

ADAPTATIONS POLICY

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Executive Summary:
<p>The adaptations policy helps us to future proof homes by looking at different options to meet people’s changing needs. We work with different partners such as Rochdale Borough Council’s Home Improvement Agency and Occupational Therapists as well as other RBH teams. We support tenants to either move to alternative accommodation which better meets their needs, or through the installation of adaptations in an existing home. There is a specific budget for this and we manage and allocate this money in a fair and equitable way using existing frameworks. This ensures we provide value for money and enables us to support tenants to sustain their tenancies and stay independent for longer.</p>

Policy Grouping/Directorate(s)	Customer and Communities	
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Notes:	<p>*This policy is currently undergoing a full review. Workshops are taking place with relevant stakeholders and as such the review is expected to be complete by March 2025.</p> <p>This policy will remain in place until the review is complete.</p>	

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy outlines Rochdale Boroughwide Housing's approach to the adaptations of homes to meet tenants' needs and ensure best use of our homes. This applies to all Rochdale Boroughwide Housing (RBH) tenants and applicants. In partnership with RBC's Home Improvement Agency (HIA). Adaptations installed in RBH homes are funded through the RBH Aids and Adaptations Budget. This policy applies to adaptations funded through the RBH adaptations budget and supplied fitted and serviced through the HIA. A service level agreement (SLA) exists between RBH and RBC which sets out the parameters for effective partnership working, administration and delivery of adaptations for RBH tenants. All adaptations installed in RBH homes remain the property of RBH. In addition Appendix 1 of this policy outlines RBH's procedures for the provision of adaptations including responsibility under regulatory and compliance legislation.

2 Context

- 2.1 This policy, developed in partnership with employees from other services within RBH including HomeChoice, Responsive Repairs, Neighbourhood Services, Engagement, Business Intelligence, Risk and Compliance and through partnership working with RBC for the provision of aids and adaptations in RBHs homes is managed through the Independent Living Team. The Policy which is in line with the agreement made during transfer to make an adaptations budget available for specific works and mirrors the scope of work under DFG (Disabled Facilities Grant).

3 Aims & Objectives

- 3.1 The aims of the policy are:

- To make the best use of RBH homes, new build programmes and HOOP (Housing Options for Older People) to meet the needs of people requiring adaptations working in partnership with RBC and other agencies.
- Housing Options for Older People (HOOP) officers will in some cases explore rehousing to a more suitable home as an alternative to a possible adaptation if a person's independence can be supported better through this route.
- To make the best use of the adaptation budget to meet tenants' needs whilst ensuring VFM.
- To provide a fair and equitable process for managing the allocation of adaptations and lettings processes and where required, not adapt.
- To outline agreement made with RBC that where a disrepair emerges as a result of an adaptation being undertaken, costs to resolve this issue will be covered under RBC's DFG budget.

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

Responsibility - We take responsibility where possible, for meeting the needs of people requiring specialist adaptations of a home to meet their needs. The policy takes into account best options for meeting people's needs in line with best use of budgets to ensure all people requiring adaptations can be accommodated in line with priorities and timescales.

Equity - This policy will help ensure a fair adaptations process to meet the needs of tenants. This could be supporting tenants through the installation of adaptations within agreed and acceptable timeframes or supporting tenants to move to more alternative accommodation.

Democracy - This approach has been developed in partnership with employees and customers from RBH and partners from RBC.

Pioneering - This policy supports a forward thinking approach to adaptations to future proof RBH homes for the longer term support and sustainability and to help tenants to be independent for longer

4 Policy Statement

4.1 RBH and RBC will jointly review and prioritise individual cases through a multi-agency adaptations panel meeting every 5 -6 weeks. RBC will present all cases requested to be brought to the panel by the Occupational Therapists. Consideration by the panel to approve spending will take into account Occupational Therapist priority banding, risk to persons, health and safety considerations, impact on the property and will take into account available resources within the budget.

4.2 RBH and RBC seek to review cases within three months from being referred by the Occupational Therapist.

4.3 We will work with the HOOP Service to provide Housing Options advice for people over the age of 55. If an applicant is under occupying a property or the property is assessed as unsuitable to be adapted a report from the HOOP officer on the best option for that individual / household will then be considered at the next adaptations panel meeting.

