
Aids & Adaptations Policy

1 Introduction and Purpose

- 1.1 This policy sets out how West Kent can support residents to remain in their home independently for as long as possible. This includes being able to carry out essential daily activities which may be affected by long-term health issues or disabilities.
- 1.2 This policy states:
- Who can access this service
 - How new aids and adaptation requests will be considered and approved
 - How we make the best use of existing adaptations in West Kent homes
 - The threshold limits for different types of adaptations
 - Which adaptations will not be funded
- 1.3 This policy provides a framework for working with all local authorities.
- 1.4 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Aids & Adaptations procedure, but also has links to other policies including:
- Housing Options Policy
 - Void Policy
 - Tenancy Policy
 - Disrepair and Recharge Policy
 - Neighbourhood Management Policy

- Complaints Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Accessibility Statement

2 Definitions

- 2.1 Under this policy and accompanying procedure, a person is considered 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 that have lasted for at least 12 months, or which are likely to last for the remainder of a person's life.
- 2.2 The definition of a 'disabled adaptation' for the purpose of this policy is an alteration to the building or garden which comes within a person's home. A 'disabled aid' is an additional piece of equipment.
- 2.3 We provide two types of adaptations, minor and major. Minor adaptations are smaller works that typically cost less than £1000. Major adaptations are bigger works that typically cost more than £1000.

3 Responsibilities

- 3.1 The policy applies to West Kent residents, general needs, affordable rent, supported and sheltered housing residents.
- 3.2 It does not apply to leaseholders, freeholders, shared owners, intermediate market rent residents, or Kent Excellent Homes for All (KEHFA) managed properties.
- 3.3 The Head of Support holds overall responsibility for this policy and ensuring that it is followed within West Kent. An annual report will also be forwarded to the Executive Team and the Communities and Housing Committee.
- 3.4 For clarification, the responsibilities of both teams within West Kent and externally are shown below:

West Kent – Head of Support	Accountable for the Aids & Adaptations Service.
Kent County Council	Responsible for:

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • appointing Occupational Therapist to assess resident's needs • sending adaptation requests to the relevant local authority and West Kent • consideration and assessing of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) application.
Enablement Team	Accountable for day-to-day delivery of aids and adaptations works. Responsible for progressing DFG applications and managing the delivery of works, including liaison with the local authority's Occupational Therapy Service
Local Authority Housing Strategy Manager	Responsible for approval of Disabled Facilities Grant Applications
Brenwards Building Surveyor – Partner Contractor	Responsible for carrying out the works
West Kent Head of Property/Asset	Accountable for the maintenance, repairs and servicing of aids and adaptations throughout their life cycle.

4 Regulation

4.1 We work in partnership with local authorities and within current requirements and legislation, including:

- Housing Grant, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & 2005
- Equality Act 2010
- European Commission Human Rights Act 1998

5 Policy Statement

5.1 Working closely with partners, West Kent aims to support residents, where possible, to remain in their own homes and communities through the provision of aids and adaptations.

5.2 We will:

- Ensure that aids and adaptations are completed to the specifications included in an Occupational Therapist Assessment
- To treat residents applying for aids and adaptations in a fair and equitable way
- Balance the needs of residents who need aids and adaptations with our duty to manage our housing stock effectively.

6 Funding

6.1 Funding for major adaptations will be met from the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), which is paid by Local Authorities from their Better Care Funding.

6.2 Further to recommendations received from an Occupational Therapist, West Kent will support the resident through the initial stages of the works appraisal and their application for a Disabled Facilities Grant working closely with the relevant local authority. An administration and management fee will be charged to the local authority by West Kent for this service.

6.3 West Kent will provide an annual budget for minor adaptations to supplement local authority grant funding.

7 Costs exceeding grant limit

7.1 Applications where works exceed the £30,000 DFG limit will be considered on a case-by-case basis with additional funding sourced from both West Kent; local authority discretionary budgets; NHS and charitable trusts where possible.

8 Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

8.1 Under the Housing Grants Construction & Regeneration Act 1996, there is a specific duty upon the local authority to provide Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to eligible applicants to meet the cost of fixed equipment and adaptations to homes to meet a disabled person's needs. The mandatory element of a DFG is subject to a maximum grant of £30,000 and may be dependant upon a means test of the

applicant's resources if not on qualifying benefits or under the age of 18. This may result in the applicant being required to make a contribution towards the cost.

- 8.2 The local authority must be satisfied that the adaptation is necessary and appropriate to meet the persons needs and that works are reasonable and can be done considering the age and condition of the property.

9 Major adaptations

- 9.1 These are works costing over £1,000 and usually involve structural alterations, improvements to, or additions to the fabric of the property.

