

Cheltenham Borough Council

Aids and Adaptations Policy for Council Housing

Version Control

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Consultees

Internal

- Public and Environmental Health Manager
- Head of Regulatory Compliance
- Empty Homes Team Leader
- Head of Tenancy Sustainment
- Housing Options Manager.
- Housing Partnership Manager
- Interim Head of Finance
- Head of One Legal

External:

- OT service (Gloucestershire Health and Care Trust)
- Adult Social Care (Gloucestershire County Council)
- Children's Social Care (Gloucestershire County Council)
- Accessibility Forum

Distribution

Email

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Introduction and purpose of the policy

Home adaptations are changes made to the fabric and fixtures of a home to make it safer and easier to get around and to use for everyday tasks like cooking and bathing. Adapting a home environment can help restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for individuals and their families. Adaptations can include the installation of stair-lifts, level access showers, wash and dry toilets, ramps, wider doors, and, in some instances, bespoke home extensions to existing dwellings as well as improvements to access to and from gardens.

Cheltenham Borough Council ("The council") recognises the importance of adaptations in supporting its most vulnerable tenants to maintain their health, wellbeing and quality of life outcomes as well as sustaining tenancies and creating sustainable communities.

This policy sets out how the council will provide an aids and adaptations service to eligible residents, to help with adapting their homes and communal areas in blocks of flats. The assistance offered will be undertaken in line with relevant legislation, good practice guidance and deliver value for money. The policy also supports the council to deliver the aims and objectives as set out in several of its strategies and plans including the Corporate Plan, 2025-28 *Key priority two: Quality homes, safe and strong communities* and the Housing Strategy, 2023-28 *Key priority five: We will invest in our communities to help make them safer, stronger and healthier*.

Where possible, the council will use this policy to enable tenants to remain both safe and independent in their own home to support positive health and wellbeing outcomes. However, in certain circumstances, and where the council has considered appropriate adaptation options, alternative accommodation options, working with tenants, will be explored to try and meet tenant's needs.

Aims and scope of the policy

This policy sets out how the council will support eligible residents and meet its statutory obligations for the provision of adaptations, as landlord of the property.

The council directly funds such adaptations, and the aim of this policy is to provide guidance and understanding of the council's approach to the provision of adaptations to its dwellings and communal areas, to enable residents to remain living independently and carry out essential daily activities for as long as possible.

Under the terms of this policy, a person is regarded 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. A long-term effect refers to disabilities that have lasted for at least 12 months, or where the effects of which will last for at least 12 months, or which are likely to last for the remainder of a person's life.

The policy refers to all disabled adaptations. Those costing over £2,000 to properties managed by the council in its landlord capacity will be referred to as 'major works' and are based on a needs assessment by an appropriately qualified person, usually an Occupational Therapist (OT), or assessor who is supervised by an OT. This policy also includes aids or adaptations costing less than £2,000 which are known as 'minor works'.

This policy specifically relates to council tenants and does not extend to homeowners, leaseholders¹, tenants within the private rented sector or tenants of social rented properties (such as charitable trusts or private registered providers). Assistance for these households is available through DFG and other discretionary assistance set out in the [Housing Assistance Policy](#).

Legislative context

The council has considered the following legislation when developing this policy.

- The Care Act 2014 is applicable to adults, and it makes clear that local authorities with responsibility for Welfare, must provide or arrange services that help prevent people developing needs for care and support or delay people deteriorating such that they would need on-going care and support.
- The Chronically Sick and Disabled Act 1970 is relevant in relation to addressing the needs of children and Chapter 44 states where a local authority has functions under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 in relation to a disabled child and the child is ordinarily resident in their area, they must, in the exercise of those functions, make any arrangements within subsection (6) that they are satisfied it is necessary for them to make in order to meet the needs of the child.

¹ Unless the adaptation is in the communal parts of a block of flats

Section 6(e) of the act requires the provision of assistance for the child in arranging for the carrying out of any works of adaptation in the child's home or the provision of any additional facilities designed to secure greater safety, comfort, or convenience for the child.

