



# DISABLED PERSONS ADAPTATIONS POLICY

## DOCUMENT CONTROL

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## EQUALITY OF ACCESS

We want Sedgefield Borough to be a place where no-one experiences discrimination or disadvantage because of race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, religion or belief, gender, marital status, sexuality, disability, age or any other unjustifiable reason.

We want everyone in the Borough to feel safe from harassment and to be able to access high quality services designed to respond to their individual diverse needs.

We are determined to meet our legal duties relating to equality and are committed to reducing disadvantage, discrimination and inequality of opportunity, however, beyond these our aim is to make Sedgefield a place where everyone is treated as an equal citizen, in the light of their different needs and where the diversity of our community is recognised, supported and valued. To do this we have set in place a planning, monitoring and review structure to address the equality and diversity agenda, channelled through our Corporate Equality Plan.

## **Translation Service**

<p><b>Please ask us if you would like this document in other languages, in large print or on audio tape.</b></p>	
<p><b>العربية (Arabic)</b></p> <p>إذا أردت المعلومات بلغة أخرى أو بطريقة أخرى، ترجو أن تطلب ذلك مننا.</p>	
<p><b>پولش (Polish)</b></p> <p>Jeśli chceszby Państwo uzyskać informację w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy o to nas zadać.</p>	
<p><b>بنگال (Bengali)</b></p> <p>মনি আপনি নাই কৃতিত্ব আবেদন করা পদক্ষেপটি করে, সামগ্রজ নাই করে আবেদনকরণ করুন।</p>	
<p><b>ਪੰਜਾਬ (Punjabi)</b></p> <p>ਜੇ ਹਿੱਸੇ ਜਾਣਦੀ ਹੋਵੇਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਖੇ ਵੇਰਗੁਪਤ ਵਾਪਿਸੀ, ਜਾਂ ਵਿਖੇ ਵਿਖੇ ਮੌਜੂਦਾ</p>	
<p><b>(中文 (繁體字)) (Cantonese)</b></p> <p>如欲索取以另一種文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。</p>	
<p><b>Español (Spanish)</b></p> <p>Póngase en contacto con nosotros si desea recibir información en otro idioma o formato.</p>	
<p><b>ଓଡ଼ିଆ (Odia)</b></p> <p>ଯଦି ଆମଙ୍କେ ସ୍ଥାନ ବିଶ୍ଵା କରି ମାତ୍ର ନା କାହାର କିମ୍ବା କାହାର କାହାର କାହାର କାହାର</p>	
<p><b>اردو (Urdu)</b></p> <p>اگر کامپلکس کی رکنیات ایجاد کی می کرنے کا لئے جو کوئی پرسوں ہے تو</p>	

## DATA PROTECTION STATEMENT

Sedgefield Borough Council adheres to the principles and conditions of the Data Protection Act, 1998. Information, which applicants provide, about themselves and their circumstances will only be used for the purpose for which it has been collected. It will be kept securely and will not be passed on to others indiscriminately.

#### MISLEADING OR INCORRECT INFORMATION

Knowingly or recklessly giving false information or withholding information may result in criminal prosecution and the application being cancelled: where a property has been let as a result of an applicant giving false information or withholding information, the Council may take action to repossess the property.

## **POLICY STATEMENT**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This policy relates to tenants living in Sedgefield Borough Council owned homes, which are no longer suitable for their needs as a result of a disability or other limiting illness affecting themselves or a household member.

In developing this policy the Council has taken into account the following key documents:

- Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People (June 2006, Communities and Local Government)
- Disability Discrimination Act (1995)
- Disabled Person Adaptations review (2006)
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (1970)

This policy sets out the criteria for enabling tenants and their family to maintain their independence, dignity and wherever practicable remain in their home.

Sedgefield Borough Council currently owns in excess of 8,590 properties across 5 Area Housing Teams. There are currently 31% of households within the Borough, containing somebody with a disability or long-term illness. Age profiling current tenancies has identified that more than 65% of tenants are over the age of 50. These facts mean the effective management of how we provide disabled persons adaptations is key to meeting tenant's needs.