- 9.2 We only accept requests for major adaptations that have been assessed and recommended by an Occupational Therapist (OT).

- 9.3 Following the assessment, the Occupational Therapist will provide a written recommendation to the local authority and West Kent.

- 9.4 Once we receive the recommendations, a surveyor and member of West Kent's enablement team will visit the property to consider the recommendations, liaising with key professionals and arranging case meetings where necessary. Plans will be drawn up and agreed; building regulations sought (if necessary), financial assessments carried out where necessary and the Disabled Facilities Grant application completed and submitted to the relevant local authority.

- 9.5 The cost of the works will be provided through the DFG grant process, which the enablement team will assist in making to the local authority on behalf of the resident, once this has been approved, we will arrange for the works to be completed.

- 9.6 Residents will be expected to remain in their home while major adaptations are carried out if it is reasonable for them to do so.

- 9.7 The local authority must accept and approve an appropriately made DFG application and pay grant monies within the nominated timescales. Once an application has been formally submitted the local authority has to give a decision within 6 months and , once the grant is approved, work must be completed within 12 months.

- 9.8 Examples of major adaptations include but not limited to:

- Level access shower
- Kitchen refurbishment with low-level rise and fall units (appliances excluded)
- Through floor lifts / Stairlifts
- Large permanent ramps

- Door widening
- Electronically operated door and window openers
- Specialist toilets
- Building Extensions
- External lift platforms

10 Minor adaptations

- 10.1 These are works which cost £1000 or less and will be carried out by West Kent. The provision of these may be based on the recommendations of an Occupational Therapist whilst assessing for major adaptations or be requested by residents, relatives, carers, GPs or other specialists such as caseworkers or West Kent staff.
- 10.2 Where relevant, requests for minor adaptations may need to be supported by appropriate evidence, such as a letter from a medical practitioner.
- 10.3 If no measurement details or specification for the minor adaptation is provided, a Trusted Assessor visit to the property may be required. Whilst at the property a Trusted Assessor will review the needs of the person and consider the most appropriate aid or adaptation; location to be installed, taking necessary measurements.
- 10.4 Once the minor adaptation is agreed a works order will be placed to carry out the works.
- 10.5 We aim to provide a fully funded fast-track service for minor pre-approved adaptations and to complete these within two months of approving a request.
- 10.6 Examples of minor adaptations include but not limited to:
- Grab rails
 - Hand rails
 - Drop-down rails
 - Mopstick rails
 - Lever taps
 - Steps
 - Small ramps

11 Minor equipment

11.1 West Kent are also able to assess for and provide some minor equipment. Our enablement team are Community Equipment Assessor trained and have access to Kent County Council provided equipment. Some examples of community equipment that we can assess on your behalf are:

- Raised toilet seat
- Toilet frame
- Bath Board
- Perching Stool

11.2 An Occupational Therapist within your local authority area would be required to carry out an assessment for more specialist equipment such as hoists; lifting equipment; wheelchairs and mobile shower chairs.

12 Refusal of adaptation requests

12.1 West Kent may refuse requests for aids and adaptations on the following grounds:

- Adaptations for the use of or storage of mobility scooters
- Certain pieces of non-specialist fixtures or equipment and appliances will not be classed as aids and adaptations. For example, ovens and hobs and other appliances forming part of an adapted kitchen
- Where the tenant is actively seeking rehousing
- Where a request is made to provide major adaptations such as flush floor showers in first floor flats and above except where there is a lift. Future lettability becomes an issue as many disabled people with mobility problems who could benefit from such a shower may have problems negotiating stairs.
- Where the property is under occupied, and it is considered there would be a demand for the property from larger households
- Where the tenant occupies a property that is scheduled for modification or major refurbishment within the next two years.
- If there are possession proceedings against the resident

12.2 Where it is not reasonably practical to carry out the necessary adaptations to enable the resident to live independently in their own home, West Kent will support the tenant to find alternative accommodation which matches their housing requirement and need, making the best use of existing stock.

13 Building Extensions

13.1 If you or a family member living in the home has a disability that requires additional space, we will in the first instance look to move you to a larger home. To do this you would need to join the housing register through the Kent Homechoice website and bid on homes that meet your need. If after a minimum of 12 months you have not been able to find a suitable alternative property through the housing register, we may, in exceptional circumstances, agree to extend your current home. Financial support through a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is likely to be available from the local authority to meet some or all of the cost.

13.2 We have guidelines to help us make the decision, but as the grant may not cover the full cost of the extension it is entirely at West Kent's discretion to decide if it wishes to make funding available for work of this nature to its homes. There is no right for any resident to have an extension request granted. West Kent reserves the right to refuse any request having considered all the information available.

