



North
Northamptonshire
Council

Aids and Adaptations Policy for Council Tenants 2021

Purpose

The purpose of the Aids and Adaptations Policy (the 'Policy') for council tenants and their immediate household is to outline how the Council will support them to remain as long as possible independently in their current home and carry out essential daily activities which may be hampered by long-term health issues or disability, or, if this is not possible or practical, to assist them in finding suitable alternative accommodation.

This policy:

- States clearly how new aids and adaptations requests will be accessed, considered, prioritised, approved or rejected.
- Makes best use of existing adaptations in council properties through the reallocation of those properties to those with needs most closely meeting the property attributes.
- Specifies threshold indicators and limits relating to types of adaptations
- Indicates what support can be offered in terms of re-housing to more suitable accommodation when an option appraisal make the application nonviable for the existing dwelling or its occupants.
- States clearly which adaptations will not be funded
- States clearly how tenants will be made aware of their responsibility to contribute towards the costs, if this applies where adaptations will cost more than the maximum limit the council will fund.

This policy is based on private sector housing policy and the legislation which governs the implementation of major adaptations made from the Disabled Facilities Grants under the "Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996" and aims to provide a consistent service across all housing tenures.

North Northamptonshire Council (NNC) as a landlord meets the cost to supply and fit aids and adaptations to council homes. These costs are met through the Councils Housing Revenue account. We will do all we can to ensure there is sufficient funding to meet the needs of tenants, however this may not always be possible.

Local Context

- The council owns and manages approximately 8450 properties and relets on average 600 each year. Accommodation comprises of a variety of houses flats bungalows and maisonettes suitable for all applicants and 980 homes in sheltered schemes. As at January 2021 approximately 35% of active applicants registered on Keyways, are waiting for a property which is adapted to meet their needs.
- Around 2000 homes are currently adapted with at least one major adaptation) within the council's stock. There are very limited number of purpose built or fully adapted properties; these properties have widened doorways, a level access shower and are fully accessible to wheelchair users.
- There has been sustained investment into the provision of aids and adaptations enabling people to remain safely within their own homes and maximising their independence.

With an ageing population and people living longer with managed medical conditions as a result of better health care it is expected that demand for adaptations will continue to rise.

In 2018/19, 73 major adaptations were completed in council homes costing £545,000.
In 2019/20, 79 major adaptations were completed in council homes costing £581,000.

Legal and Regulatory Framework

In determining this policy, regard has been given to the Council's Allocations Policy alongside the Regulatory Framework for Social Landlords, which states that Registered Providers shall:

- Offer tenancies or terms of occupation which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community and the efficient use of their housing stock.
- Co-operate with the local authorities' strategic housing function and their duties to meet identified local housing needs. This includes assistance with the local authorities' homelessness duties and through meeting obligations in nominations agreements.
- Co-operate with relevant organisations to provide an adaptations service that meets tenants' needs.
- Develop and deliver services to address under-occupation and overcrowding in their homes within the resources available to them. These services should be focused on the needs of the tenants and will offer choices to them.
- Provide tenants wishing to move with access to clear and relevant information about their housing options.

The Equality Act 2010 includes a duty for public bodies when carrying out their functions to have due regard to promoting equality. Discrimination on grounds of disability can be justified in law if the council has appropriately balanced the needs of the person with a disability and those of others in need of accommodation. Making better overall use of the limited housing stock we have with meeting all applicant needs, including those with disabilities, is a legitimate aim.

The Equality Act 2010 'Duty to make Reasonable Adjustments' applies to Landlords and Managers of rented premises or premises available to rent. This duty is not anticipatory – it only arises if NNC are requested to make an adjustment by a person to whom the premises are let or by someone on their behalf.

There is no legal requirement under the Equality Act for NNC to make any changes to residential rented premises which would consist of or include the removal, alteration or addition to a physical feature of the property.

The cost of adaptations and the suitability of the current accommodation (including under occupation) are relevant factors when considering proportionality. Alternative means of meeting needs other than adapting the current property include transfers to more suitable accommodation or tenants contributing to costs.

