



SP18 Aids and Adaptations Policy

1 Scope

This policy sets out Soha's approach to requests for aids and adaptations to help residents with a disability live more comfortably in their homes. . The main focus of the policy is providing aids and adaptations for residents that may have difficulties getting around or living in their homes, where adaptations will make that simpler and improve their quality of life. This is to be utilised where offering alternative accommodation is not appropriate or available. Aids and adaptations are additions or alterations made to a property that help a disabled tenant or a family member to remain in their home.

This policy applies to Soha tenants, their families and any other occupant. It does not include shared owners and leaseholders, who will be signposted to the relevant local authority.

2 Aims

Soha aims to provide an efficient and cost effective service which meets the needs and expectations of residents and supports independent living, allowing residents to remain in their own homes.

Aids and adaptations are completed to the specifications included in an occupational therapists assessment, excluding minor adaptations.

We aim to provide clear and accurate information about the process of applying for an adaptation and publicise this to tenants.

3 Policy Statement

Soha is committed to equality and providing equal access to services for all residents, taking individual needs into account. Providing aids and adaptations is one way in which we support residents to live independently in their homes.

Soha will have clear published service standards and guidelines for acknowledging and processing requests for aids and adaptations.

Soha will have clear definitions in place to explain the difference between minor and major adaptations.

Soha aims to apply this policy consistently and fairly and will not discriminate on grounds of race, colour, ethnic or national origins, religion, sexual orientation, disability, gender, age or any other matter which may cause a person to be treated with injustice.

4 Key terms and definitions

- 4.1 **Aids and adaptations** are alterations or improvements carried out to the home of a resident with a disability to enable them to continue to carry out day to day activities. This does not include responsive repairs or improvements that fall under the Tenant's Right to Make Improvements Policy. Adaptations are categorised as:

- **Minor adaptations** costing up to £2,000 (inclusive of VAT) including, but not limited to, steps, galvanised rails, lever taps, grab rails, moving power sockets, shower seats and specialist sensory impairment equipment.
- **Major adaptations** costing over £2,000 including, but not limited to, stair lift installations, level-access showers and through floor lifts.

- 4.2 A **disability** is defined under the Equalities Act 2010 as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person's ability to carry out normal day to day activities.
- 4.3 **Occupational therapists (OT)** are 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. If an independent occupational therapist is used by us, they must be State Registered by the Council for Professions Supplementary to Medicine and listed in the current Directory of Private Practitioners, produced by the College of Occupational Therapists and Occupational Therapists in Private Practice.
- 4.4 The **Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)** is a means tested grant provided by Local Authorities to cover the cost of providing adaptations and access to essential facilities that enable a disabled person to continue living at their property. The local authority must be satisfied that the adaptation is "necessary and appropriate" to meet the person's needs and that the works are reasonable and can be done with regard to the age and condition of the property.
- 4.5 A Home Improvement Agency (HIA) provides a range of services to help older people, people with disabilities and vulnerable people live safely and independently in their homes. This can include home visits to offer advice about changes to the property or liaising with the council or Occupational Therapist to complete aids and adaptations.

5. Our approach

- 5.1 We are not responsible for installing or maintaining aids and adaptations where an application for outright sale (Right to Buy or Right to Acquire) is currently live.

Minor adaptations

- 5.2 Requests for minor adaptations may be requested by residents, relatives, friends, carers, occupational therapists, hospital or clinical doctors, GPs, other specialists such as caseworkers, Soha colleagues, and social workers.
- 5.3 We aim to provide a fully funded fast-track service for minor pre-approved adaptations for residents and to complete these within 30 working days of approving a request. In extenuating circumstances that set back this timescale, we maintain open communication with the resident, provide regular updates, and do our best to complete the work as soon as possible.
- 5.4 Where relevant, requests for minor adaptations may need to be supported by appropriate evidence, such as a letter from a medical practitioner.

Major adaptations

- 5.5 We only accept requests for major adaptations that have been assessed and recommended by an occupational therapist (OT).
- 5.6 We only accept referrals for major adaptations from social services.
- 5.7 For all major aids and adaptations, we ask residents to apply to their local authority for a DFG to cover the cost of the aids and adaptations. Where reasonable, we may offer assistance in making the application and work with the local authority to achieve the best solution for the resident.
- 5.8 If the local authority fails to award a DFG, or the grant they allocate results in a shortfall, we may consider fund-matching or funding the whole cost of a major adaptation to a property if an OT assessment has been made. For major adaptations that cost more than £10,000, a cross- departmental meeting is held with all relevant internal and external agencies to discuss the best course of action. For those who don't meet grant criteria, we may explore splitting the funding or forming joint agreements with external agencies.

