



# ADAPTATIONS POLICY

# DOCUMENT CONTROL

<b>Document Reference / Version Number</b>	<b>Version 2 – October 2016</b>
<b>Title of Document</b>	<b>Adaptations Policy</b>
<b>Authors Name(s)</b>	<b>Caroline Goodall</b>
<b>Authors Job Title(s)</b>	<b>Service Co-ordinator (Independent Living &amp; Extra Care)</b>
<b>Directorate(s)</b>	<b>Customer</b>
<b>Document Status</b>	<b>Final</b>
<b>Supersedes (Version &amp; Date)</b>	<b>Version 1 – April 2014</b>
<b>Approved By</b>	<b>Strategic EMT (original approval) and Head of Income and Customer Support (Annual Review)</b>
<b>Date of Approval</b>	<b>1<sup>st</sup> May 2014 and 5th October 2016</b>
<b>Publication / Issue Date</b>	<b>October 2016</b>
<b>Date of Annual Review</b>	<b>September 2016</b>
<b>Changes Made at Last Review</b>	<b>Minor changes from annual housekeeping review</b>
<b>Full Review Date</b>	<b>May 2017</b>
<b>Distribution</b>	<b>Website and Intranet</b>

Rochdale Boroughwide Housing Limited is a charitable community benefit society.

FCA register number 31452R.

Registered Office: Sandbrook House, Sandbrook Way, Rochdale OL11 1RY.

Registered as a provider of social housing. HCA register number: 4607



# CONTENTS

Section	Page
<b>Introduction and Context</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Methodology</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Aims and Objectives</b>	<b>4 - 6</b>
<b>Scope</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Policy Statement</b>	<b>6 - 9</b>
<b>Consultation</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Equality &amp; Diversity</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Monitoring and Review</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Thematic Links to other SPSS Documents</b>	<b>10</b>

## **1. Introduction and Context**

- 1.1. This policy outlines Rochdale Boroughwide Housing's approach to how we adapt our homes to meet tenants' needs and ensure best use of our homes. This applies to all Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) tenants and applicants.
- 1.2. RBH funds the adaptations required and works in partnership with RBC Housing Improvement Agency who procure supply and fit adaptations to our homes up to an agreed limit. These costs are met through the Adaptation Budget. The arrangement for adaptations is based on the transfer agreement with Rochdale Borough Council (RBC). This policy applies to consideration of adaptations funded through that budget, or adaptations made prior to RBH's stock transfer in March 2012.
- 1.3. A Service Level Agreement (SLA) exists between RBH and RBC which sets out the parameters for the effective partnership working, administration and delivery of the adaptations service for RBH tenants. All adaptations provided in RBH homes remain the property and responsibility of RBH.
- 1.4. RBH will abide by existing regulatory requirements and legislation to ensure that fair and equitable services are available to all customers regardless of age, disability, gender, racial or ethnic origin, religious belief or sexual identity.

## **2. Methodology**

- 2.1. This policy has been developed in partnership with members of the Services for All Customer Involvement Group and following consultation with partner agencies including RMBC. We have used best practice from other Housing Associations, through membership of the North West Regional Adaptation Forum.

## **3. Aims and Objectives**

- 3.1. The aims of the policy are:
  - To make best use of RBH homes to meet the needs of people requiring adaptations.
  - To make the best use of the adaptations budget to meet tenants' needs.
  - To ensure that adaptations carried out represent value for money.
  - To support tenants and applicants to find alternative housing where a home cannot or should not be adapted.
  - To establish a fair and accountable process for undertaking adaptations and where necessary, taking the decision not to adapt a home.

- To manage the lettings processes to maximise opportunities for applicants seeking suitable housing whilst minimising adaptations.
- To ensure the continued provision of accessible and adapted homes through effective asset management.

### 3.2 The policy fits with the mutual values of RBH:

#### Responsibility

We take responsibility for where possible meeting the needs of people requiring specialised adaptations or a home that meets their requirements without adaptation. This approach takes into account the needs of the customer and the costs of adapting the home, making the best use of the adaptations budget to meet the needs of the highest number of people.

#### Equity

This policy will help ensure a fair adaptations process to meet the needs of our tenants and applicants. This could be through supporting tenants to move to appropriate housing where it is not suitable or beneficial to undertake the adaptation.

#### Democracy

This approach has been developed in partnership with members through the Services For All Group, who will monitor and review the policy.