The Disabled Persons Adaptation budget is currently set aside from the annual Housing Revenue Account budget, and is approximately £450,000 per annum. However examining previous years data suggests that the demand for adaptations will continue to rise. This policy has been developed to help us balance the demand against our budget, by ensuring that:

- Requests are prioritised against clear criteria
- Tenants needs for adaptations are assessed by evaluating the future prognosis of the applicant
- Requests for adaptations are assessed using the same criteria as those applying for Disabled Facility Grant.
- Value for money is achieved

The legal context for carrying out adaptations is set out in Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 which places a duty on the Social Services Authority to:

- Arrange practical assistance in the home, and any works of adaptation or the provision of additional facilities designed to secure greater safety, comfort or convenience.

Despite further legislation being introduced this duty still remains, and as the Act requires Social Services authorities to arrange assistance, the Council does recognise it has a key role in supporting Social Services in delivering its responsibility.

## PARTNERSHIP WORKING

We are committed to working in partnership to ensure that we provide the best solution for our tenants and their families.

Our key partners include, Social Care and Health, the Primary Care Trust and our Carelink service.

The structure for the partnership is as follows:

- A Strategic Group, which is responsible for reviewing policy, procedures, and monitoring performance.
- An Operational Group, whose key role is to deal with the daily operational tasks, discuss targets, deal with complaints, discuss workload and priorities.
- Case Conferences, which are held between the Occupational Therapists, Property Services and Housing Management when cases are complex. If it is not reasonable or practicable to adapt a property or there is a substantial cost to providing an adaptation (i.e. extension to property) then a case conference will be arranged. The request for a case conference can be made from any of the services. Case conferences aim to ensure the best outcome for the tenant within the constraints of policy, procedure and/or budgets.

## ELIGIBILITY

Sedgefield Borough Council will only carry out adaptations to properties if an Occupational Therapist/Sensory Impairment Officer assessment has been carried out and an appropriate referral made.

### Prioritisation

All adaptations, once assessed will be placed on a waiting list in data order. The only exceptions to this criteria are those adaptations, which have been deemed to be urgent by the Occupational Therapist/Sensory Impairment Officer and these will be moved to the top of the list.

Urgent cases are those for example where a patient is awaiting discharge from hospital or where palliative care is required, or the patient or a family member will be at serious risk if the work to adapt the property is not carried out quickly.

We will continue to have the flexibility to carry out some adaptations out of priority order to effectively manage the disabled persons adaptations budget.

If we receive a request from a disabled person or their family to re-prioritise an adaptation the case will be referred back to the Occupational Therapist/Sensory Impairment Officer for review.

### Works we will carry out

Before deciding to undertake any work it will be assessed against the criteria recommended by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant. In order for us to ensure the service we provide is equitable we will apply the same criteria as adopted for Disabled Grant Facilities. The list below is not exhaustive and only includes examples of works we will carry out.

## ***Facilitating Access and Provision***

These include works to remove or help overcome any obstacles, which prevent the disabled person from moving freely into and around the dwelling and enjoying the use of the dwelling and the facilities or amenities within it. In particular:

- Facilitating access to and from the dwelling or the building in which the dwelling or, as the case may be, flat is situated.
- Facilitating access to a room used or usable as the principal family room.
- Facilitating access to a room used or usable for sleeping, or alternatively providing such a room for the disabled occupant.
- Facilitating access to a room in which there is a lavatory, a bath or shower (or both) and a wash basin or providing a room in which there is such a facility or facilities.
- Facilities for the preparation and cooking of food.

Such works include provision of ramps, widening doors, and additional grab rails.

## ***Making a dwelling or building safe***

This is to make a dwelling or building safe for the disabled person and other persons residing in the property and may include:

- The provision of lighting where safety is an issue or for adaptations designed to minimise the risk of danger where a disabled person has behavioral problems, which causes him to act in a boisterous or violent manner damaging the house, himself and perhaps other people.
- An enhanced alarm system for those with hearing difficulties, which may be required in the dwelling to provide improved safety for the disabled occupant in connection with the use of cooking facilities or works to provide means of escape from fire.
- The provision of specialised lighting (or measures such as special blinds to reduce lighting where the disabled person has sensitivity to light), toughened or shatterproof glass in certain parts of the dwelling to which the disabled person has normal access or the installation of guards around certain facilities such as fires or radiators to prevent the disabled person harming himself. Sometimes reinforcement of floors, walls or ceilings may be needed, as may be cladding of exposed surfaces and corners to prevent self-injury.

## ***Room usable for sleeping***

Facilitating access to a room used or suitable for sleeping for a disabled person including:

- Taking reasonable steps to ensure the disabled person has access to a bedroom or other sleeping accommodation.