Under the terms of this policy, a person is regarded as being disabled if they have a physical, sensory or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities within their home. A long-term effect refers to disabilities that have lasted for at least 12 months, or which are likely to last for the remainder of a person's life.

Scope

This policy covers two areas

- Part 1 - Adapting existing homes
- Part 2 - Allocation of and best use of existing stock currently part or fully adapted to meet housing demand

The policy recognises the impact aids and adaptations in and around the home can have in helping someone with a disability to maximise their independence. The policy also recognises that alternatives to the provision of new adaptations will be explored with the tenant and their household and in some cases tenants may have to move to more suitable accommodation.

This policy confirms the council's commitment to meeting the needs of tenants, which may change over time, as well as effectively using the council's existing housing stock and ensuring a fair distribution of aids and adaptations within finite resources.

Whilst the needs of tenants will be given proper consideration it is inevitable that the use of the councils housing stock must additionally be considered in parallel to ensure that all applicants and tenants are being fairly treated particularly where the nature of the adaptation is substantial.

The council acknowledges that the timely provision of minor adaptations can often sustain the independence of tenants and postpone the need for substantial major adaptations. The provision of minor adaptations is therefore seen as an important preventative service.

Part 1- Adapting existing homes

1. Policy Details

1.1 This policy covers a number of related activities including:

- Option appraisal and feasibility of recommendations received from the Community Occupational Therapy Service.
- Commissioning and installation of aids and adaptations to council properties.
- Appropriate removal and reuse of aids and adaptations in council properties.
- Developing and maintaining an adapted council property list to support new applications for council property.
- Supporting tenants through the various stages of the aids and adaptations process.
- Receiving and prioritising new applications for re-housing from existing tenants requiring adapted or accessible housing solutions.
- Appropriately allocating adapted council properties.
- Assessment of new applications for housing

This policy specifically refers to disabled adaptations to properties managed by the council in its capacity as landlord. This policy does not extend to home owners, leaseholders or tenants applying for aids and adaptations to private sector or other social rented properties; such assistance is available through Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG).

2. Eligibility

2.1 Who Qualifies and who doesn't?

Aids and Adaptations will only be considered for CBC tenants, their partner or a member of the immediate family who is permanently resident in the household.

And

Have an impairment which has a significant long term effect on their ability to

- Carry out normal day-day activities in and around their home
- Access essential facilities within their home

2.2 Adaptations for children of tenants will only be completed at the property which is the principal home.

2.3 Major Adaptations will not be approved for individuals who are waiting for medical procedures which will improve mobility until their expected recovery is complete. Adaptations will be considered when a tenant is waiting to be discharged from hospital and require their current homes to be adapted, however it may not be possible for them to be completed prior to discharge.

2.4 Adaptations will not be carried out for lodgers or temporary visitors.

2.5 Generally adaptations will be carried out where a secure tenancy is held, although consideration will be given if tenants are introductory tenants. If the tenancy is in its introductory period and is less than 12 months old adaptations may not be carried out if the tenant failed to declare that they or a member of their household had a pre-existing disability where it would have been reasonable for them to do so.

2.6 Requests for major adaptations will not be approved where a Right-to-Buy application has been received. Tenants in these cases will be signposted to the assistance available through the council's DFG programme once they have completed the purchase of their home.

- 2.7 Tenants seeking to Transfer or Mutual Exchange will be considered on their individual merit and whether they are leaving or going to a suitably adapted property will form part of this consideration.
- 2.8 The council will not progress with an adaptation where possession proceedings have commenced or a possession order is already in place.
- 2.9 We will only consider carrying out major adaptations that have been recommended by the Community Occupational Therapy Service.

3. The Application Process for Adaptations

- 3.1 How to enquire or make an application – tenants should:

Contact their Housing Officer, Doctor or other health professional to complete a referral, tenants can also self refer by completing an application for assessment available on the Council's website or the website of Northamptonshire County Council. <http://www3.northamptonshire.gov.uk/councilservices/adult-social-care/living-at-home/Pages/equipment.aspx> **needs confirming post apr 21**

Tenants can also telephone the Occupational Therapy Service on 01604 366000, needs confirming.