- The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against people with protective characteristics that are specified in Section 4. Section 29 of the Act provides that the council, in providing a service to a section of the public, must not discriminate against a person with a protected characteristic who requires the service, by not providing the person with the service. However, Section 15 provides that discrimination on grounds of disability may be justified in law if the council has appropriately balanced the needs of the person with a disability and those of others in need of accommodation. Making better overall use of the housing stock and meeting more needs, including those with disabilities, is a legitimate aim. The cost of adaptations and the suitability of the current accommodation (including under-occupation) are relevant factors when considering proportionality. Alternative means of meeting needs other than adapting the current property, including transfers to more suitable accommodation or tenants contributing to costs are options which may be considered.
- Under Section 343 of the Armed Forces Act 2006 (inserted by section 8 of the Armed Forces Act 2021), the council is required to have due regard to the Armed Forces Covenant when carrying out adaptations, but this does not require the Council to take specific actions, or that members receive special treatment over and above other groups. The council has exercised due regard through the following:
 - o Ensuring that serving armed forces personnel and their families living in regular accommodation, and veterans, are not disadvantaged when compared to other citizens in the provision of public services.
- In determining this policy, regard has been given to the Council's Allocations Policy, which complies with the Housing Act 1996 (as amended).
- The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 governs the delivery of disabled facilities grants and clearly sets out the purposes for which a DFG must be approved, subject to applicant eligibility. It is not possible for a public body to be the end beneficiary of a DFG funded adaptation, but for equity of service this policy mirrors the criteria set out in the 1996 Act. The maximum funding available also mirrors that available through the mandatory DFG.

National context

Living in an accessible home can have a life-changing impact for people with frailty and disabilities. A significant body of research shows that a suitable, accessible and

adapted home can help disabled people to maintain their independence and social connections within their local communities. The prevention agenda is reflected within The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC)'s latest [10-year health plan for England: Fit for the Future](#). This seeks to shift the focus from primary healthcare settings to community-based services, resulting in fewer people staying in hospital unnecessarily or moving to residential care prematurely.

National evidence from the [2024/25 English Housing Survey](#) indicates that 61% of people living in the social housing sector (in rented affordable housing) have a long-term illness or disability, which is likely to align with higher levels of physical disabilities, meaning that residents living in social housing may require proportionately higher levels of adaptations than residents living in other forms of housing. In view of these high nationwide levels of frailty and disability, the Government recognises that all disabled people have the right to live safely and independently in their own homes.

Local Context:

Draft data from the Housing and Economic Needs Assessment indicates that 19.8% of Cheltenham's population are over 65, which, despite being higher than the national average of 18.7%, is lower than the average for Gloucestershire and the South West at 22% and 22.8% respectively. Between 2024-2046 the proportion of Gloucestershire's over 65 population is projected to increase by 41.2% (with 61,000 people moving into the 65+ age bracket), likely resulting in increased long-term demand for health, housing and social care services, including aids and adaptation services.

The council's [Housing Strategy 2023-28](#) notes that the population is ageing and that according to the 2021 census, 6% of the population have a life limiting long-term illness. Under priority 5, it sets the goal that the council will create opportunities for independent and healthy living for our vulnerable residents.

Additionally, the [Corporate Plan 2025-28](#), sets the mission statement for Housing Services that: "Together with our tenants we provide safe, secure and well-maintained homes that help everyone to reach their potential".

This policy helps to meet these local aims and is an important part of meeting the council's obligations under the five [consumer standards](#) introduced by the Regulator of Social Housing.

In particular, the [Safety and Quality Standard](#) requires the council, in our landlord capacity, to:

- "Assist tenants seeking housing adaptations to access appropriate services" (1.5.1)
- "Ensure that the safety of tenants is considered in the design and delivery of landlord services and take reasonable steps to mitigate any identified risks to tenants" (2.2.3)

- “Clearly communicate to tenants and relevant organizations how they will assist tenants seeking housing adaptations services” (2.4.1)
- “Co-operate with tenants, appropriate local authority departments and other relevant organisations so that a housing adaptations service is available to tenants where appropriate”. (2.4.2)

The council owns just over 4,650 rented affordable homes, of which 885 homes (20%) include some form of aid or adaptation and 114 are classed as wheelchair accessible. Furthermore, the council’s stock includes 535 properties with step free access, 830 properties with a bedroom at the entrance level and 1,079 properties with the bathroom at the entrance level (this includes 124 bungalows). This information has been collected from the stock condition survey and will need further validation to enable the council to categorise its stock in accordance with the Gloucestershire-wide Accessible Housing Register.