## ***Bathroom***

Providing a disabled person with access to a wash hand basin, a WC and a shower or bath. Works include:

- Widening doorways.
- Providing an entry level access shower/wet room.
- Specialist toilet.
- Lever taps.

### ***Facilitating preparation and cooking of food***

This covers a wide range of works to enable a disabled person to cater independently.

Eligible works include:

- The rearrangement or enlargement of a kitchen to ease maneuverability of a wheelchair.
- Specially modified or designed storage units, gas, electricity and/or plumbing installations to enable the disabled person to use these facilities independently.

Where most of the cooking and preparation of meals is done by another household member, it would not normally be appropriate to carry out full adaptations to the kitchen. However, it might be appropriate that certain adaptations be carried out to enable the disabled person to perform certain functions in the kitchen, such as preparing light meals or hot drinks.

### ***Heating, lighting and power***

To enable a disabled person to have full use of heating, lighting and power controls in the dwelling including:

- Making improvements where there is no heating system or where the existing heating arrangements are unsuitable to meet his needs, a heating system may be provided.
- Relocation of power points to make them more accessible.
- The provision of suitably adapted controls where a disabled person has difficulty in using normal types of controls.
- The installation of additional controls.

In certain circumstances we may carry out works outside this area providing the works are reasonable and practicable.

### **Works which will not be carried out**

In line with Social Care and Health policy we will not provide ramps or storage facilities for motorised scooters provided by the tenant themselves. However we will normally grant permission for tenants to carry out works to store their scooters. Occupational Therapists would not normally recommend that a disabled person buy a motorised scooter, they would refer to the wheelchair service for assessment.

A Health and Safety risk assessment of Grouped Accommodation schemes has been carried out. This has identified a number of risks associated with the storage and circulation of motorised scooters in communal areas, therefore the Council will not allow the storage of scooters within its Grouped Accommodations.

## Alternatives To Carrying Out Adaptations

All recommendations from the Occupational Therapists will be assessed by the Property Services Division to ensure the work is reasonable and practicable. In some cases the Council may refuse to carry out works if:

- The integrity of the property will be at risk.
- There is a suitable alternative property, which could be offered to the tenant and their family.
- The future long-term letability of the property will be affected.
- The adaptation may not meet the future long-term needs of the tenant.
- Cost.

In all cases the Council will assess the case to determine that the adaptation is reasonable and practicable.

If an adaptation is not deemed to be reasonable or practicable or falls into the other criteria below then the Council will look at re-housing the applicant.

Re-housing would be considered as the most appropriate option if an adaptation is likely to:

- cost more than £5,000 and the property is under occupied,
- if the adaptation is likely to cost more than £10,000 and the tenant is in the appropriate size property.

The applicant can be given exceptional letting status, which will automatically move them up the housing list, and therefore when a suitable property is available it will be offered to the applicant. (Refer to Allocations and Letting Policy).

## Incentives

Where a tenant is offered alternative accommodation, we will pay for all reasonable costs and support up to £3,000. This will be reviewed annually to take account of cost increases. Reasonable costs have been determined by calculating average costs associated with moving property and details can be found in the Disabled Persons Adaptations Procedure. This can include:

- Arranging to inform utilities supplier(s) of the move to the new property.
- Removal costs.
- Contribution to decoration and carpets.

## SERVICE STANDARDS

We have developed a range of service standards for the service, which will be measured through our customer satisfaction surveys. A copy of the service standards will be sent to all applicants in the information pack.

Service standards will be reviewed and updated regularly in line with service provision and customer priorities.

## PERFORMANCE MONITORING

We currently send out customer satisfaction surveys to all tenants who have had adaptation work carried out at their property. The results of these surveys are reported monthly to Housing Property Services Sub Group, Tenants Housing Services Group and the Joint Shop Stewards Meeting.

We will develop a suite of performance indicators, which will be monitored through the Departmental Performance Group.

## COMMUNICATIONS

All referrals for adaptations will receive a comprehensive information pack, which includes:

- Introduction
- Policy
- Procedure
- Service Standards
- Assessment
- Priority system
- Inspection/survey
- Major adaptations
- Complaints/comments
- Contact numbers

## REVIEW OF POLICY

This policy will be reviewed regularly and in no more than two years from publication. It is the responsibility of the Adaptations Strategic Group to carry out any reviews of policy or procedure.