



POLICY DOCUMENT

Group Member: Progress Housing Group

Service Area: Housing Operations

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INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Progress Housing Group (the Group) is committed to meeting our tenants' need for independence, privacy, and dignity. We aim to help people continue to live independently and comfortably in their homes for as long as possible, with the minimum intrusion or intervention.
- 1.2 We have statutory requirements to fulfil, under the Equality Act, the Group must consider "reasonable adjustments" that enable tenants with a disability to live in their homes.
- 1.3 The Group also has a regulatory requirement to cooperate with relevant organisations to provide an adaptation service that meets tenants' needs.
- 1.4 This policy provides the basis for all Group business areas to produce and implement procedures for providing aids and adaptations. There are some differences in procedures between business areas.

2. SCOPE OF THE POLICY

- 2.1 This policy covers the Group's general needs, independent living and RWP supported living properties (excluding LiLAC schemes which are subject to a separate policy), and their respective tenants.

3. RESPONSIBILITY

- 3.1 **The Director (Housing Operations)** is responsible for approving this policy.
- 3.2 **Operations Directors** - are responsible for overseeing the implementation of this policy and its effectiveness within their business stream.
- 3.3 **Head of Operations (Housing Support Services)** and the **RWP Head of Housing Operations** – are responsible for managing the Assessment Officer (AO) and the RWP Health and Wellbeing Officer respectively, and the adaptation budget for Progress Homes customers and RWP.
- 3.4 **The Assessment Officer in Progress Homes** – is responsible for the assessment and processing of all applications received for aids and adaptations for Progress Homes properties. They will manage each case, using our electronic housing system, from application through to completion, working with the tenant to achieve the best possible outcome for their circumstances. They will act as the subject matter expert to provide advice and guidance, work with external agencies and partners and monitor works to ensure they are completed in a timely manner to the satisfaction of the customer.

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3.5 The **Health and Wellbeing Officer** will:

3.5.1 assess applications for aids and adaptations received by RWP either via support providers, commissioners, Occupational Therapists (OT), or directly from a customer or their appointed representative and offer advice . They will also ensure adaptaions are passed through to the RWP surveyor and compliance team for input. They will ensure that where a third party is carrying out work at a property that the correct legal arrangement is in place (such as a Licence) to satisfy all aspects of H&S and compliance. They will also maintain up to date information on the housing management systems.

3.6 **The Group Surveyor** – is responsible for:

- 3.6.1 giving technical advice and, where necessary, drawing up specifications for work
- 3.6.2 liaison and site meetings with OT's where required
- 3.6.3 carrying out post-inspections
- 3.6.4 the tendering of contracts for aids and adaptation work where required, ensuring an effective supply chain is in place
- 3.6.5 discuss proposed changes with the AO and the OT when work cannot be carried out as per the request from the AO. The AO will make sure that the customer is fully aware of the implications of the proposed changes
- 3.6.6 any changes to what has been agreed in the initial specification must not be carried out without the prior approval of the appropriate lead person for the local council providing a DFG.

4. POLICY

4.1 **Aims and Objectives**

- 4.1.1 **Customer first** – Progress Homes and RWP aim to take a person-centred approach to provide adaptations to our properties. We recognise that aids and adaptations support people living independently in their homes. We will seek the best possible outcomes to support the tenant for their own individual circumstance.
- 4.1.2 **Partnership working** - We will work in partnership with the local authority (and support providers where required) to maximise available funding and support to ensure that the needs of tenants requiring adaptations are met. The Group will also work with

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Occupational Therapists, local authorities, social services, and other external agencies to deliver a quality service under professional advice.

- 4.1.3 **Value for money** - We will ensure we maximise available resource and funding through the best use of available adapted homes, robust procurement of services, and budget management.
- 4.1.4 **Forward thinking** – We will ensure good data quality and collection of customer insight allows us to make informed decisions and plan ahead for the benefit of our customer groups.

Funding

- 4.1.5 Progress Homes and RWP will set an annual budget for aids and adaptation funding. The budget will be monitored by the Assessment Officer, RWP Health and Wellebing Officer Head of Operations and RWP Head of Housing Operations for each respective business stream monthly, and the budget will be reviewed as necessary.
- 4.1.6 Where an applicant can fund the adaptation themselves, or has access to funding from a third party (including a local authority), permission should be requested in writing by the tenant. Permission will only be refused in exceptional circumstances e.g, under occupation, arrears history, where a property is in the defect period, or the physical viability of the property. The decision will be clearly communicated to the applicant and any reasons for refusal discussed with the applicant so that alternative options may be considered.
- 4.1.7 The Group will rely on the local authority's information regarding the applicant's access to funding. Where the local authority determines an applicant has the financial means to pay for the adaptation, then contact will be made to discuss the option to fund the adaptation themselves or consider a level of match funding up to 50%.
- 4.1.8 Where the Group is required to fund part or all of the adaptation, this policy provides the grounds on which the application will be assessed for acceptance.