Once a referral is received and reviewed by the Community Occupational Therapy Service they will contact the tenant from which is usually by telephone to undertake an initial screening. An appointment to visit (if required) will be made with the tenant to identify any adaptations that are necessary, appropriate and qualifying. If a need for adaptations is identified the Community Occupational Therapy Service will in turn send a written recommendation to the Council for consideration.

4. Qualification for Adaptations

- 4.1 An assessment of needs, by an Occupational Therapist must be undertaken for all major adaptations identifying any necessary and appropriate adaptations required to meet the needs of the disabled person. Following the assessment the Occupational Therapist will provide a written recommendation to the council. The council is not bound by law to undertake all or any of the recommendation(s). The recommendation is used as a tool to trigger and consider a tenant's need.

The council must be satisfied that the recommended works are:

- Reasonable Feasible and Practicable with regard to the type, age and condition of the dwelling
- Necessary and appropriate to meet the needs and prognosis of the disabled occupant, having regard for end of life care protocols.

For example, the council would not normally provide a level access shower to a first floor flat unless there was lift access to the first floor. The council will also consider the wider impact of the requested adaptation in relation to issues such as others in the family tenancy, regular visitors to the property, under-occupancy levels. It should be noted that some of the council's properties are unsuitable by design for adaptation.

If a tenant has expressed the intention to move from the property, e.g. by way of transfer, mutual exchange or other method, the council may decide not to approve major adaptations at their current property. However, each application will be considered on its individual merit.

5. Types of Assistance Available

There are three categories of Aids and Adaptations for existing tenants covered by this policy.

5.1 Equipment and Aids

Provided a tenant meets the Fair Access to Care (FACS) criteria, Health or the Community Occupational Therapy Service will provide a range of freestanding portable or medical aids suitable for the functional requirements for including:

- Portable Hoists, Hospital Beds, Toilet frames and Specialist seats
- Bed levers Wheelchairs Shower chairs Chair risers
- Walking frames, Reaching devices Door entry systems

5.2 Minor Adaptations

Works which cost £1,000 or less.

The provision of these adaptations may be based on the recommendation of an Occupational Therapist whilst assessing for major adaptations or be requested by a tenant direct to NNC.

Examples of minor adaptations include:

- Grab rails Hand rails Lever taps Stair rails Bath lifts
- Lowering/repositioning of light switches and sockets (wheelchair users only)
- Steps Small ramps or removable ramps
- Flashing or amplified doorbells Door and wall protectors

5.3 Major Adaptations

Major adaptations are works that cost over £1,000 and usually involve structural alterations, improvements to, or additions to the fabric of the property. For all Major adaptations a written recommendation from an Occupational therapist must be received.

Major adaptations are provided in line with the provisions of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 for disabled facilities grants (DFG) and in summary help to facilitate:

- Access to and from the home.
- Making the dwelling or building safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with him/her.
- Access to a room used or usable as the principal family room.
- Access to or providing for the disabled occupant, a room for sleeping.
- Access to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room(s) in which there is a lavatory, a shower and or bath, a wash hand basin, or facilitating the use of such facilities by the disabled occupant.
- The preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant.

- Improving/providing a heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the disabled occupant.
- The use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of one or more means of access to or control of that source or by providing additional means of control.
- Access and movement by the disabled occupant around the dwelling in order to enable him/her to care for a person who is normally resident in the dwelling and is in need of such care.
- Facilitating access to and from a garden by a disabled occupant

Examples of major adaptations include:

- Level access showers Large permanent ramps Door widening Stair lifts
- Kitchen refurbishment with low level units (appliances excluded)
- Through floor lifts Tracked Hoists (works associated with strengthening the structure and additional electric points only – hoists are a medical aid)
- Swing doors or doors operated electrically Extensions – Ground floor level only

6. Threshold Indicators and Options Appraisal Process for Major Adaptations

In assessing the recommendations received from the Community Occupational Therapy Service the council will consider in more detail a number of factors and threshold indicators to establish if it is willing to proceed. To do this it will undertake an Options appraisal process which includes.

Establishing if the aids and adaptations are feasible, reasonable and practicable.