4.4 Consideration for specialist new build

4.4.1 RBH are committed to developing new homes that meet the long- term needs of families and individuals. Should a specialist housing need be better supported through RBHs new build programme consideration will be given through discussion with RBC and RBHs new build Co-ordinators and agreement will be reached for RBC to fund additional building requirements through the DFG grant up to £27,000 per property (excluding the 10% management fee). Other funding opportunities may be sought.

4.4.2 RBH propose that 5% of new RBH homes are built to planning M4 (3) Category 3 for fully adapted wheelchair standard or M4 (2) Category 2 assessable and adaptable to meet the needs of specific households

4.5 Compliance

4.5.1 RBH has a responsibility to ensure that all aids and adaptations that are installed in our homes are safe to use and comply to all legal and best practice requirements. RBC HIA undertakes the responsibility for compliance on behalf of RBH in line with the service level agreement. RBH monitors all best practice compliance through a monthly dashboard produced by RBC and reported to RBHs ELT through the RBH Home Safety Manager.

4.6 Applications for Housing

4.6.1 RBH will support applicants requiring adaptations to find a new home. Where possible applicants will be supported to find a new home that does not further require any adaptations to meet their needs.

4.7 Transfer from an adapted home

4.7.1 Tenants living in a property that has been adapted by RBH are able to apply for a transfer to a similar property, where an Occupational Therapist has assessed that the current need has changed and further adaptations are needed. Further transfers may then not be considered for up to 5 years unless there is a change of needs. Change of needs may also include changes in family makeup.

4.7.2 Adaptations will not be considered where a tenant has a current application for transfer unless there is an immediate person at risk or health and safety consideration.

4.8 Rents and Service Charges

4.8.1 Rents and service charges for adapted properties will be in line with RBHs rents and service charges structure in line with the Regulator of Social Housing (RSH). Where there are adaptations requiring annual service and maintenance a service charge will be payable to reflect the cost of this requirement. RBH do not means test for adaptations a service charge to cover depreciation and general wear and tear will also be included.

4.8.2 Where the number of bedrooms in use has been reduced because of an adaptation- for instance a through floor lift the rent charges will not be changed because of the reduction of bedrooms in use.

4.9 Right to acquire

4.9.1 An application to acquire a home that has been adapted or is purpose built to meet disability needs may be exempt the right to acquire. However, if the right to acquire does apply to a specific adapted home either singularly or as part of a group of homes the price to acquire will include the cost of any adaptations.

4.9.2 Where an application has been received to acquire a property, RBH will suspend requests for adaptations until the results of the application is known. No adaptations will be undertaken on any property subject to a successful application to acquire.

4.10 Mutual exchanges

4.10.1 RBH tenants have a right to mutual exchange. The grounds for refusal outlined in the Housing Acts 1985 and 2004 state that a mutual exchange can be refused if a home has been substantially adapted for a person with special needs and nobody in the new tenants household has those needs.

4.10.2 Any request for a mutual exchange must be agreed by the HomeChoice Manager and ILS Senior Manager with reference to the Head of Better Living. Tenants undertaking a mutual exchange would be expected to move to another property requiring minimal or no adaptations.

4.10.3 Any appeals or complaints about decisions made about adaptations will be logged on RBHs CRM system and co-ordinated through the complaints process.

4.11 Repairs to adaptations

4.11.1 Repairs to adaptations out of warranty and undertaken under the qualifying list will be funded through the adaptations budget.

4.11.2 Funding for repairs will not be undertaken to adaptations using the adaptations budget in the following circumstances:

- Where the adaptation has not been agreed at the RBC/ RBH adaptations panel
- Where the adaptation has been funded and installed through a capital works programme outside the adaptations panel
- Where the tenant has funded and installed an adaptation themselves
- Where the adaptation has not been installed by a contractor under contract with the RBC HIA

4.12 Minor adaptations as part of a planned capital programme

4.12.1 Where a tenant has minor adaptations in place that are removed as part of capital improvement works, the adaptations can be re installed as part of capital works unless there are significant changes or concerns in which case a referral to the Occupational Therapist should be made. A minor adaptation is usually described as a small aid such as a grab rail, hand rail or toilet rail with a cost usually under £500.