As of January 2026, 187 adaptable homes had gained final planning consent, with likely completion dates over the next 3-4 years. Additionally, final planning consent had been granted for 8 wheelchair accessible social rented homes to meet the needs of wheelchair users on the council’s housing register.

Moving forwards, the council, working alongside our partners at Gloucester City Council and Tewkesbury Borough Council, are actively working on the Strategic and Local Plan (SLP), which, will seek to establish a percentage requirement of adaptable and wheelchair accessible affordable homes on all new developments to ensure that new homes built through the SLP reflect the importance of supporting our tenants to remain safe and independent in their own homes, both now, and into the future.

Equalities statement

As a public body, the council is committed to meeting its obligations under the Equality Act 2010 by promoting equality of opportunity and preventing both direct and indirect discrimination. The Act also requires the council to comply with the Public Sector Equality Duty when making decisions and delivering services.

In this context, all adaptation requests from tenants will be considered fairly, taking into account the council’s statutory responsibilities. The council will also make reasonable adjustments as set out in the [Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy](#) 2026. This ensures that service delivery reflects the needs of tenants with protected characteristics. An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been completed by the council in support of this policy, which can be found in Appendix 2

Assistance available

The council provides a range of both minor and major adaptations to tenants living in council-owned homes. The aids and adaptations available to tenants includes the following:

Available adaptation service	Examples of work	Who makes request	Timescales	Means-tested?	Responsible teams
Minor adaptations. Work costing up to around £2,000 a. Minor adaptations	Grab rails, handrails, lever taps, half-steps	Tenant can request work	6 weeks	Not means tested	Repairs/Logistics Team
b. Minor adaptations	Over-bath shower, ramps, door widening, level threshold doors, minor kitchen adaptations	Requires OT referral	26 weeks	Not means tested	Technical & Investment Team
c. Requests for reasonable adjustment	Work will vary based on tenant's needs	Requires OT referral	26 weeks	Not means tested	Social Services, Repairs or Technical & Investment Team
Major adaptations. Adaptations costing between £2,000 - £30,000.	Level access shower, stairlift, through-floor lift, wash-dry toilet, adaptations to make property wheelchair accessible, ground floor extension	Requires OT referral	26 weeks but longer if complex adaptations or work to construct an extension	Yes – subject to means-testing	DFG Team or Technical & Investment Team
Work to communal areas	Ramps, door opening systems	Requires OT referral	26 weeks	Not means tested	Technical & Investment Team

Minor Adaptations are relatively small, low-cost modifications (typically under £2,000), designed to improve safety, accessibility, and independence for people with disabilities or mobility issues.

Tenants do not always need to be assessed by an Occupational Therapist (OT). The examples below are intended to explain this further

a) Examples when an assessment is **not** required and tenants can self-refer to the Repairs Team for work to be carried out:

- grab rails
- handrails
- lever taps
- half-steps

b) Examples when an OT assessment **is** required:

- over-bath shower
- ramps
- door widening
- level threshold doors
- minor kitchen adaptations

Major adaptations are works that usually require structural changes to the home and cost between £2,000 and £30,000.

Tenants will require an assessment by an Occupational Therapist to determine if their disability is affecting their ability to carry out at least one of the following essential daily activities (this list is not exhaustive):

- Facilitating access to/from the property and garden/area of open space.
- Making the premises safer.
- Access to a principal family room or bedroom.
- Access to a bath or shower.
- Access to a toilet and wash-hand basin.
- Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food.
- Better heating.
- Control of power, light and heat.

The most common type of a major adaptation to a property is replacing a bathroom with a wet room. Major adaptations can also include the installation of a through-floor lift or construction of a ground floor extension.

Discretionary Assistance

There may also be some discretionary funding available in association with the adaptation services listed. All discretionary assistance is subject to availability of funding and will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Specific examples of discretionary funding will mirror examples set out in the council's Housing Assistance Policy and includes:

1. Shortfall funding where adaptations exceed £30,000.
2. Funding towards a disabled person's assessed contribution.
3. Funding for rapidly progressing and/or highly debilitating conditions.
4. Relocation grant/Downsizing grant.
5. Funding for temporary rehousing to facilitate adaptations.
6. Funding for abortive fees.

Any changes to the Housing Assistance Policy will lead to a review of the discretionary funding available under this policy. Requests for discretionary funding not included within these specific examples will be approved by the Director of Governance, Housing and Communities and the Cabinet Member for Housing and Customer Services, in line with the council's constitution.