Gathering further information, undertake home visits, site visits, case conferences with key professionals.

Identify if any threshold indicators have been reached, and if they have, recommend an options appraisal be undertaken

- 6.1 On deciding whether it is reasonable and practicable to undertake major adaptations the council will consider the following a number of threshold indicators:

The Building/ Property

- The age and structural condition of the property. Existing adaptations at the property.
- Cost of adaptations necessary to make the property suitable.
- Length of time the adaptation will take and incumbent void rent loss.
- Property constraints in terms of its adaptability
- If the adaptation is for a level access shower in a first floor flat the means of accessing the flat
- Where works would require planning permission or building regulation approval which has not been, or would not be, granted
- Whether adaptations make the best use of the council's housing stock and future let ability of a property
- Whether adaptations affect the amenity of the area for other residents
- Whether there is a 2nd reception room which could be utilised as a bedroom /bathroom when a stairlift and wet room to the 1st floor is being recommended

The Demand

- Property type and demand.
- Availability of suitable alternative adapted or part adapted accommodation.
- A suitable, alternative adapted property is offered and refused
- Whether the property is a ground floor home in a block of flats
- Whether the property is a bungalow

The Person/ The tenancy

- Availability of the disabled person's existing support network and carers
- Affordability (rent increase and under occupation for instance)
- The tenants intentions regarding the long term use of the property
- Where the council is taking possession proceedings against the tenant for example, for rent arrears (in line with general needs transfer requests) and anti-social behaviour
- Any competing needs of different members of the family.
- Whether the property and proposed adaptations will meet the long-term needs of the disabled person.
- Current occupancy of a property, for example is it under-occupied or will it be over occupied on completion
- The request is to address specialist medical needs of an individual other than basic needs (Example of specialist needs: **self washing facilities**, hospital beds or hoists)

6.2 An options appraisal process will automatically apply to cases that hit one or more of the following triggers but may also be referred through the process if a large number of other threshold indicators are in question:

- a) Where the property is currently under or over-occupied or will become under or over-occupied if the adaptations are undertaken
- b) Where a possession order has been obtained or is in the process of being obtained
- c) Where the estimated cost of adapting a property is £2,000 or above
- d) The property cannot be adapted because of design constraints
- e) If there are likely to be excessive costs

Levels of decision making

Team	Amount	Major	Minor
Maintenance Team	£1000	√	√
Maintenance Team/Housing Services	£2000	√	√
Maintenance Team/Housing Services	£2-5000	√	
Housing Manager	£5-8000	√	
Housing Manager Head of Housing	£8-12000	√	
HM HOD LMH	£12-15000	√	
Board Approval	£15000 plus	√	

The options appraisal will be undertaken by the Housing Services Team. A short report with officer recommendations on the options available will be presented to the Head of Housing Services for adaptations costing over £8000 but less than £12000. When adaptations are estimated to cost between £12000 and £15000 the Lead Member for Housing will also consider the report. Board Approval will be required for adaptations costing more than £15,000.

Consideration will be given to whether any extensive adaptation work would be the best use of the current housing stock or would negatively affect the future let ability of the property or would prove to be prohibitively expensive.

Before extensive adaptations are carried out to a property other options will always be considered. These options include the possibility of better use of space within the existing footprint of the property, for example utilising a second reception room/dining room, or whether a move to a more suitable property would resolve the need for adaptations and present a better long term solution for the applicant. Only one main family room is necessary to meet a households needs and the council may consider the use of one of any additional reception rooms in a property to provide adaptations.

Tenants will be expected to remain in their adapted property if it is reasonable for them to do so.

Where ever possible the council will seek to carry out the most cost effective adaptation to the property which adequately meets the applicant and households needs, this usually means that an adaptation is carried out within the existing footprint and structure.

The options appraisal will make a decision as to whether the adaptations will be undertaken or recommend/approve an alternative option.

