

Aids and Adaptations Policy

Stevenage Borough Council

2024

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1. Purpose

1.1 What is the policy position?

The policy sets out Stevenage Borough Council's (SBC's) strategy for dealing with internal and external requests for aids and adaptations in its council tenanted homes. It is necessary to clarify to customers and the wider audience our intentions, the limitations of the service, what other options and support we can offer and the conditions under which we might refuse to carry out the work requested.

1.2 What does it aim to achieve?

This policy aims to provide a single document explaining how the council will provide adaptations to council tenants properties which is to be funded from the Housing Revenue Account.

The Council as a social landlord has various responsibilities including those under the Equalities legislation, The Regulator for Social Housing's Consumer Standards and this policy is intended to set out the assistance that can be provided by the Council.

This policy will enable disabled people of all ages to build and sustain their independence. The purpose of any installation of an aid or adaptation is to modify the home environment to restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for individuals and their families.

This policy allows the council to support our Corporate Plan 2024-2029 and a key priority of maintaining good quality homes.

For residents living in private sector properties or homeowners, they should find further details of the Disabled Facilities Grant through our Environmental Health and Licensing Service. Further details can be found [here](#). For prospective tenants requiring aids and adaptations within new tenancies, further information is available within our Allocation Policy, which is available [here](#).

1.3 Does it replace an existing policy?

This policy replaces the previous policy from 2020.

2. Scope

2.1 Who is responsible for administering this policy and who will be impacted?

The Assistant Director of Building Safety and Housing Property Services have overall responsibility for the policy, ensuring it is fully implemented.

The Head of Service and Programme Manager are responsible for:

- The effective implementation of the policy
- Monitoring the performance and delivery
- Reviewing the policy in line with the policy review date or in response to changes in legislation governing the provision of aids and adaptations.

This policy is relevant to all our employees, tenants, other stakeholders and persons who may work on, occupy, visit, or use our premises, or who may be affected by our activities or services.

2.2 Does it underpin all policies, strategies and schemes, or is it specific to a particular Business Unit (BU)?

This policy is specific to tenants and those employees that interact with tenants. This is including Housing and Neighbourhoods, Building Safety and Housing Property Services.

The policy underpins the Equality, Diversity & Inclusion Policy, Tenancy, Safeguarding, and Allocations Policies.

3. Legal Framework

3.1 What legislation is this policy associated with?

This policy sets out how Stevenage Borough Council will comply with the requirements of the following:

- The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- Children Act 1996
- Equality Act 2010
- The Care Act 2014
- The Housing Act 1985
- The Housing Act 2004 - Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)
- Mental Capacity Act 2005
- Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002
- Home Adaptations for Disabled People 2013
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023 - Consumer Standards in particular – Safety and Quality Standard 1.5.1, 2.4.1 and 2.4.2
- Building Regulations 2010

3.2 What are the legislative or regulatory requirements that the council must fulfil?

This policy has been developed to ensure that Council tenants are able to receive aids and adaptations to at least the same standard as would be provided if assistance were to be provided under the Mandatory Disabled Facilities legislation. A person will be considered for reasonable adaptations in their home under the Equality Act 2010 if they are a Stevenage Borough Council tenant and they, their partner or a member of their immediate family who is permanently resident in the household and is considered as disabled as defined within section 6.8 **Eligibility** and that substantially affects their ability to carry out normal day to day activities or access facilities in or around their home.

4. Equalities

4.1 Under the Equality Act (2010) the Council has a legal duty to fulfil the requirements of the Public Sector Equality Duty (PSED). Through this duty and in the application of this policy, the council will carry out its functions in a way that:

- a. Removes discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is unlawful under the Equality Act (2010)
- b. Promotes equal opportunities between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't.
- c. Encourages good relations between people who have a protected characteristic(s) and those who don't.

Further information on the Council's fulfilment of the Equality Act (2010) is set out in the Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) Policy (2022) and Reasonable Adjustment Policy (2024).