#### Pioneering

This policy supports a forward thinking approach to adaptations to future proof

Properties for the longer term and to support sustainability and to encourage independent living for tenants.

#### Openness & Honesty

Through the policy we will explain clearly to customers when an adaptation will be made, and if not, we will explain fully why that decision has been taken and what options they have. We will give customers the right to appeal decisions.

#### Caring

This policy will ensure that all tenants are made aware of the process for aids and adaptations and have equal access to the service and receive support and guidance through out the process .It also takes into account tenants individual needs and circumstances.

**3.3 RBH's Vision:**  
This policy helps to meet the vision of RBH which is 'To use our exceptional position as a mutual to help people to create inspiring communities which enhance the lives of the people who live and work in them'. We have developed this policy in partnership with our tenants through a mutual approach. Living in a home that does not meet their needs due to a disability has a significant impact on someone's life. This policy has been developed to ensure people's needs are met, either through adapting their current home or by supporting them to find a suitable new home.

**3.4 RBH's Mission:**  
To meet the aspirations of our communities by providing inclusive opportunities and quality homes in safe, secure and friendly neighbourhoods where people want to live and work. This policy will help meet those aspirations by delivering safe and secure housing to people requiring adaptations.

#### **4. Scope of the Policy**

4.1 This policy applies to all existing tenants of RBH and applicants looking to be housed with RBH.

#### **5. Policy Statement**

5.1 RBH will take reasonable steps to ensure that where required, homes will be adapted to suit the needs of existing tenants with disabilities, or alternative housing is offered to meet the tenant's needs. RBH need to ensure that we make best use of our homes and deliver services that represent value for money. All major adaptations in excess of £5K will be considered by the Service Co-ordinator Independent Living, who will decide whether the adaptation should be made to the home when funded through the RBH Adaptation Budget. These cases are discussed at the Adaptations Panel (AP) the AP consists of RBH employees and where appropriate, RBC and occasionally the Occupational Therapist (OT) managing the case.

5.2 RBH will continue to undertake a significant amount of adaptations to help people remain in their homes. However, there are cases where making the adaptation may not be in the best long term interests of the tenant, may not be possible, or it may not make the best use of the home. Adaptations are costly and are funded through our tenants' rents, and it is important that we manage the budget appropriately to ensure we can help the most people in the most appropriate manner.

5.3 All decisions will be made on the basis of the facts of the individual case, taking into account all relevant circumstances.

5.4 If the panel decides the adaptation should not be made, the tenant will be notified of the decision in writing and offered support to be housed elsewhere or resolve the problem in other ways. The tenant can appeal the decision through RBH's complaints process. The tenant could approach RBC directly to see if an adaptation could be funded through the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant.

5.5 Usually, adaptations will not be made where in the view of the Service Co-ordinator:

- the home is not suitable to be adapted or the traditional use of the home would be compromised, such as where there is poor access, a lift is required in a communal area of a block of flats.
- it is not in the best long term interests of the tenant (for example where the tenant is under-occupying and impacted by the bedroom tax).
- by making the adaptations, the home would become difficult to let.
- there are suitable alternative homes available within a reasonable timescale which will meet the tenant's needs without need for further adaptation.
- a suitable adapted home is offered to the tenant and refused.
- the tenant has lived in the home for less than two years and there has not been a significant change of circumstances.
- the tenant is in breach of the tenancy agreement, through rent arrears and a repayment plan is not being maintained or they are under investigation for anti-social behavior.
- a right to buy application has been made, or the tenant is actively seeking rehousing.
- the adaptations work is relating to the use of a mobility scooter.
- an applicant is not an existing RBH tenant and a suitable home can be found within a reasonable timeframe where further adaptations are not required.
- the applicant/ tenant has, within the last 5 years, left an adapted home that met their disability need. This includes applicants moving from outside the Borough.
- the cost of the adaptation would be over £30,000 (as per the Service Level Agreement with RBC).
- Adaptations over £30,000 would only be considered in very exceptional circumstances in a case by case basis to meet the individuals' needs, where all other options have been explored and exhausted. These cases will be considered by the Independent Living and Homelessness Manager.

5.6 The nature of this type of provision means that cases will arise that are not anticipated in this policy. Such cases will be referred to the Independent Living and Homelessness Manager and considered on a case by case basis.