Application process

Minor Adaptations (a) not requiring an assessment by the Occupational Therapist can be arranged by the tenant contacting the council's housing services by calling 0800 408 0000 or requesting it through the online portal [MyCBH](#).

Minor Adaptations (b) requiring an assessment by the Occupational Therapist can be arranged by the tenant contacting Gloucestershire County Council on either the Adult Social Care Help Desk on 01452 426868 or the Children's Help Desk on 01452 426565. The assessment will identify if any adaptations are required to meet the needs of the disabled person and a referral will be sent to the council's Adaptations Coordinator who will determine if the nature of the adaptations is minor or major.

If the works are below approximately £2,000, the referral will be sent through to the Technical & Investment team to be processed.

The Technical & Investment team will either raise an order for the work or add it to a planned improvement programme (e.g. bathroom or kitchen renewal) to be completed within 6 months. The tenant will be kept updated throughout the process.

Major Adaptations requiring an assessment by the Occupational Therapist can be arranged by the tenant contacting Gloucestershire County Council on either the Adult Social Care Help Desk on 01452 426868 or the Children's Help Desk on 01452 426565. The assessment will identify if any adaptations are required to meet the needs of the disabled person and a referral will be sent to the council's Adaptations Coordinator to request funding for the work.

Any assistance is subject to a means-test calculation unless the adaptations are for a disabled child. How much assistance is available will depend on the level of income and savings of the disabled person and their partner, if applicable (See section on Financial Assessment).

The Adaptations Coordinator will arrange to visit the property due to be adapted to consider:

- If the adaptations are suitable for the property having regard to its future use. For example, adaptations to a bungalow or ground floor flat/maisonette will be considered suitable. Adaptations to a 2nd floor flat which is accessed by stairs (and no lift is available) may not be considered suitable.
- The number of occupants in the property compared to the number of bedrooms to see if a property is under or over occupied.
- Whether moving to alternative accommodation would better suit the needs of the disabled person.
- Whether the tenant intends to remain in the property on completion of the adaptations for a period of 5 years or more.

The outcome of these points will form the basis for Cheltenham Borough Council's decision as the landlord to agree that the proposed adaptations can go ahead.

The council may refuse to carry out adaptations where any of the following apply:

- It is not reasonable or practicable to adapt a property. In such circumstances the council would continue to seek a positive outcome by looking at other housing options.
- A Right to Buy application has been received. If the Right to Buy application is withdrawn or cancelled, a new application for major adaptations may be submitted.
- The tenant has expressed an intention to move from the property by transfer, mutual exchange, or another method.
- There is an order of the court relating to the tenancy such as rent arrears or antisocial behaviour or if there is ongoing court action.
- The work would extend beyond the curtilage of the property or may adversely affect communal areas.
- The property is under occupied or over occupied, the council would work with the tenant for an alternative solution.

If the property can be adapted the work will be allocated to either an in-house surveyor or the tenant will be required to appoint an external surveyor to help them with their application. The surveyor will prepare plans and a detailed specification of the work, obtain estimates and supervise the work until completion. The council will notify the applicant of the outcome of their application in writing as soon as reasonably practicable, and, in any event, not later than six months after the date of the application concerned.

Tenants should be aware there may be implications relating to rent where major adaptations are carried out. For example, adaptations which include the installation of specialist equipment such as a stairlift, through-floor lift, wash-dry toilet will require an annual service, and a charge may be levied for this. Similarly, adaptations that result in additional ground floor facilities or an extra bedroom may result in increased rent

Eligibility

The council will only normally consider an application for an adaptation in the following circumstances:

- If the adaptation is required by the tenant, (or in the case of an adaptation in a communal area, a leaseholder) of a Cheltenham Borough Council property, or a member of their household.
- If the applicant is over 18 years old on the date of making the application.
- If adaptations are for children of parents with shared access arrangements, adaptations will only be completed at the principal home, evidenced by the receipt of Child Benefit.

- To be eligible for a minor (b) or major adaptation a person is disabled if:
 - Their sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired,
 - They have a mental disorder or impairment of any kind, or
 - They have a substantial physical disability by illness, injury or impairment.
 - This automatically includes any adult who is or could be registered under section 77 of the Care Act 2014. For children and young people, it includes those who are registered under paragraph 2 of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989 or a disabled child as defined by Part III of the Children Act 1989.