7. Funding and Prioritisation of Adaptations

- 7.1 The council will normally only fund major adaptations up to a maximum limit of £30,000. The maximum is set in line with DFG limits, currently £30,000. Anything not being funded by the council, e.g. over the maximum limit, or having a client contribution, will need to be funded by other means. In such circumstances, the council will discuss with the tenant the options of self-funding, alternative funding available or re-housing
- 7.2 An options appraisal will be invoked for all adaptations over £2,000
- 7.3 The annual funding budget for aids and adaptations is a fixed amount, with demand often exceeding the financial resources available. Therefore, the council will prioritise the demand in a way that best meets the greatest needs. All major adaptations are subject to budget availability.
- 7.4 Prioritisation of adaptations will be by means of a waiting list and the Occupational Therapists assessment of how critical and urgent the adaptation is. In general terms, this means dealing with the highest priority cases first and will take into account the length of time a person has been waiting. Should funds be depleted the council will inform tenants who are awaiting an adaptation to explain the position and give an indication as to how long they are likely to have to wait. Where necessary, the council will also work with the tenant to explore alternative options such as re-housing or other sources of funding.

8. Approval of works

If adaptations qualify and are considered the most appropriate solution, the council will:

- 8.1 Instruct the production of any schemes, costs and drawings as necessary.
- 8.2 Ensure relevant permissions are obtained.

- 8.3 Approve the undertaking of such work with relevant contractors.
- 8.4 Agree and implement where applicable the need to reclassify the property in terms of adaptations undertaken and any reduction in bedrooms due to the adaptations.
- 8.5 Work with relevant partners, to facilitate the adaptations to properties.
- 8.6 Add the recommendation to the waiting list.
- 8.7 Inform the tenant of the outcome.

9. Timescales

The council will look to facilitate a tenants discharge from hospital by fast tracking approved recommendations in order to minimise any delay to ensure they are able to return home as quickly as possible and prevent bed blocking where adequate notice, communication and information has been received.

Under normal circumstances and the financial resources being available the council will aim to complete all approved major adaptation recommendations within 9 months of receipt of the recommendation. Cases will be dealt with in date order. The council will aim to complete Critical timeframe cases within 3 months, urgent cases may take up to 6 months. Cases for minor adaptations may take up to 2 months.

10. Exclusions

The following are examples of aids and adaptations that will not be funded:

- 10.1 Adaptations for the use of or storage of mobility scooters.
- 10.2 Vehicular access, hard standings and driveways.
- 10.3 Certain pieces of non-specialist fixtures or equipment and appliances will not be classed as aids and adaptations. In general, this applies where the fixture, equipment, or appliance has the same use for another occupant who is not disabled. For example ovens and hobs and other appliances forming part of an adapted kitchen.
- 10.4 Safe play areas inside or outside.
- 10.5 Extensions and loft conversions would only be considered if a suitably sized property did not exist in the councils housing stock
- 10.6 If the proposed adaptation results in the disabled person still being unable to access a significant proportion of the home
- 10.7 The request is to address specialist medical needs of an individual other than basic needs (Example of **specialist needs: self washing facilities, hospital beds or hoists**)

11. Tenants Contribution towards Major Adaptations

Tenants will be subject to “test of resources” this is to ensure this policy is more reflective of the test of resources calculation applied to DFG applicants.

Where a tenant has a contribution to make towards works over the maximum limit or in relation to preferred choice, this will be discussed with them. Any costs not funded by the Council must be paid for prior to works commencing.

In the majority of cases tenants will make no contribution to the cost of an adaptation. However, the rent will be increased on all new or replacement adaptations to cover the costs annual servicing, testing and maintenance. Rent increases will also be made where the structure of the building is increased in size or internal modifications are undertaken to accommodate additional aids that would result in an increase in future maintenance costs.

Any voids being returned into stock with adaptations which are to remain will have the rent increase implemented where they currently do not exist.

Adaptation	Rent Increase per week
Stair lift	£1.33
Through Floor Lifts	£2.70
Tracked Hoists	£1.53
Extension	£3.50
Loft Conversion	£3.50
Additional Bedroom	£2.80
Integral or attached Garage Conversion	£1.80

Service charges and rent increases will be subject to review.

12. Undertaking Major Adaptation Work

Where the Council is funding adaptation works, partially or in full, the council will contract these works through its Maintenance team and their relevant specialist contractors.