5. Data Protection

- 5.1 The Council regards respect for the privacy of individuals and the lawful and careful treatment of personal information as very important to delivery of services.
- 5.2 The Council will ensure that it treats personal information lawfully and proportionately as set out in the General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) and Data Protection Act (2018). For further information on the Council's approach to handling information please see [Data Protection Act \(stevenage.gov.uk\)](https://www.stevenage.gov.uk/data-protection-act)

6. Policy

- 6.1 The policy sets out how Stevenage Borough Council will manage and administer aids and adaptations to its properties for council tenants. The policy is not written for owner occupiers, leaseholders, private or housing association tenants for whom other provisions exist via Disabled Facilities Grants much of which is administered via the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency (HHIA).
- 6.2 The policy is more flexible than any of its predecessors in that it promotes options and alternatives.
- 6.3 Adaptations are categorised as minor, major and complex. The definitions and Expected timescales for delivering adaptations are as follows:

Type of work	Cost of work	Timescale		As an example of work – includes but not limited to
		Desktop Assessment	Delivered once accepted	
Minor Works	Less than £1000	4 weeks	20 working days	Temporary ramps Half steps Handrails Grab rails Lever taps Sanitary ware

Minor Works	More than £1000	4 weeks	12 weeks	Over bath shower The installation of stair lifts and special purpose equipment Ramps
Major Works	More than £1000	4 weeks	52 weeks	Bathroom and kitchen adaptations, ground floor WC conversions Garage conversions, extensions and access
Complex	More than £1000 and involving planning consent, building control.	4 weeks	<i>Dependent on complexity and involved 3rd parties</i>	

Major and Complex works – if accepted a technical feasibility and financial viability survey will be undertaken. If survey is viable then providing there are no better or quicker options such as a move to a property already fully or partially adapted that meets the needs of the customer), we aim to carry out the work in line with the above.

- 6.4 To provide clarity and uniformity across tenures the Council will adopt the same approach to consider if assistance should be provided as defined within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended).

The council must be satisfied that the “eligible works” are “necessary and appropriate”, and that they have been judged to be “reasonable and appropriate” having “regard to the age and condition” of the property as set out within the Governments Code of Guidance for the assistance. But each application will be assessed on its merits.

The Equalities Act 2010 states ...” where a disabled person requests and would, but for the provision of an auxiliary aid, be put at a substantial disadvantage in comparison with persons who are not disabled, the council must “take such steps as it is reasonable to have to take to provide the auxiliary aid”. Please note that landlords do not have to make changes which affect the structure or would substantially and permanently alter their housing stock.”

6.5 This policy aligns with the Allocations Policy 2023 which seeks to match customers with a suitable property i.e., where it is preferable to offer the tenant an alternative property which already has or is more suited to the required adaptations then this option will be presented to the customer. Where possible we will seek to match the person to a property local to their current home.

6.6 Where a property is underoccupied, the tenant will be encouraged to downsize in line with our Downsizing policy which also provides support to facilitate a move including financial compensation for each room surrendered and help with moving costs.

6.7 Similarly, where the customer requires additional support which can more easily be provided through a move to one of our Independent Living Schemes the tenant will be encouraged and assisted to take up this opportunity. This will be dependent on the tenant being eligible for Older People properties.

6.8 Eligibility

6.8.1 A person will be considered for adaptations if they are a Stevenage Borough Council tenant and they, their partner or a member of their immediate family who is permanently resident in the household has an impairment that is likely to last for at least 12 months or for the remainder of the person's life, that substantially affects their ability to carry out normal day to day activities or access facilities in or around their home.

6.8.2 Under the terms of this policy a person is regarded as 'disabled' as defined under the Housing, Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended) if they have any of the following:

- Sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired
- Mental disorder or impairment of any kind
- Physically substantially disabled by illness, injury, impairment