13.3 Not all our homes are suitable to extend, and any application would depend on West Kent being able to get planning permission.

The rent charged for your home may increase and if you are not able to pay that higher rent we will not agree to your request. We will ask you to agree to vary your tenancy agreement (as a condition of completing the works) so that when or if you no longer require the extension/adaptations, we can help you to move.

14 Adaptations to common parts / communal access

14.1 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.

14.2 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, taking into account the health, safety and needs of all affected occupants and the most appropriate funding where necessary.

15 Installing own aids and adaptations – home improvements

15.1 In some circumstances residents may wish to install their own aids and adaptations. West Kent will need to give the resident permission in writing through the home improvement process which can be found on West Kent's website. West Kent will not maintain these aids and adaptations and the resident will be responsible for any servicing or repair costs that are needed as a result of the adaptation.

16 Repairs and maintenance of aids and adaptations

- 16.1 We take responsibility for the repair and maintenance of aids and adaptations that we have installed, except where a defect period still applies.
- 16.2 Repairs to adaptations are subject to our repairs policy, and as such repairs can be recharged to the resident if they are due to negligence or deliberate misuse.
- 16.3 If a resident has replaced fixtures or fittings themselves, we are not responsible for any repair or replacement.

17 Specialist equipment

- 17.1 We maintain, repair and service specialist equipment such as stairlifts, through floor lifts and wash and dry toilets following the end of the warranty period.
- 17.2 If the equipment cannot be repaired due to parts becoming obsolete, a further Disabled Facilities Grant may need to be considered.

18 Retaining and utilising adaptations

- 18.1 We retain minor and major adaptations such as permanent ramps, flush floor showers and lifts when an adapted property is vacated and becomes void. However, West Kent reserves the right to remove an adaptation if it is cost effective to do so.
- 18.2 As part of the local authority approval of a Disabled Facilities Grant for a major adaptation, we would expect the resident to remain in the property for a minimum of five years. There may be exceptions where the resident's needs have changed in these instances and the local authority, Occupational Therapist and West Kent must agree a move is necessary.

19 Asset management and record keeping

- 19.1 We maintain accurate and up-to-date asset management data with relevant information about major aids and adaptations. These details are available to inform the management of allocations and lettings and the maintenance of the adaptation itself.

20 Housing allocations

- 20.1 If you or someone in your household has a disability or long-term health issues, we will try to match you to one of our homes that already has suitable adaptations in place. We may not allocate you a property you have bid for if it is not suitable;

cannot be adapted (within a reasonable timeframe and cost) or where there is more suitable accommodation available. If we allocate you a home that requires adaptations, we will expect you to move into that home prior to the works being completed as they can take some time to be designed and installed.

21 Mutual exchanges

21.1 Mutual exchanges may not be approved if the resident's current property meets their existing housing need and their application is for a non-adapted property. Applications will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Permission may be approved where the exchange is for a like-for-like property and both parties require the adaptations. Refer to our mutual exchange and allocations policy for more information.

22 Reporting

22.1 We monitor access to services provided under this policy to ensure equality and use the results to improve the service and to inform budgetary changes.

22.2 We will maintain robust processes for monitoring Disabled Facilities Grant recommendations, completion of works and quality inspections.

22.3 All requests from residents to accommodate their needs are considered and acted on, where possible in accordance with the Equality Act 2010. The duty only arises if West Kent is requested to make an adjustment by the resident or by someone on their behalf.

22.4 There is no legal requirement under the Equalities Act for West Kent to make any changes which would consist of or include the removal or alteration of a physical feature of the home.

22.5 This policy aligns with our wider Equality and Diversity Policy.

23 Appeals and complaints

23.1 If you want to appeal a decision by Kent County Council or a Local Authority in relation to an adaptation or Disabled Facilities Grant, you may need to contact them directly. Please discuss the decision with our Enablement team.

23.2 If you are dissatisfied with the service received from West Kent in relation to the provision of adaptations, including our contractors, the issue will be addressed by

West Kent. Please report any dissatisfaction to us at your earliest opportunity, so we can investigate the matter for you.

24 Performance and monitoring

- 24.1 Feedback from the residents on the quality of the completed work is important to West Kent to help in the continuous improvement of the service.
- 24.2 Residents, alongside the enablement team are required to 'sign off' the completed works carried out within their home following major adaptations. The local authority then carries out a telephone satisfaction survey once all works have been completed.
- 24.3 Regular performance meetings are carried out internally and with the relevant local authority to ensure each case is being managed effectively and the completed works finished to a good standard and within timeframes.

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