



Places to live. Space to grow.

Aids & Adaptations Policy

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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
- What the threshold limits are for different types of adaptations
- What adaptations will not be funded

This policy provides a framework for working with all local authorities.

2 Definitions

2.1 Under this policy and accompanying procedure, a person is considered as being disabled if they have a physical, sensory, cognitive 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. This does not include responsive repairs or improvements. 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 £1,000. Major adaptations are bigger works that typically cost more than £1,000. See appendix A for examples.

3 Scope

3.1 The policy applies to West Kent residents including general needs, affordable rent, supported and sheltered housing residents.

3.2 However, this policy and procedure only applies where West Kent have a partnering agreement with the Local Authority. In other areas the Occupational Therapists should refer to the Local Authority, who would arrange the grant and works themselves or with the Home Improvement Agency. In these cases, residents would need to follow West Kent's Home Improvement process (See also 15.1).

3.3 This policy does not apply to leaseholders, freeholders, shared owners, intermediate market rent residents, or Kent Excellent Homes for All (KEHFA) managed properties. In our KEHFA properties most adaptations are assessed by the occupational therapists, with works carried out by the Home Improvement

Agency, following a grant of permission from Kent County Council and West Kent through the tenant improvement process.

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
- 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 homes effectively, taking account of both reasonable adjustments and the Equalities Act 2010.

5.3 All requests from residents to accommodate their needs are considered and acted on 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.

5.4 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.

5.5 West Kent will look at alternatives to adaptations where these may be more appropriate. This may include exploring the possibility of residents moving to more appropriate or previously adapted accommodation.

5.6 This policy should be read in conjunction with the Vulnerability Policy, which explains our approach to helping vulnerable West Kent residents, ensuring that our services make provision for known vulnerabilities.

5.7 As part of the local authority approval of a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) for a major adaptation, the resident must agree to remain in the property for a minimum of five years. There may be exceptions where the resident's needs have changed, and in these instances the local authority, occupational therapist and West Kent

must agree that a move is necessary.

6 Funding

- 6.1 Funding for major adaptations up to the £30,000 grant limit will be met from the DFG, which is paid by local authorities from 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 DFG, 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: 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 (DFG) to eligible applicants to meet the cost of fixed equipment and adaptations to homes to meet a disabled person's needs. This may result in the applicant being required to contribute towards the cost.
- 8.2 The mandatory element of a DFG is subject to a maximum grant of £30,000 and may be dependent upon a means test of the applicant's resources if not on qualifying benefits or under the age of 18.
- 8.3 The local authority must be satisfied that the adaptation is necessary and appropriate to meet the person's needs and that works are reasonable and can be done considering the age and condition of the home.

9 Minor Adaptations Process

- 9.1 These are works which cost £1,000 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, General Practitioners or other specialists such as caseworkers or West Kent staff.
- 9.2 Where relevant, requests for minor adaptations may need to be supported by appropriate evidence, such as a letter from a medical practitioner.
- 9.3 If no measurement details or specifications for the minor adaptation is provided, a

visit to the property may be required by a Trusted Assessor. These will usually be West Kent or Brenwards staff who have a formal Trusted Assessor qualification, allowing them to assess for simple aids and adaptations. Whilst at the property they will review the needs of the person and consider the most appropriate aid or adaptation; location to be installed, taking necessary measurements.

- 9.4 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 Minor Equipment / Specialist Equipment

- 10.1 An OT within the 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.

11 Major Adaptations Process

- 11.1 These are works costing over £1,000 and usually involve structural alterations, improvements to, or additions to the fabric of the property.
- 11.2 Occupational therapists (OT) are external health care professionals. Following receipt of a referral, the OT will carry out an assessment of the need for aids and adaptations in the resident's home. We only accept requests for major adaptations that have been assessed and recommended by an OT.
- 11.3 Following the assessment, where the OT has assessed that there is a need, they will provide a letter of support and written recommendation to the local authority and West Kent.
- 11.4 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 DFG application completed and submitted to the relevant local authority.
- 11.5 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.
- 11.6 Residents will be expected to remain in their home while major adaptations are carried out if it is reasonable to do so. If it is unsuitable for residents to remain in the property whilst works are ongoing, we would follow West Kent's Decant Policy. social services would manage and organise any respite care needs identified.
- 11.7 In the event that aids or equipment have been purchased but not yet installed as part of the approved DFG works, and the disabled person moves or intends to move without West Kent knowledge or approval within the 5-year certified date, the cost of the aid or equipment may be recharged from that person.
- 11.8 If an adaptation becomes unsuitable due to the disabled person's changing medical

needs, then a new OT assessment would be required.