13. Adaptations to Common Parts/Communal Access

Common parts relate to those areas outside of an individual dwelling but within the structure of the building, for example, entrance hallways or communal staircases to blocks of flats. Communal access relates to shared access to a group of properties, for example, shared paths and steps. Stair lifts on communal stairwells will not be installed.

Aids and adaptations to common parts and communal areas including handrails or ramps to a shared path will be reviewed on a case by case basis via an option appraisal. The council will take into account of the health, safety and needs of all affected occupants.

14. Installing Own Aids and Adaptations – Permissions

In some circumstances tenants may wish to install their own aids and adaptations such as showers over baths or stair lifts. The Council will need to give the tenant permission in writing, through the Alterations and Improvements application process, for adaptations they wish to make to the property before the work is undertaken.

When tenants wish to install their own aids and adaptations and before work begins the Maintenance Team will advise on the application and where they are of a technical nature, these will not normally be maintained by the Council, therefore the tenant will be responsible for any servicing or repairs costs that are required as a result of the

adaptation. Any Planning or Building Regulation fees and costs will be met by the tenant if applicable.

In the case of tenant installed aids and adaptations, at the end of the tenancy the tenant will be required to remove them and make good any damage to the property. Alternatively, the Council may agree to take responsibility for the aid or adaptation. The tenant will be required to sign over ownership free of charge and cannot lay claim later. Agreement to accept any aid or adaptation will be dependent on its age, condition and demand.

15. Maintenance and servicing

- 15.1 On relet of any adapted property there will be routine inspection and maintenance undertaken of the aids and adaptations in place.
- 15.2 Certain aids and adaptations will be subject to agreed servicing and maintenance programmes. This generally applies to large pieces of equipment including stair lifts, through floor lifts, step lifts, showers and fixed tracked hoists.
- 15.3 Tenants will be expected to allow reasonable access to enable servicing and maintenance of aids and adaptations. Should this not be permitted, tenants may be liable for the cost of any deterioration or fault which is attributed to the inability to perform necessary servicing and maintenance.
- 15.4 Tenants may also be liable for charges in the case of inappropriate call outs or aborted pre-arranged visits
- 15.5 After 12 months maintenance/repair of new major adaptations to the structure of a property will be undertaken as responsive repairs.

16. Removal of Aids and Adaptations

- 16.1 An aid or adaptation to a property that has been funded by the council is owned by the council and must not be removed by the tenant during or at the end of their tenancy. If a tenant removes an adaptation without approval they will be recharged the full cost of replacing it.
- 16.2 In some circumstances where an aid or adaptation is no longer required, the council will consider removing **it if it may be used in another home. Otherwise, it will be left in place.**

If an aid or adaptation is no longer working and beyond reasonable repair then approval will be given for it to be removed following a reassessment of need. The council will not normally remove structural adaptations to a property, for example ramping, widened doors or level access showers and wet rooms.

- 16.3 NNC reserve the right to remove adaptations in void properties if this is viewed as the best use of its resources to meet local housing need.

Part 2 – Allocation of and best use of existing stock currently part or fully adapted to meet housing demand

17. Allocation Managing and Re-letting of properties – this policy:

- 17.1 Identifies the appropriate matching of applicants needs on the housing register to adapted and void properties via the keyways allocation scheme.
- 17.2 Requires acceptance of the adapted property 'as is', unless a new tenant's disability at a later stage require it to be altered.
- 17.3 Ensures the adapted property list will be kept up to date.
- 17.4 Considers if current adapted properties make best use of available stock
- 17.5 Provides financial help to existing tenants where a move to more suitable accommodation is the most appropriate option.
- 17.6 Allows the Direct Matching of adapted properties to meet current tenants needs when a decision has been reached not to adapt the tenants current home