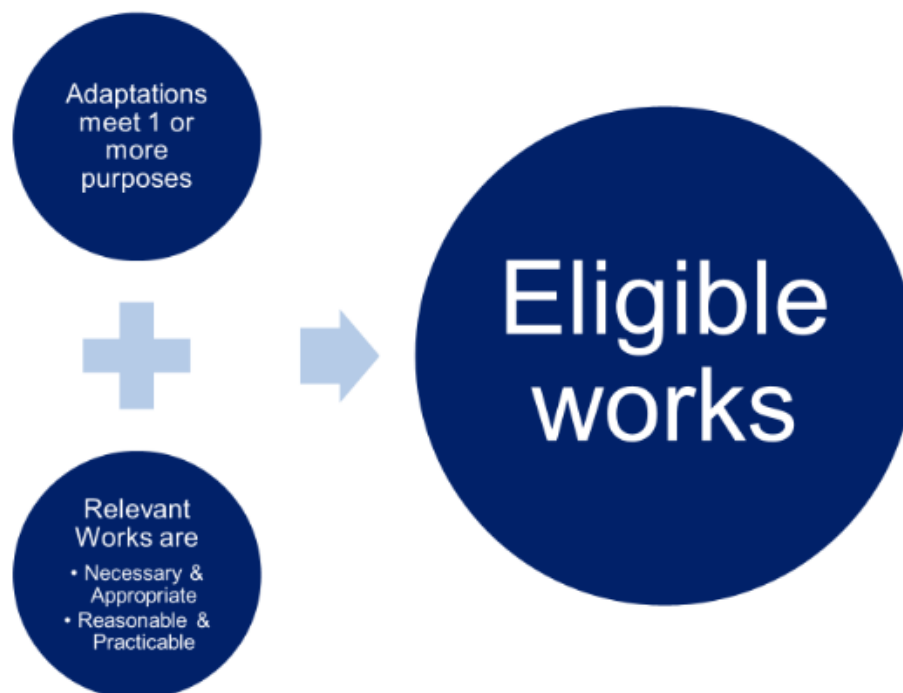
and a person over 18 is taken to be disabled if:

- they are an adult who is or could be registered under [section 77 of the Care Act 2014](#)
- they are an adult who is or could be registered under [section 18\(5\) of the Social Services and Well-being \(Wales\) Act 2014](#)
- they are a child or young person registered under [paragraph 2 of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989](#)
- they are a disabled child as defined by [section 17 of the Children Act 1989](#).

The council is responsible for considering adaptation referrals to the properties we own and that are occupied by our tenants.

The Eligible Works

In line with the wider approach to providing disabled adaptations assistance will only be available for “eligible works” as set out in the Governments Guidance and as reflected within Section 23 of the Housing, Grants and Regeneration Act 1996. The approach to be adopted within this policy will see the adoption of the same “purposes” for which assistance will be provided as stated within the Act and Guidance.



Eligible works will be considered as: -

- Facilitating Access to the home and garden
- Making the premises safer
- Access to the principal family room or bedroom
- Access to a toilet
- Access to a bath or shower
- Access to a wash hand basin
- Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food
- Better heating
- Control of power, light and heat
- Caring for others

Full details of Eligible works are set out within Appendix 1 of this policy.

The Council will consider if each of the “eligible works” are “necessary and appropriate” and “reasonable and practicable”, in line with this policy and the framework adopted.

6.9 Costs of Adaptations

6.9.1 In line with the disabled adaptations legislation this policy will consider the maximum level of assistance towards eligible works as £30,000. The Council is not required to fund additional works over this amount. However, in line with Government Guidance the Council has the discretion under this policy to provide up to an additional £20,000* to cover eligible works, and this is in line with the Hertfordshire County Council approach.

*This approach will only be taken in exceptional cases and for complex cases, each case will be determined on its own merits and the final decision would be made by the Assistant Director.

The council will work with the Occupational Therapist to look at other alternative cost-effective solutions within the £50,000 limit. If this is not possible the council will look for alternative suitable accommodation. For further details of other reasons aids and adaptations can be refused please see following section.

6.9.2 The council will set an annual budget in which will be used as efficiently as possible to provide a fair and accessible service to all existing tenants, whilst demonstrating value for money. If the demand for assistance exceeds the annual budget allocation, a waiting list will be operated subject to priority need which can be rolled forward into the next financial year.

6.9.3 The processing of referrals for recommended works will generally follow a chronological order, aligned with any established priority system. However, in emergency situations, referrals may be processed outside this order, subject to approval at the discretion of the Council. Where necessary, the Council will also work with the tenant to explore alternative options such as re-housing or other sources of funding.