4.12.2 In certain circumstances minor adaptations can be retrospectively fitted prior to an Occupational Therapist referral as long as it is accepted the Occupational Therapist may make adjustments to the original installations.

4.13 Assistive Technology

4.13.1 RBH will use £20,000 of the adaptations budget for assistive technology in Independent Living Schemes and supported housing properties in line with the DFG rules on prevention and preventative measures.

5 Monitoring

5.1 This policy will be monitored through the multi- agency adaptations panel meetings and Service Level Agreements with Rochdale Borough Council and changes made at annual review.

6 Review

6.1 All RBH strategies, policies, service standards and procedures are reviewed on a regular basis in order to ensure that they are 'fit for purpose' and comply with all relevant legislation and statutory regulations.

6.2 This policy will go through the full policy approval process every 3 years and will undergo a desktop review annually. This is to ensure that it is fit for purpose and complies with all relevant and statutory regulations.

7 Links with Other RBH Documents

7.1 This policy links to the following policies and strategies:

- RBH's Corporate Strategy Together 2018 -22
- RBC's Allocations policy

Appendix 1 - Procedures

Spending

Spending up to £30,000 is agreed by the Independent Living Team with major spend – (over £30,000) being agreed by the Head of Service for Better Living. The allocation of funds for adaptations is agreed at a multi- agency panel every 5 – 6 weeks and in line with Occupational Therapist priority and risk and safety considerations. Where there is an under occupancy issue or where another type of property may support a person's needs better, a referral to HOOP (Housing Options for Older People) will be made before a final decision on spending on adaptations is made. The HOOP Officer may attend the next available panel meeting to discuss the case before a final decision is made.

1.1 When considering an adaptation the adaptations panel will consider to following areas.

- The needs of the applicant
- Suitability of the home and surroundings for an adaptation
- Other housing options available, including if more suitable accommodation is a good offer.
- There is a breach of tenancy conditions such as significant rent arrears with no management plan in place or a proven case of anti- social behaviour
- A right to acquire (RTA) has been made or the tenant has put in an application for re housing.
- Where the cost of the adaptation is over £30,000, agreement to spend over this limit will be reviewed on an individual basis and escalated to the Head of Better Living for decision.

1.2 Once a decision is made to adapt a property RBH will request a Technical Officer from the HIA, to work up plans and costs for final approval. Any amendments or additional spending requirements will be discussed at the next panel meeting or sooner if required.

1.3 Following the decision by the panel being made the ILS Co Ordinator will then inform the tenant, in writing of the decision and scope of work to be undertaken.

Consideration for a New Build

1.4 Where there is a specialist housing need that can be better accommodated through RBHs new build programme, consideration of up to three new specialist homes per year will be given. RBC will agree additional build cost funding up to £30,000 per development through DFG funding for works needed up and above their disability in order to maintain longevity, and independence. A consideration for specialist new build housing would normally be expected to remain in the property once completed for a minimum period of 5 years. Application for DFG funding for additional works would be made by the individual and will be subject to means testing. When considering an application the following criteria will be applied

- Risk to persons health and safety
- Longevity – the solution will support the complex needs with only minor adjustments within a reasonable period of time

- Not possible (or extremely difficult) to adapt an existing property and may not be able to support complex needs in full, or if the adaptation would be classed as being a poor adaptation
- Planned new build can support additional requirements to meet complex needs
- RBC agree to fund additional development costs through DFG assuming all criteria is met.

1.5 RBH will continue to influence new build programmes and have committed to delivering up to three bespoke homes as specialist development per year as part of their new build programme. Priority for these homes will be given to identified tenants on the HomeChoice register in line with the adaptations panel recommendations.

1.6 During the planning stage following confirmation of the new build programme, The HomeChoice and ILS Co Ordinator will identify applicants to be put forward for the programme. The applicants will be contacted and informed about the build timescales and any additional information.

