



## **Clydebank Housing Association Limited**

### Social Work Adaptations Policy

Housing Management/Maintenance Sub- Committee submission:	16 August 2016
Approved:	16 August 2016
Review date:	August 2019

This policy can be made available on request in a variety of different formats, such as on tape, in large print and translated into other languages.

## **Introduction**

Even when their health and/or mobility deteriorates most people prefer to remain in their own home for as long as possible. By adapting existing properties Clydebank Housing Association (CHA) hopes to assist its tenants in achieving this goal. Additionally, it is recognised that provision of an adapted home will often facilitate a quicker release from hospital.

Nonetheless there are considerations regarding cost, availability of funds and the best use of stock that must also be addressed.

This policy aims to set out the basis on which we will enable people with medical needs to adapt their house to meet their needs whilst also protecting our wider responsibilities as a landlord.

## **Aims & objectives**

The main aims and objectives associated with carrying out medical adaptations are as follows:-

- Support independence, privacy and dignity by enabling tenants to live in their own home, or another suitable property, by facilitating adaptations that enable proper use of the property and its facilities.
- Ensure the best use of CHA housing stock by taking measures to encourage tenants to move to a suitable property in preference to their own property being adapted wherever possible and/or practical.
- Carry out adaptation works only on receipt of an appropriate referral from West Dunbartonshire Council's Social Work Department's Occupational Therapists.(OT)
- Carry out works in priority order as determined by the OT's needs assessment score.
- Acknowledge that in some instances construction type and financial constraints may prohibit the successful adaptation of a property.
- Ensure that any government or other grant monies are spent as speedily and efficiently as possible and within the timeframe that they have been allocated for.
- Review policies, procedures and systems regularly to ensure they are up to date and reflect current best practice guidance and legislation.
- Record and report on adaptations carried out and on costs.
- Keep records of all adapted houses and the nature of the adaptations.

## **Scottish Housing Regulator guidance on medical adaptations**

The Scottish Housing Regulator classifies adaptations into three groups:-

- a) Stage 1 – design features which are not specific to a condition or an individual and which are incorporated into the initial specification prior to construction or improvement.

- b) Stage 2 – adaptations to a house to meet the particular needs of a tenant to whom the property has been allocated before, or close to, practical completion. These adaptations may be completed by the original contractor.
- c) Stage 3 – works to adapt a property to suit the changing needs of the existing tenant, or of a new tenant, where these could not reasonable have been identified when the house was originally provided.

Applications for Stage 1 and Stage 2 adaptations funding will normally be included in main scheme submissions at the time of development. This policy concentrates on Stage 3 adaptations.

## **Funding**

The Association is asked to submit a request for funding an on annual basis by the Scottish Government. This request will reflect any known requirements (outstanding referrals) and will take into account historic expenditure. The Association is then allocated an amount of grant (HAG) by the Scottish Government to spend on medical adaptations.

It should be noted that owner occupiers and sharing owners are excluded from HAG funding for adaptations as they are eligible for financial assistance towards the costs from the local authority i.e. West Dunbartonshire Council.

## **Type of adaptations carried out by the Association**

The following indicates the types of adaptations most commonly carried out and which we would expect to be eligible for grant funding. The list is not exhaustive and all referrals received by the Social Work Department's Occupational Therapists will be considered.

- Level access tray (LAT) with shower
- Wet floor shower
- Shower over bath
- Lever taps
- Access ramps
- Internal & external handrails
- Additional door entry handset
- Widening or re-hanging of doors
- Support rails for bath / shower
- Non-slip or tactile surfaces
- Sensory aids for visually/hearing impaired e.g., smoke alarms, vibrating pads, flashing beacons

## **Type of adaptations not carried out by the Association**

West Dunbartonshire Council's Social Work Department is responsible for the provision of items classed as specialist or temporary including:-

- Specialist bathing equipment

- Raised toilet seats
- Stair and / or bath lifts

### **Assessing and prioritising needs**

The Association does not have the knowledge or skills to assess what adaptations a tenant may need and therefore this service is carried out by an OT. Where a tenant requests an adaptation from the Association directly, the Association will advise them that they must request a medical assessment via their GP / OT to enable a formal referral to be made.

The OT will allocate points to each applicant, depending on the level of urgency of need and the Association will maintain a list of applicants graded in priority order of OT scores. This list, together with practical and cost considerations, will determine the order in which adaptations are carried out, always assuming that the property has been deemed suitable for the adaptation.

Should a tenant's circumstances change, whilst they are on the waiting list, their points level may be reviewed by the OT and an updated referral received.

Due to the limited funding available, it may only be possible to progress referrals above a minimum points level. This minimum may vary and will be determined by the number of cases on the waiting list and the funds available. Where referrals score below this minimum they will be retained on a "reserve list" but will be considered only if additional resources become available.