Internal transfers

- 5.9 As an alternative to installing major aids and adaptations, a resident can apply for an internal transfer to a more suitable property.
- 5.10 At our discretion, we may choose to offer to move a resident to a specifically adapted property to meet their needs rather than adapting their current home.

Asset management and record keeping

- 5.11 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.

Inspection and repairs

- 5.12 We aim to inspect all major aids and adaptations costing over £2,000. Where a completion inspection has not occurred, we contact the resident so that any defects can be reported.
- 5.13 We carry out repairs to aids and adaptations equipment, except where a defect liability period still applies.
- 5.14 We maintain the adaptations fitted in our properties after the warranty period. A charge may be applied to cover the cost of servicing equipment, e.g., with stair lifts.

Retaining and utilising adaptations

- 5.15 We retain minor adaptations and major adaptations, such as permanent ramps and wet rooms, when an adapted property is vacated and becomes void. We only remove aids and adaptations if they are beyond economical repair.

- 5.16 Major adaptations, where funded/part funded by a local authority, must remain in place for a (minimum) five-year period, unless the resident passes away.

Declining requests and temporary adaptations

- 5.17 We decline requests for making aids and adaptations where we believe that this is not an effective use of resources or community impact. For example, where it is not physically possible to alter the property in the requested way, the aid/adaption would involve big structural works or if an adaptation would present a health and safety risk. In this situation, we work with the resident and, where appropriate, their occupational therapist to consider other options such as suitable alternative accommodation. The OT may provide a rehousing report to support this process.
- 5.18 Our decisions are based on individual needs and circumstances. We make decisions at our discretion to do what is best for the resident, and try to reach an agreement and/or compromise that will satisfy the resident.
- 5.19 In some exceptional cases, we may agree to extend a property based on an OT assessment and subject to a DFG – this decision will be made by the Directors. Should the cost of an extension exceed the total DFG available then Soha may consider funding the shortfall but this will be restricted to a maximum of 50% of the available grant, and will not be considered if suitable alternative accommodation has been offered and declined, or where properties are under occupied.
- 5.20 We do not carry out temporary aids and adaptations.

Communal Areas

- 5.21 Requests for adaptations in communal areas are considered on a case-by-case basis and all affected residents are consulted with.

Customer satisfaction

- 5.22 We measure the success of this policy by undertaking satisfaction surveys of all completed aids and adaptation works.
- 5.23 Residents who receive aids and adaptation work are given a personalization or satisfaction survey; the results of which are monitored and reported monthly.
- 5.24 5.24 Soha will continue to work closely with Oxfordshire County Council and South Oxfordshire District Council and explore ways to jointly deliver a high quality, speedy and efficient disabled adaptation service to Soha tenants.

6. Value for Money

Soha will procure major works in accordance with the South Oxfordshire District Council Disabled Facilities Grant Agreement and Soha's Financial Regulations to make sure we get a competitive price for each adaptation.

7. Appeals and Complaints

Any appeals or complaints received relating to this service will be dealt with in line with Soha's complaints policy.

8. Resident Involvement

Soha will involve residents in setting and monitoring service standards, reviewing and modifying contract specifications, selecting Contractors and monitoring their performance.

We will survey tenants who have had an aid or adaptation installed in their home and will use their feedback to improve our service to them.

This policy will be reviewed by both the DAAG Group and members forum prior to approval

9. Monitoring and Review

We will share survey results with our Board and Tenant Repair Portfolio Holders and the partner agencies that provide this service.

Soha will post inspect 100% of major adaptations on completion to check the work has been carried out in accordance with the agreed specification.

We will monitor performance and expenditure monthly to ensure work is completed on time and to a high standard.

Each year a review of the year's programme and performance will be carried out, including consideration of the likely demand for the following year.

We will review budgets each year and adjust them if necessary to allow for any expected increase or decrease in demand.

10 Responsibility

The Director of Property Services is responsible for the implementation of this Policy.

11 Context

Equality Act 2010

Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

Soha's Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Strategy & Policy

Soha's Safeguarding Vulnerable Adults & Children Policy

Sohas Reasonable Adjustments for Residents Policy

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