Applications

- 4.1.9 Adaptations will not normally be paid for by the Group in any property where:
- The occupancy is short term in nature

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- The Group leases the property from a head landlord. The application will normally be referred to the head landlord in these cases for their assessment of whether they will do the work required. In exceptional cases, the work may be funded by the Group, but in all such cases, the written consent of the head landlord will be required.

4.1.10 The Group will **not** normally fund the following types of work (although there may be some exceptions within RWP properties):

- extensions or loft conversions
- portable equipment, including specialist W.C. seats, induction loops, walking, and toileting aids, portable heating or lighting, etc.
- the removal of adaptations from existing Group adapted properties unless an OT requests this following an individual assessment
- permanent constructed ramp provision in non-supported living schemes. Portable ramps can be provided (in supported living schemes the provision of permanent level-access ramps will be considered)
- replacement of level-access showers with a bath unless an OT has requested this following an individual assessment
- provision of over-bath showers unless requested by an OT following an individual assessment
- additional parking facilities
- the adaptation of more than one entrance to a property
- the provision of electric sockets or ramps for electric scooters where a risk assessment highlights a danger to the customer or other residents from using them, or where the cost of such works would be unreasonably high
- landscaping - unless the work is essential for access
- works where there is a negative impact on the communal areas of a shared property; this may be considered following consultation with all residents.

4.1.11 In all cases (with the exception of RWP supported living schemes) tenants in rent arrears on the waiting list for major adaptation work will be asked to agree to a payment plan to pay off the arrears. Payments under this agreement must usually commence and be

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maintained for a reasonable period of time before the adaptation is carried out. As a guide:

- where the arrears are less than £500, the customer will be expected to maintain a payment plan for at least three months
- where the arrears are greater than £500, the customer will be expected to maintain a payment plan for at least six months.

4.1.12 As with all other aspects of the aids and adaptation service the Group provides, the requirements concerning rent arrears may vary in exceptional circumstances and must be authorised by the Head of Operations.

4.1.13 An application may be considered under the Group's Match Funding Policy where no funding is provided under the Aids and Adaptations Policy.

4.1.14 **Minor Aids and Adaptations.** These are usually defined as works with an estimated cost of less than £1,000. The Group will pay for minor aids and adaptations where the need for the work has been assessed by an OT or by the Group's own AO, subject to budget availability.

4.1.15 **Major Adaptations.** These are usually defined as adaptations with an estimated cost of £1,000 or more. All such applications should normally be referred for assessment by an OT to determine whether or not an adaptation is required.

4.1.16 A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) application will be submitted to the local authority if the adaptation falls within the DFG criteria. Depending on the local authority, the success of the application and the amount provided will vary.

4.1.17 Where a positive recommendation has been received from an OT and DFG resources and/or the Group's budget allows, the Group will facilitate the provision of adaptations.

Re-housing as an alternative

4.1.18 In some circumstances where funding from the Group has been requested, it may be reasonable to meet a tenant's needs by asking them to consider a move to another home. Examples of this may include:

- where it would be easier and/or more cost-effective to provide the adaptation in another location, e.g. another home already benefiting from the adaptation is, or is likely to be, available to the applicant within a reasonable time, or carrying out the

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work in the applicant's current home is expected to lead to significant further costs either now or at a later date

- where it is considered likely that the applicant will need to, or wish to, move to other accommodation within the foreseeable future to meet their longer-term housing needs
- where the applicant is under-occupying their current home and it is considered likely that there would be demand for the home from other larger households.
- For RWP schemes-where even if the work was undertaken the tenant could not safely evacuate in the vent of a fire

4.1.19 In all such circumstances, the option of a move will be discussed with the tenant (or advocate/commissioner/family member) and their views will be fully taken into account before a decision is made. Practical and financial assistance may be provided by the Group where required in the transfer process.

4.1.20 Where the applicant does not wish to move, but the Group regards a move as reasonable, the application for an adaptation will be given a much lower priority.

4.1.21 In all cases where a move is agreed upon with the applicant or is considered reasonable by the Group, a timeframe will be determined for a suitable move to be identified, following which a full review of the application will take place. For RWP tenants, a reassessment of the tenants needs will usually be requested by the relevant Adult Social Care Team.

4.1.22 The purpose of this review is to ensure that where a decision or an adaptation is deferred pending a move, there is a reasonable prospect of such a move being identified within a reasonable period of time.