### **Suitability of the adaptation for the property**

Whilst the Association recognises the validity of the needs and wishes of individuals, and the skills of the OT in assessing an individual's needs, both these processes are focussed solely on the individual and their needs. The Association must also take into account its duty to safeguard its stock and funds and therefore its business and its ability to re-let adapted properties once they are vacated.

The details of our policy on the suitability of adaptations to the property are:-

- We will only fit wet floor showers in ground floor properties.
- We will only fit LAT's with showers in ground floor properties with the exception of our multi-storey flats at Radnor Park (full lift access) or where the property is classed as "amenity".
- Where any other physical barriers exist which are likely to negate the benefit of the adaptation.

### **Value added tax**

VAT exemption will be claimed where applicable. In such circumstances the tenant will be required to sign a VAT exemption certificate, provided by CHA, and this will be forwarded to the relevant contractor carrying out the adaptation works.

## **Assistance to move to an already adapted property**

If households who require high cost adaptations can move to a house that already has an adaptation that is suitable for their medical needs then this is a financial saving in both the short and the long term as well as a more efficient use of housing stock. In view of the limited funding and the consequent fact that many households have to be placed on a waiting list, moving to another property may resolve the needs of the household more quickly.

In order to encourage and facilitate such moves CHA can offer assistance to tenants who need a high cost adaptation and who move to another CHA property that has already been adapted.

Examples of adaptations that are high cost are level access and wet floor showers and ramps. Examples of adaptations that are not high cost are lever taps and handrails. However, it will always be the Association's decision as to whether the adaptations that are required are or are not high cost and therefore whether removal assistance can be offered. The Association's assessment will also influence the level of assistance offered which may include:-

- House removal costs (to a maximum value of £500)
- Reconnection of landline telephone
- White goods disconnected and reconnected
- Other costs might be considered on an individual basis depending on needs

If a tenant is in arrears of rent or other charges then the assistance package would still normally be offered. However, if the property that is to be vacated has been abused and significant rechargeable repairs would be necessary before the property could be re-let then the offer of the package is discretionary.

There will be a total annual budget of £2,500 for assistance packages and this amount will be reviewed by the Housing Management/Maintenance Sub-Committee on an annual basis.

## **Re-letting adapted properties**

Where an adapted property is vacated the Association will always endeavour to allocate it to a household that will benefit from the adaptation, using nominations and referrals from other approved agencies if necessary.

If this fails then the Association will attempt to let the property to a household that will accept the adaptation.

## **Allocations**

In general we will not approve a waiting list allocation, nomination, internal transfer or mutual exchange where it will create an immediate requirement for adaptations expenditure. Making such an offer will only be considered where it generates a very clear improvement in the applicant's living circumstances or where the expenditure that would be required if the applicant did not move would be greater. This

consideration would particularly apply if the applicant was already living in an adapted property.

The Association expects to allocate properties that are suitable for the applicant's needs and therefore no adaptations will be accepted for a period of twelve months following the allocation unless the need for the adaptation was approved at the time of the allocation or the person needing the adaptation has had a substantial change in medical circumstances that could not have been foreseen by the household at the time of allocation.

### **Reporting and monitoring**

A report will be presented to the Housing Management/Maintenance Sub-Committee on a quarterly basis highlighting information as detailed below:-

- The number and types of adaptations completed
- The total expenditure, HAG claimed/unclaimed
- The number of outstanding referrals
- The number of approved/unapproved applications

### **Review of policy**

The policy will be reviewed every three years or sooner if required by statutory, regulatory or best practice requirements.

### **Appeal procedure**

Any tenant who wishes to have an adaptations decision reviewed has the right of appeal.

Where a decision is disputed a written appeal should be made within 28 days of receiving the decision.

The Housing Management/Maintenance Sub-Committee will review the decision and if it is upheld written reasons will be given. If there has been a factual error that justifies reversing the decision, the appeal will be upheld.

If, following an appeal, the tenant is still dissatisfied recourse can be sought through the Association's Complaints Handling Procedure.

### **Equal opportunities**

Clydebank Housing Association will ensure equality of opportunity across the full range of our activities, including both employment and service provision.

We will not discriminate on the grounds of Age, Disability, Gender Reassignment, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Pregnancy and Maternity, Race, Religion or Belief, Sex and Sexual Orientation.

## For Office Use Only – Actions

Customer Consultation Required/Arranged	Yes
Intranet Update	Yes
F Drive Update	Yes
Website Update	Yes
Leaflet change required?	No
Newsletter Promotion?	Yes
Other information updated, e.g. posters, automatic email responses, post cards, answering machine messages, etc.	No
Equality Impact Assessment completed	Yes