## Applicants for housing

- 5.7 RBH receives requests for housing from applicants with a range of disabilities. RBH will support applicants requiring an adaptation to find new housing. Where possible, the applicant will be supported to find a home that does not require further adaptations to meet their needs.
- 5.8 Only in exceptional circumstances will major adaptations be considered where an applicant is moving to a new home. This will be following an OT assessment and where there is no other suitable home likely to come available within a reasonable timescale that would meet their needs. Usually, priority will only be awarded for suitable accommodation that will already meet the needs of the applicant. Exceptional cases will be considered by the Independent Living and Homlessness Manager.
- 5.9 All new applicants (and tenants looking to transfer) will be required to complete an on line housing application form and medical on line form. Their housing needs will be assessed in accordance with RBC's Allocations Policy.

## Transferring from an Adapted Home

- 5.10 Tenants living in an adapted home are able to apply to transfer to another home. If RBH has funded major adaptations to a tenant's home, some restriction on the ability to transfer in the short to medium term will be expected, minimum 5 years. Transferring tenants would be expected to transfer to a property that is already adapted to meet their long term needs.
- 5.11 Adaptations will not be provided where the tenant has a current application to transfer. Tenants who are awaiting transfer and also applying for adaptations will be asked to decide which option they wish to pursue.
- 5.12 Following a major adaptation, RBH would normally expect the individual to remain in the home for a minimum of 5 years. In these circumstances, RBH may refuse to carry out adaptations to another dwelling if a tenant wants to transfer unless there is an overriding need to move.
- 5.13 Where a tenant wishes to transfer to another social landlord, RBH will inform that landlord of the investment that RBH has made in adapting the current home. RBH has no control over the decisions that other landlords may make.

## Rents for adapted homes

- 5.14 RBH will review the rent on a dwelling where major works are carried out to create an additional room. If as a result of an adaptation, a bedroom is no longer functional, this will not result in a change of rent as the number of bedrooms remains the same albeit with a different functionality. This could occur for example where a through floor lift is installed to access upstairs facilities rendering a bedroom redundant.

## Right to buy

- 5.15 An application to purchase a home which is purpose built or adapted to meet disability needs which forms part of a group of houses may be exempt from Right to Buy/Right to Acquire. Single, non purpose built adapted homes will be treated as mainstream housing, so eligible for Right to Buy, but the sale price will reflect the cost of any adaptations.
- 5.16 Where an application to purchase has been received, RBH will suspend requests for adaptations and any work ordered, pending the outcome of the application. No adaptations will be undertaken if the home is sold.

## Mutual Exchange

- 5.17 RBH tenants have a right to a Mutual Exchange. The grounds for refusal are prescribed within the Housing Act 1988.
- The completion of minor adaptations will not impact the right to exchange.
  - A mutual exchange can be refused if a home has been substantially adapted. Any request will be considered by the Neighbourhood Manager and the Service Co-ordinator of the Independent living Team
- 5.18 Tenants who undertake a mutual exchange and move from an adapted home to one that needs adaptation would be expected to fund any adaptations.

## Appeals of Decisions

- 5.19 RBH's aim is to get it right first time. However, RBH has a Complaints Policy which customers may use where they are dissatisfied with this policy, its operation or if they disagree with a decision made by the Service Co-ordinator Independent Living. Any complaint about areas of work which are the responsibility of RBC should be dealt with under the Council's complaints process.
- 5.20 Appeals against a decision by the Service Co-ordinator Independent Living enter the complaints process at the final stage.

## Adaptations Policy

## **6. Consultation**

6.1 This policy has been developed in consultation with the following groups:

- The Services For All Customer Involvement Group
- Sheltered Housing in Partnership
- The Disability Working Group (now part of Services for All)
- Rochdale Borough Council

## **7. Equality and Diversity**

7.1 A full equality impact assessment has been undertaken.

## **8. Monitoring and Review**

8.1 All RBH strategies, policies and procedures are reviewed at least every three years in order to ensure that they are 'fit for purpose' and comply with all relevant legislation and statutory regulations.

8.2 This policy, including any other related procedures will be reviewed annually by the Services for All Group in order to ensure its continued appropriateness and formally reviewed and submitted to the appropriate approving body every three years.

## **9. Links to other RBH Policies & Procedures**

9.1 This policy links to the following policies and strategies:

- RBH's Corporate Strategy for 2014/15.
- RBH's Equalities and Diversity Policy.
- RBC's Allocation Policy.