12 Timescales for Major Adaptations

- 12.1 Once an application for a DFG has been made the local authority have up to 6 months to approve this.
- 12.2 Once the budget and works are approved by the local authority, West Kent have up to one year to complete the works, though we will endeavour to complete this within 6 months.

13 Refusal of Adaptation Requests

- 13.1 West Kent may refuse requests for aids and adaptations on the following grounds:
- If there are possession proceedings being considered against the resident
 - If the resident is seeking rehousing
 - If the property is scheduled for major modification or refurbishment in the next two years
 - If the adaptation requested is for the storage of a mobility scooter
 - If the equipment or appliance is non-specialist (i.e., a standard oven or hob, within an adapted kitchen).
 - If a major adaptation, such as a flush floor shower, has been requested above ground floor, when there is no access via a lift.
- 13.2 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 resident to find alternative accommodation which matches their housing requirement and need, making the best use of existing homes.

14 Building Extensions

- 14.1 Where a larger property has been recommended, West Kent will, in the first instance look to move people requiring a larger home to a more suitable home.
- 14.2 We will not extend homes unless in extreme circumstances and various criteria need to be met. This includes available budget and funding, ability to extend the home and also ability to get necessary planning permission.
- 14.3 The rent charged would increase and if the resident is not able to pay that higher rent then West Kent will not agree to the request.
- 14.4 West Kent will ask the resident to agree to varying their tenancy agreement (as a condition of completing the works) so that when or if the extension/adaptations are no longer required, West Kent can help the resident to move.

15 Adaptations to Common Parts / Communal Access

- 15.1 Stair lifts in communal stairwells will not be installed.
- 15.2 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, considering the health, safety, needs and implications for all affected occupants and the most appropriate funding where necessary.

16 Installing Own Aids and Adaptations – Home Improvements

- 16.1 In some circumstances residents may wish to install their own aids and adaptations. The resident will need to seek permission to do so in writing through West Kent's website.
- 16.2 West Kent will not maintain these aids and adaptations and the resident will be responsible for any servicing or repair costs that are needed because of the adaptation.

17 Repairs and Maintenance of Aids and Adaptations

- 17.1 We take responsibility for the repair and maintenance of aids and adaptations that we have installed, except where a warranty period still applies.
- 17.2 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.
- 17.3 If a resident has replaced fixtures or fittings themselves, we are not responsible for any repair or replacement.
- 17.4 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.

18 Replacement

- 18.1 If the equipment cannot be repaired e.g., due to parts becoming obsolete, a further DFG may need to be considered due to the cost and the full process of applying will have to take place. As a result, this sits outside of day-to-day replacement timescales.

19 Retaining and Utilising Adaptations

- 19.1 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.

20 Asset Management and Record Keeping

- 20.1 We will 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.

21 Housing Allocations

- 21.1 We will try to match applicants who require adaptations to one of our homes that already has suitable adaptations in place. We may not allocate properties that are not suitable or cannot be adapted (within a reasonable timeframe and cost) or where there is more suitable accommodation available. West Kent will expect applicants to move into a suitably identified home prior to the works being completed as they can take some time to be designed and installed.

22 Responsibilities

- 22.1 The Head of Support holds overall responsibility for this policy and ensures that it is followed within West Kent. An annual report will also be forwarded to the Executive Team and the Communities and Housing Committee.
- 22.2 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 and Medway 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 (district/borough) and West Kent• consideration and assessing of the 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 DFG 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.
Trusted Assessors	Responsible for measuring and ordering small aids and adaptations

23 Reporting

- 23.1 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.
- 23.2 Reports on Aids & Adaptations will be made twice a year to the Executive team and Communities & Housing Committee.

24 Appeals and Complaints

- 24.1 If a decision by Kent County Council or a Local Authority in relation to an adaptation or DFG requires an appeal – then the relevant body will need to be contacted directly, as this falls outside the remit of the policy.

Appendix A:

Examples of major adaptations include but are 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

Examples of minor adaptations include but not limited to:

- Grab rails
- Handrails
- Drop-down rails
- Mopstick rails
- Lever taps
- Steps
- Small ramps

West Kent is also able to assess for and provide some minor equipment. Our enablement team and several other staff in the organisation 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

RELATED POLICY DOCUMENTS AND SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS

Related Policies

- Housing Options Policy
- Tenancy Policy
- Recharge Policy
- Complaints Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy
- Accessibility Statement
- Vulnerability Policy