18 Re-lets, Matching Need and Re-housing

Adapted Properties List

- 18.1 A list of adapted properties confirming the type of purpose built or part adapted council accommodation detailing the type of adaptations by area, will be kept up to date by Housing Services Team and shared with the Housing Options Team. Keyways adverts will clearly describe adaptations to interested bidders
- 18.2 The Housing Maintenance Team will provide details of adaptations undertaken once complete
- 18.3 Allocation of properties will be based on the criteria set out in the Council's current Allocations Policy except when a direct match is required to meet the needs of a current tenant
- 18.4 It is expected that there will be appropriate matching of applicants' needs on the housing register to an adapted void property to ensure best use of the Council's facilities and resources. This could mean a part adapted property could be offered that doesn't meet exact needs but could do with additional adaptations. An example of this includes where a wet room has been installed in a 1st floor bathroom which would meet bathing needs however due to mobility problems accessing it would be difficult. With the provision of a stair lift the property would meet all essential needs.

Accessible Housing List

- 18.5 The Housing Options Manager will keep a list of applicants requiring an adapted property detailing what is required, this will be shared with the Housing Services Manager.
- 18.6 The Housing Services Manager will share details of any approved Direct Match tenant for whom the decision has been made not to adapt their current property

19 Direct Matching /Discretionary Lets

- 19.1 If a property becomes vacant and has extensive or specific adaptations, the decision may be made not to advertise the property and offer a direct/discretionary let. The decision will be made by the Housing Options Manager and Housing Services Manager to meet the needs of those on the Accessible Housing List. Properties may be offered directly to a current tenant waiting for adaptations to their current home where the need has become urgent and an options appraisal identifies reasons not to proceed adapting the current home or a Keyways waiting list applicant who can make full use of the adaptations and to date no properties have become available which would suit their needs.
- 19.2 The council will hold a list of all the applicants who require extensive or specific adaptations. When a property is identified as not being suitable for a normal let an attempt can will be made to match it to the applicant most in need, based on priority banding and waiting time.
- 19.3 The council reserves the right to withdraw adapted properties from the lettings list as appropriate to meet urgent unmet demand.

20 Letting adapted properties

- 20.1 If a person requiring adaptations applies to join the housing register, they may, after being assessed be granted priority banding for any suitable adapted properties in line with the current Councils allocation scheme.
- 20.2 If a tenant no longer requires the adaptations and would prefer to move from an adapted property to an un-adapted home, the council will consider awarding priority if it has someone else who needs that type of adapted home.
- 20.3 Future tenants must accept the adapted property 'as is', unless after taking up the tenancy a new recommendation identifies additional adaptations are required.
- 20.4 Where the adaptation is preventing the property from being relet, after 2 advertising cycles and Direct Match offers being made the council may consider offering it to applicants without a need for the adaptations. In most cases the adaptation will not be removed. Applications to remove the adaptation will not be approved. In some cases it may be appropriate to remove in part or whole the adaptation and where practical to do so place it into storage. Each case will be considered on a case by case basis with input and advice from relevant officers.

21 Re-housing current tenants

For all requests for major adaptations, the council will discuss with the tenant the option of a transfer to alternative accommodation that better meets the needs of the disabled person. This will be done on receipt of an OT recommendation. This could include arranging a suitable alternative home within the council's stock, for which a discretionary direct match or priority medical banding may be given.

Examples of why this may be considered:

- A vacant property which is already suitably adapted to meet the essential needs of the tenant can be identified.

- A vacant property which is more suitable to be adapted to meet the essential needs of the tenant can be identified.
- An extension can be avoided by a move to a larger property.
- The current property is not suitable for a particular adaptation.
- Adaptations to a property may reduce its potential to be let in the future.
- There is under occupation by at least one bedroom or more

21.1 Where it is considered that a move to more suitable accommodation would be possible and/or is the best solution, a priority banding may be given to the tenant to enable them to move more quickly.

21.2 If suitable accommodation is available the tenant would be expected to accept the alternative property.

21.3 Once an offer has been accepted on an alternative property, the customer will be expected to take up the tenancy and move into this property as soon as is practical.

21.4 If a tenant refuses two reasonable offers of alternative accommodation, the council will inform the tenant that they may be excluded from any further considerations. Under such circumstances, the council may also discuss with the tenant the options of self-funding or alternative funding.

