

Lancaster City Council
Health and Housing Services – Council Housing
Housing Adaptations Policy
December 2012
Version 1.0

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1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 Housing adaptations can play an important role in allowing people to live independently, and in comfort and safety in their own home. This document sets out Lancaster City Council's policy for the provision of aids and adaptations to the homes of tenants living in council accommodation.

2.0 Aims and Objectives

- 2.1 Lancaster City Council is committed to ensuring that council tenants and their immediate families who experience health problems and/or have disabilities can continue to live safely and independently within their own homes.
- 2.2 The objectives of the adaptations service are to:
- Provide a high quality aids and adaptations service to enable disabled tenants and their immediate families to live safely and independently in their own home.
 - To provide an efficient and cost effective adaptations service making best use of the council housing stock, and the budget available.
 - Assist those in need of adaptations to make informed choices about their housing options, facilitating transfers to more appropriate accommodation where required.
 - To raise awareness of the availability of the aids and adaptations service.
 - Set out the approach of Lancaster City Council to dealing effectively and consistently with requests for aids and adaptations.
 - Ensure that where possible vacant adapted properties are re-allocated to those who most need them.

3.0 Scope

- 3.1 This policy applies to Lancaster City Council tenants, applicants applying to be re-housed by Lancaster City Council, and their immediate families.
- 3.2 Leaseholders, owner occupiers and tenants of the private rented sector should contact Lancaster City Council's Home Improvement Agency (Tel: 01524 582257).

4.0 Legislation

- 4.1 Lancaster City Council will, in line with the statutory duties of the Housing Act 1985 and the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970, arrange the provision of appropriate adaptations following assessment and recommendation by a qualified Occupational Therapist, and identify the needs of disabled people and housing provision in the Lancaster district.

- 4.2 In addition, we will ensure that we meet our duties under the Equalities Act 2010 to enable our customers to access an adaptations service which is fair and non discriminatory, through a process which is as simple as possible.
- 4.3 Any assessment of a financial contribution to be made by a tenant with regard to adaptation work will be made in line with The Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996.

5.0 Financial Considerations

5.1 Minor Adaptations

- 5.1.1 Minor adaptations are works which cost £500 or less.
- 5.1.2 The council's policy is to provide minor adaptations without charge to the customer. The provision of these adaptations is based on the recommendation of an Occupational Therapist following a referral from the customer's GP, or a self referral via Social Services. Minor adaptations are then usually funded by Social Services.
- 5.1.3 Examples of minor adaptations include:
- Grab rails
 - Handrails
 - Lever taps
 - Path works
 - Steps

5.2 Major Adaptations

- 5.2.1 Major adaptations are works which cost over £500.
- 5.2.2 When an Occupational Therapy request highlights the need for major adaptations, the council will consider all such requests which are reasonable and practical and meet the essential needs of the customer.
- 5.2.3 Examples of major adaptations include:
- Level access showers
 - Ramps
 - Stair lifts
 - Door widening
 - Extensions
- 5.2.4 In the case of major adaptations a financial assessment is carried out to determine whether the customer is required to contribute to the cost of the work. If no contribution is to be made the council will fund the cost of the

works. If the customer is required to make a financial contribution this will be made clear prior to work commencing.

- 5.2.5 When considering request for major adaptations the council reserves the right to explore other alternatives to ensure that the service being provided is cost effective, and that best use is being made of the available housing stock (see 6.0).

6.0 Extensive Adaptations

- 6.1 Extensive adaptations are major adaptations which cost £10,000 or more. These often involve the provision of an extra bedroom or bathroom.
- 6.2 Where it has been identified that extensive adaptations are required, a meeting will be convened involving the Occupational Therapist, the customer, and relevant staff from the council's Housing Options and Repair and Maintenance services.
- 6.3 In these cases the group will consider whether the work should go ahead, or whether an alternative solution can be found which will continue to meet the essential needs of the customer. Consideration will be given to whether any extensive adaptation work would prevent the best use of the current housing stock, would negatively affect the future lettable of the property, or would prove to be prohibitively expensive.
- 6.4 Before extensive adaptations are carried out to a property other options will always be considered. These options will include the possibility of better use of space within the existing footprint of the property, and the potential for re-housing as an alternative (see 8.2).

7.0 Prioritising Adaptations

- 7.1 Where a need for extensive adaptations has been identified, an assessment is made as to whether the adaptation is urgent or non-urgent. This assessment is made by the Occupational Therapist involved with the case and is based on medical grounds.
- 7.2 Lancaster City Council will then deliver extensive adaptations in line with the prioritisation awarded by the Occupational Therapist. The urgent adaptations will be carried out in date order, followed by the non-urgent cases.
- 7.3 Major adaptations which do not involve extensive works are not prioritised based on need, but are added to the waiting list in date order. These works are then carried out in this order.
- 7.4 All major adaptations are subject to budget availability.

8.0 Making Best Use of Available Stock

8.1 Responsibility

8.1.1 Lancaster City Council has a responsibility to all residents and all those currently on the housing waiting list to make best use of the limited social housing stock available.

8.1.2 While the essential needs of the customer are the key consideration, the use of the available housing stock should be taken into account when considering major or extensive adaptations.

8.2 Re-housing as an alternative

8.2.1 In certain cases re-housing will be identified as an alternative to carrying out major adaptations to a property. This could be to another Lancaster City Council property, or that of an alternative registered provider of Social Housing.

8.2.2 Examples of why this decision may be made include:

- A vacant property which is already suitably adapted to meet the essential needs of the customer can be identified
- A vacant property which is more suitable *to be* adapted to meet the essential needs of the customer 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. For example, level access facilities in upper floor properties.
- Adaptations to a property may reduce its potential to be let in the future

*Once works have commenced on adaptations to an alternative property the customer will be expected to take up the tenancy and move in to this property as soon as is practical.