Financial assessment

Major adaptations are subject to a formal means test to determine the tenants' contribution towards the cost of the work.

If a disabled person is calculated to have an assessed contribution less than £10,000, they may be able to receive discretionary funding to cover their contribution.

If the tenant is required to contribute towards the cost of the work, they will be notified of the amount and agreement obtained to pay this and all payments must be received prior to any work starting.

Where the tenant is in receipt of a recognised, qualifying means tested benefit known as a passported benefit, they will not be further means tested and they will not have a calculated contribution to make.

Pre-commencement requirements

Prior to the commencement of any adaptation work, the council will ensure all relevant processes and procedures have been completed. This includes, but is not limited to:

- Obtaining approval from the budget-holding service, Technical & Investment.
- Collecting any required financial contribution from the tenant.
- Agreeing the specification of works with the tenant. Any requested variations (such as alternative tiles or taps) must be agreed between the contractor and the tenant. The tenant will be responsible for any additional costs arising from the variation.
- Obtaining the tenant's understanding that where adaptations change the size, layout or number of rooms, the council may review the rent in line with its rent-setting procedures. Any rent change will be subject to the notice requirements set out in the tenancy agreement.

Completion of works

On completion of major adaptations, the work will be subject to a 12-month warranty, so any problems within that period will be the responsibility of the contractor who carried out the work. Once the 12-month warranty has expired, the council will be responsible for all ongoing maintenance and repairs of adaptations.

Where the adaptations include the installation of specialist equipment such as a stairlift or wash-dry toilet, the council will take on the responsibility of the annual servicing and any repairs of the equipment. The exception to this will be where repairs are required due to misuse of the specialist equipment by the tenant. In these circumstances tenants may be recharged the cost of any repairs.

The council will maintain records of adaptations installed to enable the appropriate matching of properties against tenants needs.

Removal of aids and adaptations

Any aid or adaptation to a property that has been funded by the council is owned by the council and must not be removed by the tenant during or at the end of their tenancy. If a tenant removes an adaptation without the proper approval, then they will be recharged.

In circumstances where an aid or adaptation is no longer required, the council will consider removing it if it may be used in another home. Otherwise, it will be left in place.

If an aid or adaptation is no longer working and is beyond reasonable repair, then approval will be given for it to be removed following a reassessment of need.

The council will not normally remove structural adaptations to a property, for example ramping, widened doors, level access showers.

Communication and expectations:

The council, when carrying out the aids and adaptations service, commits to meeting the following standards in terms of communications and service standards:

- We commit to discussing the options around aids and adaptations with you in easy-to-understand language, ensuring that you can make an informed decision about whether you would prefer to remain at home with adaptations or move to a more suitable property.

- We will keep you informed and updated about the status of your minor or major adaptations application at every stage of the process through your preferred communication method.
- We will work closely with Occupational Therapists and Contractors, Consultants and Surveyors to ensure that your needs are met in a timely manner, whilst managing expectations owing to significant demand for these services.
- We will work closely with the council's Housing Options team to enable you to move home, if adaptations are either unfeasible or do not represent good value for public money.

Complaints and appeals

If a customer is unhappy with any element of service that they have received from the council, they will be able to make a formal complaint. The complaint will be dealt with in line with the latest [Complaints Policy](#). This sets out that customers can make a complaint via phone, in writing, in person or via email and the customer is notified of their right to access the [Housing Ombudsman Service](#) at all stages of the process.

Monitoring and review:

The Operations Manager of Technical Investment within the council's Housing Services portfolio is responsible for monitoring this policy to ensure that it is being correctly applied and is responsible for carrying out reviews of this policy, where these are required. This includes ensuring that relevant staff training needs are met, as well as focusing on achieving the continuous improvement of the council's aids and adaptation service. Key performance indicators will be reported to the Compliance Monitoring Group which meets bi-monthly.

This policy will be automatically reviewed whenever the Government changes policy or legislation around the delivery of aids and adaptations (including disabled facilities grants). In the absence of this trigger, the council commits to reviewing this policy every two years.

Appendix 1: Flowchart showing routes to adaptations to council properties

Council tenants who require home adaptations to enable them to live independently and safely, can access help by following one of the four routes below. Tenants should consider which route is most appropriate to meet their requirements, then follow the instructions for that route. Route 3 also applies to leaseholders.