21.5 In cases where re-housing is being looked at as the approved/preferred option, then this must be possible within a reasonable timescale (based on an assessment of risk and availability of accommodation). If it is not possible to find suitable alternative accommodation within a reasonable time, adaptations to the existing property or another property will be considered. A reasonable timescale is deemed to be no longer than 12 months from the date the decision not to adapt has been made.

21.6 If any additional aids and adaptations are required to the new property these will not be undertaken until confirmation of the tenant's intention to move has been received.

22 Financial assistance towards moving

Where an offer is accepted to transfer/re-house under the Aids and Adaptations Policy, the council may help with the cost of moving to the other home.

Tenants who take up the option to be re-housed may receive financial assistance to cover relocation expenses. Assistance will vary according to circumstances but may include:

- Removal costs
- Disconnection and reconnection of cooker, and essential appliances
- Refitting of carpets
- Redecoration allowance or where appropriate redecorating of rooms in a new home

23 Adapting Vacant Properties

There may be occasion where a property would be suitable if additional adaptations were installed. However, under the council's current allocation scheme unless a property meets the needs of the household they would not be nominated to it. This does limit the choices disabled applicants and current tenants have.

- 23.1 From time to time and where no suitable void properties have become available the council may consider offering Keyways applicants or a current tenant a vacant un-adapted or partially adapted property which may require further adaptations to address all needs.
- 23.2 If extensive major adaptations are required or there is no funding available to carry out the works, the offer of accommodation may be withdrawn.
- 23.3 If major adaptations are required and the property is deemed suitable, some or all of the adaptation work will be carried out as a priority where possible and practical, to minimise void times.
- 23.4 The Keyways applicant or current tenant will be expected to take up the tenancy as soon as is practical. If they are able to live in the property whilst awaiting some or all of the adaptation work they will be expected to do so. If only minor adaptations are required they will be expected to take up the tenancy prior to the adaptations being carried out.
- 23.5 Prior to undertaking major works, applicants who are existing council tenants will be required to sign a tenancy agreement for the newly allocated property. The property they currently reside in will then be treated as a decant property. Upon completion of works the tenant will be required to vacate the decant property and move into their new property. They will have no rights to remain in the decant property. Note; the tenant will only be responsible for paying rent at the property where they are actually residing.
- 23.6 Applicants who are not existing council tenants will be required to sign a Declaration of Understanding prior to works being undertaken. The Declaration of Understanding highlights that the applicant is making a commitment to move into the property as soon as it is available and adapted if they cannot take up immediate residence and that they will not receive another offer of accommodation. In such cases applicants will be considered as adequately housed. Failure to take up an adapted property offer once works have commenced, will be deemed a refusal of a reasonable offer and this will affect any future applications they make for re-housing or aids and adaptations.

24 Future occupation and successive applications

- 24.1 Once major or extensive adaptations have been completed at a property it is expected that the tenant requiring the adaptation will continue to live at the address, unless circumstances do not allow this (for example, no longer able to use the property due to a worsening medical condition and further adaptations are not possible).
- 24.2 If a tenant applies to be re-housed, unless their circumstances have changed significantly, they would normally be considered to be adequately housed and would have no priority on the housing register.
- 24.3 Tenants requesting consideration to undertake a mutual exchange to a property without adaptations when it is clear they have been provided for them in their current property will be refused consent if they chose to move to an un-adapted/unsuitable property.
- 24.4 Where significant work has taken place at a property and the person(s) requiring the adaptation(s) dies or is unable to remain at the property and permanently resides elsewhere, the remaining family members may be asked to move to alternative accommodation to allow the adapted property to be let to a disabled tenant or applicant. Similarly, where the disabled person remains after death of a partner in a joint tenancy, the disabled person may be required to move to alternative adapted accommodation if for example, the property is grossly under-occupied.

25 Appeals and Complaints

If applicants are dissatisfied with any decision made about their application they have the right to request a review. Reviews will be carried out by a relevant Service Manager from the Council.

If applicants are not satisfied with the review decision they may register a complaint through the Council's formal Complaints Procedure. Housing Applicants who want to make a general complaint or comment about the aids and adaptations process can also use this procedure. Details are available from the One Stop Shop or online at insert new NNC web address?