8.2.3 Such cases will be dealt with on an individual basis, taking into account all circumstances and involving discussion between the Occupational Therapist, Housing Options, RMS and the customer.

8.2.4 Customers 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:

- Removals
- Disconnection and reconnection of cooker
- Refitting of carpets
- Redecoration allowance

- 8.2.5 If the customer refuses a reasonable offer of more suitable alternative accommodation which meets their essential needs, major or extensive adaptations will normally not be carried out at their current property (except under exceptional circumstances).
- 8.2.6 The suitability of an offer of alternative accommodation will be agreed through discussion between the Occupational Therapist, Housing Options, RMS and the customer.

8.3 Exclusions

- 8.3.1 Unless exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise, major adaptations will not be carried out in cases where:
- The customer has a Right to Buy application
 - The customer is under-occupying the current property
 - The property is above ground floor level, and has no lift
 - The layout and/or location of the current property make it unsuitable
 - The works would negatively affect the future lettable of the property
- 8.3.2 In such cases, the customer will receive advice and assistance regarding their housing options and the alternatives open to them.

8.4 Use of the adapted property

- 8.4.1 Once major or extensive adaptations have been completed at a property it is expected that the customer 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).
- 8.4.2 If the customer then applied to be re-housed, unless their circumstances had changed they would normally be considered to be adequately housed, and would have no priority on the housing register.
- 8.4.3 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.

8.5 Letting adapted properties

- 8.5.1 When they become vacant, most currently adapted properties will be let through the choice based lettings service in the district (Ideal Choice Homes).
- 8.5.2 If an applicant requiring adaptations applies to join the housing register they can, following assessment by an occupational therapist, be granted eligibility for particular types of adaptation. They will be asked to complete

a medical form and will be given priority banding based on the information provided.

- 8.5.3 Vacancies will be advertised making it clear what adaptations the property has, and the system will only allow customers who are eligible for those adaptations to bid for the property.
- 8.5.4 The Housing Needs team will monitor the bidding patterns of applicants who require adapted properties to identify 'non-bidders' and to ensure they are aware of how the service works, and are able to access it.

8.6 Adapting Vacant Properties

- 8.6.1 If a customer is offered a vacant un-adapted property and the need for adaptations is then identified, the customer will be referred for a priority assessment by an Occupational Therapist to identify their essential needs and the suitability of the property.
- 8.6.2 If major adaptations are required and the property is deemed suitable, this work will be carried out as a priority where possible and practical, to minimise void times. The customer will be expected to take up the tenancy as soon as is practical. If the customer is able to live in the property whilst awaiting the adaptation work they will be expected to do so.
- 8.6.3 If major adaptations are required and the property is not deemed suitable or there is no funding available to carry out the works, the offer of accommodation may be withdrawn. The customer will be advised regarding their housing options.
- 8.6.4 If minor adaptations are required the customer will be expected to take up the tenancy prior to the adaptations being carried out.
- 8.6.5 Once the Occupational Therapist has made their assessment of a vacant property, Lancaster City Council reserves the right to withdraw an offer of accommodation if the property is not deemed suitable.
- 8.6.6 If the customer disagrees with the assessment made by the Occupational Therapist regarding the works required (see 12.2), the council reserves the right to withdraw an offer of accommodation if this is not resolved within a reasonable timescale.

8.7 Direct Lets

- 8.7.1 If a property becomes vacant and has particularly extensive or specific adaptations the decision may be made not to advertise the property. Instead, it may be offered directly to an applicant requiring those adaptations.
- 8.7.2 The council will hold a list of all the applicants who require particularly extensive or specific adaptations, and information about all stock which

has been extensively adapted. When a property is identified as not being suitable for choice based lettings an attempt can then be made to match it to the applicant most in need, based on priority and waiting time (see 7.0).

8.7.3 The council reserves the right to withdraw adapted properties from the choice based lettings system as appropriate.

9.0 Customer Satisfaction

9.1 Each customer is invited to complete a satisfaction survey following adaptation work. The results of these are monitored by the service management team to respond to any specific problems or trends, and to identify the potential for service improvement.

10.0 Service Standards

10.1 We will:

- Advise you that we have received a recommendation from your OT
- Inform you of the progress of your proposed adaptation
- Give you 7 days notice before commencing work
- Start adaptation work at the time we say we will
- Leave your home in a clean and tidy state and carry out the work in a way that minimises disruption to you

11.0 Performance Indicators

11.1 The indicators used to monitor the housing adaptations service are:

- Number of days notice given before starting work
- Average number of weeks wait for major adaptations (from receipt of OT8 by RMS to work beginning)
- Customer satisfaction surveys

12.0 Appeals and Complaints

12.1 The council has an established corporate complaints procedure. Details of this are available by requesting a copy of the Comments, Compliments and Complaints booklet using the contact details at the end of this document. Alternatively, this information is available online at www.lancaster.gov.uk/council-housing/customer-care.

12.2 Where the customer disagrees with an assessment by an Occupational Therapist regarding the nature of adaptation works required or the suitability of a property, they will be advised to pursue this as a complaint with Lancashire County Council where appropriate.

Contact Information

Health and Housing Services Council Housing

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01524 582929

Email:

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www.lancaster.gov.uk

Our office hours are 9.00 am to 5.00 pm weekdays
(10.00 am to 5.00 pm Wednesdays)

When the office is closed, if there is an emergency,
ring the Council's Emergency Call Centre,
which is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

The number to call is: 01524 67099

Calls may be recorded to help improve
our standard of service and accuracy of information



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