Procurement

4.1.23 Property Services will adopt the supervisory role so far as adaptation works are concerned. Property Services will be responsible for developing the service specification, establishing the supply chain and procuring aids and adaptations services unless other local agreements are in place.

Maximising the value of investment in adaptations

4.1.24 The Group aim to ensure that, wherever possible, aids and adaptations are utilised when re-letting a property. Customers in

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need of adapted properties will be prioritised for the allocation of housing with suitable adaptations that meet their needs.

- 4.1.25 Following the installation or removal of adaptations, the relevant IT systems will be updated to keep an electronic record of adapted properties within the Group.
- 4.1.26 For Progress Homes, all adapted properties available for allocation, excluding supported living schemes, will be placed on the choice-based lettings system, wherever possible, to ensure the process is open and transparent. There may be individual cases where significant adaptations have been carried out where a direct let may be made to match the property to the applicant most in need of the property.
- 4.1.27 RWP will always work with local authority social services teams and other external agencies to identify appropriate applicants for adapted properties.
- 4.1.28 The Group will capture profiling information from its customers to identify and assess potential future demand for aids and adaptations.

Removal of adaptations at request of tenant

- 4.1.29 Where adaptations have been carried out to a property, these will not normally be reversed, e.g. where a bath is replaced with a level access shower, except in exceptional circumstances. This could include a medical condition where evidence would be required from the doctor to demonstrate the need to remove the adaptation.

Monitoring

- 4.1.30 The AO for Progress Homes and the RWP Head of Housing Operations for RWP, will monitor the budget for aids, adaptations, and improvements monthly. For Progress Homes, monitoring will include the number of transfers completed when considering adaptations and the total value of works completed on our properties (including local authority spend).
- 4.1.31 The AO and RWP Health and Wellbeing Officer will monitor performance on timescales for responding to requests and completing any approved work. We aim to complete minor works within 28 days, but there is no time scale set for major adaptations as this relies on 3rd parties.
- 4.1.32 The Group will carry out a customer satisfaction survey following every adaptation completed and results will be compiled quarterly.

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4.1.33 100% of all major works and 10% of minor works are inspected by a surveyor who will monitor the standard of the work.

4.2 Definitions

4.2.1 O.T.6 - Occupational Therapist Recommendation

4.2.2 Customer/applicant – any person, tenant, leaseholder, or advocate contacting the Group to seek information about aids and adaptations.

4.2.3 “Disability“under the Equality Act 2010 - In the Act, a person has a disability if:

- they have a physical or mental impairment
- the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day-to-day activities

People who have had a disability in the past that meet this definition are also protected by the Act.

4.2.4 Minor adaptations include items such as:

- Hand/grab rails
- Key safes
- Raised doorsteps
- Door intercom systems
- Adjustment to door handles/window latches
- Adhoc requests such as shower screens, safety gates, etc.
- Temporary ramp

4.2.5 Major Adaptations – include items such as:

- Walk-in showers
- Ramps
- Lifts
- Extensions (to meet of the applicant’s needs)
- Room conversions

4.2.6 Improvements - include items that are considered an adaptation that would benefit anyone who may live in the property in the future, such as:

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- Use of specialist wall covering i.e. Perspex or padding
- Use of specialist flooring i.e. hard-wearing or easy to clean
- Soundproofing
- Replace light pendant fittings with flush-to-the-ceiling fixtures to prevent a tenant from pulling off the lights

4.3 References

- 4.3.1 The Regulatory framework for social housing in England from 2012
- 4.3.2 Equalities Act 2010
- 4.3.3 Minor Adaptations without Delay: A Practical Guide and Technical Specifications for Housing Associations (2006)
- 4.3.4 The Disability Discrimination Act (2005)
- 4.3.5 Reform Order (2002)
- 4.3.6 The Secretary of State for Health 2003
- 4.3.7 The Human Rights Act (1998)
- 4.3.8 The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act (1996) as amended by the Regulatory
- 4.3.9 Housing Act (1980) and (1985)
- 4.3.10 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (1970)
- 4.3.11 The Community Care (Delayed Discharges etc.) Act. (Qualifying Services) England Regulations

5. IMPLEMENTATION

- 5.1.1 General awareness of the policy will be raised through the Group intranet with examples of work carried out.
- 5.1.2 Specific training will be provided to the leads for Aids and Adaptations to undertake the application and delivery process.

6. REVIEW

- 6.1 This policy will be reviewed as and when required but within a maximum of three years.

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7. DATA PROTECTION

- 7.1 In carrying out aids and adaptations, the Group are required to handle and store personal information, including special categories of personal data (i.e. medical conditions and disabilities). All processing will be carried out in line with the Group's Data Protection Policy

8. EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 This policy has been assessed as having a positive impact on disability because it enables customers to live with greater independence.