2.5.3 An appeal letter must be received within 15 working days of the date of the adaptations refusal letter.

2.5.4 All appeals will have an independent review by the Operations Directors for Assets and Customer First. A response will be provided within 28 days of receipt of the appeal letter.

2.5.5 Following conclusion of the review the DLS will write to the customer within five working days informing them of the outcome.

2.6 Roles and Responsibilities

2.5.1 The **Disability Living Service** co-ordinate all requests for aids and adaptations and work with the FCHO Housing Advice Team to consider re-housing options where appropriate. The DLS will:

- Ensure that minor aids and adaptations and related works are progressed in line with the policy.

- Work in partnership with external agencies in order to support the provision of aids and adaptations (e.g. Local Authorities, COTT, Health Service, etc.).
- Make referrals to the COTT where required.
- Commission the Asset Investment Delivery Team to undertake a feasibility study for major adaptations that require structural changes.
- Liaise with the customer to consider re-housing needs where this is the most viable option.
- Review all requests for major adaptations in collaboration with the Adaptations Panel and progress accordingly.

2.6.2 **Property Care** will manage the installation of all minor aids and adaptations to FCHO Properties. These will be delivered by a Trusted Assessor.

2.6.3 The **Asset Investment Strategy Team** will consider whether a property is suitable for any complex major adaptations and manage all aids and adaptations related data.

2.6.4 The **Investment Delivery Team** will carry out feasibility studies on proposed major adaptations that require structural changes. Once approved, they will manage all major adaptations to FCHO properties, hold and manage the budgets for all aids and adaptations and ensure that invoices are raised to the local authority for their contribution to the costs.

2.6.5 The **Compliance Team** will ensure that all specialist equipment that is the responsibility of FCHO is maintained, serviced and all statutory inspections are completed.

2.6.6 The **Finance Team** will report on spend against budget and that the overall spend is within the annual budget.

2.7 Support to Move

2.6.1 When FCHO customers move to a property that meets their identified needs rather than have a major adaptation undertaken, FCHO may provide both practical and financial assistance. This will be managed by the DLS and the support offered by the scheme can include:

- Removal costs
- Storage costs
- Assistance with packing

2.6.2 A support package may also be offered to a customer releasing an adapted property where the adaptations are no longer required and where the property can meet the identified needs of another customer.

2.8 Right to Buy (RTB), Right to Acquire (RTA) and Succession

- 2.8.1 If the property meets the requirements in the schedule five of the Housing Act 1985 FCHO reserve the right to refuse an application for Right to Buy (RTB) or RTA Right to Acquire (RTA) for adapted properties.
- 2.8.2 FCHO will not process any requests for aids and adaptations where a current application for Right to Buy (RTB) or Right to Acquire (RTA) is active.
- 2.8.3 Where a Right of Succession applies and the property has adaptations or is otherwise unsuitable for the remaining customer, FCHO will seek to make reasonable offers of alternative accommodation, rather than remove major adaptations.
- 2.8.4 FCHO reserves the right to refuse requests for the removal of adaptations, pending condition, type of adaptation and lifecycle of the adaptation.

3 Monitoring Performance.

- 3.1 Delivery of aids and adaptations will be reported on a monthly basis detailing financial expenditure, delivery timescales and customer satisfaction against the Operational Performance Indicators detailed below. Performance will be monitored by the Aids and Adaptations Panel.

Performance Measure	Target 20/21	Target 21/22	Target 22/23
Minor adaptations completed in time (20 days)	95%	98%	100%
Customer satisfaction with minor adaptations	90%	92%	93%
Major adaptations completed in time (6 months)	95%	98%	100%
Customer satisfaction with major adaptations	90%	92%	93%

4 Legislation and other Guidelines

- 4.1 As a registered provider of social housing, FCHO's provision to customers is regulated by the Regulator of Social Housing. The Home Standard, states that:

Registered providers shall ensure a prudent, planned approach to repairs and maintenance of homes and communal areas. This should demonstrate an appropriate balance of planned and responsive repairs, and value for money.

The approach should include: responsive and cyclical repairs, planned and capital work, work on empty properties and adaptations.

4.2 This Aids and Adaptations Policy ensures FCHO complies with the relevant legislation. The main provisions of the legislation which the policy is subject to is set out below:

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Housing Act 2004 (Housing Health and Safety Rating System)
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- LOLER (Lifting Operation Lifting Equipment Regulations)
- Regulatory Consumer Standards

5. **Links to First Choice Home's Strategic Delivery Plan (SDP)**

This policy links to the area of 'Excellent Landlord' within the Strategic Delivery Plan and could impact on the following measures:

KPIs:

Excellent Landlord - Percentage of overall satisfaction
Percentage of overall complaints received

Business Assurance - Compliance measures

The policy links to the following strategic risks:

Failure to meet landlord health, safety and compliance requirements.