6.9.4 The timescales will depend on the urgency and complexity of the adaptations required. High priority cases, as defined by the occupational therapist on the referral, will be prioritised for action, but major and complex schemes will take longer to complete.

In cases where planning permission or other regulatory elements are required, we cannot guarantee the timescales will be met.

To address waiting times for adaptations, the team will be expanded through permanent recruitment. This will increase capacity and enable the Council to implement the policy more efficiently, ensuring timely execution by streamlining processes and securing adequate resources.

6.9.5 The council will operate a triage system to make an initial assessment of the complexity and urgency of referral to help the person understand the likely timescales for delivery of the work. As stated in point 6.3 above, the council will complete a desktop assessment within 4 weeks of receipt of the referral, the customer will be updated on further timescales following that assessment.

The council will keep the customer updated on progress at all stages, from acknowledging receipt of the referral and expectations, up to the completion and satisfaction survey.

6.10.1 Reasons for Refusal

6.10.1 There are multiple reasons why SBC may refuse to carry out all or some of the work requested. Below gives examples of reasons why SBC might decline a request for adaptations. This list is in no way exhaustive:

- I. The property is under occupied by more than one bedroom, considering the need for an additional room to store medical equipment.
- II. The property is unsuitable for adaptations due to overcrowding (in accordance with the Tenancy Agreement), except where minor works can be carried out to provide benefits until a suitable alternative property is found
- III. Where the work exceeds £30,000 (or £50,000 with discretionary top-up) as detailed above.
- IV. In the opinion of the council, the work is not necessary, appropriate, reasonable, and practical.
- V. The work is not technically feasible or could be achieved in a different way.
- VI. The application does not meet the eligibility criteria.
- VII. The referral is not via the Occupational Therapist (OT) service or our internal referral process via our supported housing staff. The council reserves the right to seek an OT's report on aids and adaptations requests below £1,000 in value on a discretionary basis, to ensure the proposed works meet the customer's individual needs in the most effective way.
- VIII. The tenant is currently on the Housing Register, except where minor works can be carried out to provide benefits until a suitable alternative property is found.
- IX. Where work for the individual is to a communal area but will negatively impact communal space for other residents or be prohibitively expensive
- X. The tenant has a Right to Buy Application

6.10.2 If a request for aids and adaptations is refused for any reason the tenant will be supported in alternative solutions. These solutions may include:

- Assistance with joining the housing register for an alternative move.
- Referral to Downsizing Officer for a move to a more suitably sized property.
- Providing information and support with registering for a Mutual Exchange
- Referral to the Independent Living service or Flexicare if suitable

- A discussion with OT and tenant about alternative solutions which could be more necessary, appropriate, reasonable or practical.
- Referral to the Income team or Welfare Benefits Advice team who may assist with arrears or payment plans.

6.10.3 Any reason for refusal can be appealed by the tenant. A request for an appeal should be received in writing within 28 days of the decision to refused communicated to the tenant. The appeal will be reviewed by a Head of Service or Assistant Director.

6.10.4 The escalation following an appeal would be to approach the Housing Ombudsman or Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman depending on the circumstances.

6.10.5 Mental capacity

Where the Council thinks a tenant lacks capacity to make a particular decision or take a particular action for themselves at the time the decision or action needs to be taken, they should follow the guidance laid out in the [Code of Practice to the Mental Capacity Act 2005](#).

7 Consultation

7.1 Who have we consulted with in the development of this policy?

The policy was consulted with the relevant Portfolio Holder, the Executive Housing Working Group, Heads of Service and impacted staff members.7.2

7.3 In part of forming this policy, the tenant satisfaction perception survey for 2023-2024 were analysed for mentions of the aid and adaptation service. Within the tenant satisfaction measures and the perception surveys for 2023/2024, Aids and Adaptations was mentioned by 12 tenants of the 1000 tenants approached as a reason for overall satisfaction. 50% of those resulted in a positive response. Of those that mentioned aids and adaptations within the free text who were dissatisfied with the overall service provided by Stevenage Borough Council as a landlord the main themes included issues with delays and communication. This policy ensures that clear guidelines on timescales are imposed and may result in further positive results. Satisfaction will continue to be measured with transactional surveys with tenants following completed adaptation work.