1.7 During the development timeframe and commissioning stage the applicant will be fully informed and involved through contact with the ILS Co Ordinator . The ILS Co Ordinator will work with the RBH Development Manager, HIA Technical Officer and Occupational Therapist on specific requirements for the individual or family. Equipment and adaptations needed that are not part of the development costs will be funded through the adaptations budget through agreement in the adaptations panel meetings.

Applicants for Housing

1.8 Where a home for the applicant is identified RBH will seek the advice from the Occupational Therapist if the home is suitable for the applicant and determine what further adaptations may be needed. Should the Occupational Therapist deem the home not suitable for the applicants needs, RBH will not consider any further adaptations even if the applicant chooses to move into the property.

1.9 All new applicants (and tenants wanting to transfer) will be required to complete a housing application and medical form online. Their housing needs will be assessed in accordance with RBCs Allocations Policy.

Transferring from an Adapted Home

1.10 Should a tenant wish to transfer to another landlord RBH will inform the landlord of the investment in adaptations made to the tenant's current property. All adaptations made will remain the property of RBH and as such will not be able to be transferred to an alternative landlord's property.

Compliance

1.11 As part of compliance the HIA contractors will undertake service and maintenance inspections, insurance inspections in line with best practice. This provision takes into account the following :-

- **Stair lifts** –LOLER and PUWER do not apply in terms of legislation as stair lifts installed in RBH homes are classed as being for domestic use only. However they are covered by best practice so if installed for more than 5 years are subject to a 6 monthly service and maintenance and a 12 monthly insurance inspection. If installed for less than 5 years are subject to a 6 monthly service and maintenance inspection under warranty and a 12 monthly insurance inspection. All new stair lifts must be supplied with instruction, a declaration of conformity and CE marking.
- **Vertical and through floor lifts** – LOLER does not always apply to vertical lifts as they are not often used as work equipment by anyone other than the person they have been installed for. However to act on the side of precaution RBH will cover vertical lifts under LOLER. In addition the lifts must be covered under the Health and Safety at Work Act 1973 section 3 and if it extends more than 3 meters will be subject to Annex IV (item 170 of the Machinery Directive as required by Article 12 (3) and 12 (4). Therefore all vertical lifts will be subject to a 6 monthly service and maintenance inspection and a 6 monthly insurance inspection.
- **Step lifts** – step lifts are covered by LOLER and require servicing and maintenance inspections on a 6 monthly basis and an insurance inspection on a 6 monthly basis
- **Hoists and slings** - Hoists and slings are defined as accessories and are subject to LOLER. Therefore all hoists and slings are subject to a 6 monthly service and maintenance inspection and a 6 monthly insurance inspection .

1.12 RBC will provide RBH with monthly commentaries and a dashboard on compliance. This will be monitored at the RBH Home Safety Group and at RBH's Executive Leadership Team.

1.13 Compliance and inspection visits will be undertaken by the HIA contractors. Wherever possible the contractors will arrange visit times with RBH tenants. Where there is difficulty in making contact with the tenants or difficulty in gaining access the contractor will refer to the RBC Lifting Equipment and Compliance Team or Moving and Handling Advisors who will progress the issue and report through the HIA to RBH any further issues or difficulties .

Provision of Assistive Technology

1.14 RBH will use up to £20,000 of the adaptations budget to provide assistive technology to tenants living within its Independent Living Schemes, supported living schemes and extra care scheme. The provision of this technology will be through an identified need as part of a support needs assessment or ILS risk assessment (RA1) and referred to the ILS Co Ordinator by the Scheme Manager. Where there is a requirement within a supported living home the managing agent will refer for assistive technology through the HIA who will make the referral to the adaptations panel. This adaptation will be classed as a minor adaptation as a support requirement for prevention.

Minor adaptations as part of a capital improvement programme

1.15 Where there is a new requirement for minor adaptations the tenant should be referred for an Occupational Therapist assessment and the requirement referred to the adaptations panel if over £500.00 or automatically progressed by the HIA if under £500.00.

1.16 RBC will inform RBH at the next adaptations panel meeting of any minor adaptations installed since the previous meeting so that budget estimates can be adjusted.