7.4 As part of the implementation of this policy, we will actively seek feedback from tenants on the operation of this policy and provide feedback on how we have taken this on board when reviewing this policy.

8 Monitoring and Review

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed by the relevant Business Unit's Head of Service or Service Manager every 2 years (see page 1 for details of Business Unit) or earlier if there is a change in legislation. Where more than 10% of the policy content is changed the Assistant Director and appropriate Portfolio Holder will be required to decide if the policy needs to be formally reconsidered by the Executive or appropriate decision-making body.
- 8.2 Where there is a request for the content of the policy to be reviewed in response to a complaint, the relevant Business Unit's Assistant Director will be notified. If the Assistant Director agrees that a review of policy is required, this will be discussed with the appropriate Portfolio Holder. The Head of Service or Service Manager will be responsible for implementing a subsequent policy review.

9 References and Resources

Internal Documents:

Stevenage Borough Council – Tenancy Agreement

Decant Policy

Right to Buy Policy

Health And Safety Policy

Corporate Plan: Making Stevenage Better 2024 – 2029

Allocations Policy 2023

External:

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970

The Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

Children Act 1996

Equality Act 2010

The Care Act 2014

Mental Capacity Act 2005

Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002

The Housing Act 1985

The Housing Act 2004 - Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

Home Adaptations for Disabled People 2013

Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) delivery: Guidance for local authorities in England

10 Abbreviations and Definitions

EDI	Equality, Diversity and Inclusion
GDPR	General Data Protection Regulation
PSED	Public Sector Equality Duty
SBC	Stevenage Brough Council
OT	Occupational Therapist
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant

11 Appendices

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Appendix 1

Eligible Works

Facilitating access to the home and garden

There is a need to remove or help overcome any obstacles which are preventing the disabled person from moving freely in and out of the property, including common parts, in and around the garden and any yard, outhouse or “other appurtenance” (e.g. a balcony or the land adjacent to the mooring of a qualifying houseboat).

Access can also include works outside the normal curtilage of the dwelling, such as a dropped kerb pavement crossing.

Making the premises safer

There is a need to make the home safer for the disabled person and other people living with them. It’s not appropriate to be too prescriptive but the needs covered under this subsection might include situations where:

- someone with challenging behaviours is hurting themselves, other people they live with or damaging the property.
- someone with impaired vision cannot safely navigate into and around their home or carry out everyday tasks and activities.
- someone with impaired hearing can’t hear a standard smoke alarm; or
- someone with a physical disability could not safely escape in the event of a fire.

Access to the principal family room or bedroom

The disabled person is unable to access a room suitable for use as a living room or gain access to a room usable for sleeping. Or where the disabled occupant shares a bedroom with another person, they cannot access a room of sufficient size so that the normal sleeping arrangements can be maintained.

Access to a toilet

The disabled person cannot access a room with a toilet or cannot use the existing toilet.

Access to a bath or shower

The disabled person cannot access a room with a bath and/or a shower or cannot use the existing bath and/or shower. In cases where the disabled person needs access to a bath and a shower, they would need to demonstrate a medical need for both.

Access to a wash hand basin

The disabled person cannot access a room with a wash hand basin or cannot use the existing wash hand basin.

Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food

The disabled person cannot access or does not have suitable facilities to prepare and cook food for themselves and others living with them.

Better heating

People with limited mobility who remain in one room for long periods usually need a warmer home than able-bodied people.

Control of power, light and heat

The disabled person cannot operate the controls for power, light or heating in their home.

Caring for others

The disabled person cannot move around the home to care for another person who normally lives there, whether they are related to the disabled person. This may include a spouse, partner or family member, another disabled person or a child. Importantly the dependent being cared for need not be disabled.

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Please include your completed [Equality Impact Assessment \(EqIA\)](#). Please note, the draft EqIA should be sent to equalities@stevenage.gov.uk for review prior to policy sign-off.

12 Version History

Date	Outlined Amendments	Author
31/05/2024	Revised policy	Keith Peirson Programme Manager

Once approved, please send a copy of the policy to policy@stevenage.gov.uk for Council records.

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