

STOKE-ON-TRENT CITY COUNCIL



City of
Stoke-on-Trent

Major Adaptations Policy for Council Owned Properties 2025

HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY DIVISION

REGULATORY AND STRATEGIC SERVICES TEAM

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1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of Policy

Throughout this policy where we refer to “customers”, we specifically mean tenants of Stoke-on-Trent City Council.

Housing adaptations enable people to live more independently, comfortably and safely in their homes. Stoke-on-Trent City Council’s Major Adaptations Policy sets out the process, eligibility and support available for customers who require significant adaptations to council homes. This policy aligns with the council’s new Corporate Strategy, aiming to empower individuals to live more fulfilled lives with dignity and independence.

1.2. Policy Key principles:

- To provide a high-quality adaptations service to enable customers with disabilities or health conditions to have access to the necessary adaptations to make their homes safe, comfortable and accessible.
- To provide a transparent and fair process for assessing, approving and delivering major adaptations.
- To assist customers to make informed choices about their housing options including facilitating transfers to more appropriate accommodation if required.
- To coordinate effectively with professional services such as occupational therapists to ensure that all adaptations are necessary and appropriate and reasonable and practicable to meet the individuals’ health and mobility needs.
- To make best use of existing Housing Stock and preserve the long-term benefit and investment of previously adapted properties.

2. Scope

This policy applies to customers living in Stoke-on-Trent City Council managed housing who require adaptations due to physical disabilities or other health related needs. It covers major adaptations such as structural changes, accessibility modifications and the installation of specialised equipment.

The policy specifically refers to disabled adaptations costing over £1,000; these are known as ‘major works’ and are recommended following an assessment by an occupational therapist from the council’s Social Care Occupational Therapy Service.

Adaptations costing £1,000 or less such as grab rails, hand rails and ramps are classed as ‘minor works’ and are also recommended following an assessment by an occupational therapist. Further information and guidance on minor adaptations can be found in Stoke-on-Trent City Council’s Minor Adaptations to People’s Home Policy 2017-2020.

3. Legal and Regulatory Framework

3.1 The policy is informed by (but not limited to) the following national legislation and local policies.

- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Act 1985
- Disabled Persons Act 1986
- Care Act 2014
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- SoTCC Allocations Policy 2020
- SoTCC Housing Strategy 2022-2027
- SoTCC Tenancy Strategy 2020 -2025
- SoTCC Housing Renewal Assistance Policy 2021 – 2026
- SoTCC Repairs and Maintenance Policy 2023
- SoTCC Tenancy and Estate Management Policy 2017

3.2 Consumer Standards Code of Practice

The policy is closely aligned with the Consumer Standards Code of Practice by prioritising customers’ safety, accessibility, and independence. It will ensure that customers with health and mobility needs receive fair access to necessary adaptations. A transparent process for applications and assessments will be delivered in conjunction with active customer involvement to ensure the council upholds its commitment to providing a good service that is accountable.

4. Equalities Statement

4.1 The council recognises that it provides housing for communities which include wide social diversity and is committed to providing equal access to services.

4.2 This policy aims to treat all customers fairly, with respect and professionalism. In line with the duty placed on the local authority under the Equalities Act 2010 specific consideration of the impact of this policy has been given to people with protected characteristics, including gender, race, age, disability,

religion, sexual orientation and marital status. The approach adopted within this policy focuses on understanding individual circumstances in order to provide appropriate advice and support; this includes understanding the needs of customers who have protected characteristics. Consideration will therefore be given to language barriers, accessibility and cultural issues which may affect a customer's ability to manage their tenancy or seek advice on problems, and resolutions which take account of the individual's beliefs and abilities.

- 4.3 The council will enable all our customers to have clear information and equal access to available services and information in a range of appropriate languages and formats will be provided when requested. This policy has been designed to be fully inclusive regardless of the ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religious belief, or disability of service users or residents. The Equality Impact Assessment will be reviewed as part of reviewing the policy document in order to inform any changes that may be required.
- 4.4 From time to time the council may ask customers to provide details of their gender, age, religion, disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation in line with the protected characteristics identified within the Equalities Act 2010 to help the council to deliver more effective, appropriate and inclusive policies and practices. All data collected is kept securely, used only for monitoring purposes and is de-personalised at the point of analysis to protect an individual's privacy.

5. Major Adaptations

- 5.1 Major adaptations are substantial modifications for customers who 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 decision as to whether a person falls within this definition for the purposes of this policy will be made following an assessment by an occupational therapist (OT) from the Social Care Team.
- 5.2 Major Adaptations are designed to improve accessibility, safety and independence within the home. Major adaptations can require structural modifications and will only be considered once a recommendation has been received from an Occupational Therapist. The council generally expects applicants to remain in the property for a minimum of five years following an adaption although the council recognises that in some circumstances, the applicant's health and other relevant circumstances may not allow for this.

Examples of major adaptations include:

- Installation of a level access shower.
- Door widening to accommodate a wheelchair.
- Property extensions.
- Bathroom and kitchen remodelling.
- Stairlifts and home elevator installations.
- Ramp installations.

5.3 Extensive Adaptations costing more than £30,000

The Council applies a maximum level of £30,000 for major adaptations. Funding above this will only be approved in exceptional circumstances such as: where it is essential to meet the applicant's assessed needs; where all alternative options have been exhausted; and where failure to provide such funding would place the individual at significant risk. Any such approval will be at the Council's absolute discretion and subject to the availability of resources.

Where it has been identified that extensive adaptations are required at a cost in excess of £30,000, a meeting will be held involving the Occupational Therapist, the council's Home Improvement Agency (HIA), Housing Options, and Housing Management. The group will consider whether the work should go ahead, or whether a more suitable alternative solution can be found which will meet the needs of the customer.

In reaching a decision, the council will take into account the individual circumstances of the customer to ensure that their assessed health, mobility and care needs can be appropriately met., Consideration will also be given as to whether the proposed adaption presents the best use of the current housing stock, and any implications for the council's ability to let the property in the future.

5.4 Types of adaptations not eligible for funding

Certain adaptations are not normally eligible for funding under this policy. These may include modifications that are considered non-essential, cosmetic or do not directly address the individual's accessibility or safety needs. The following are some examples of non-funded items: (list is not exhaustive).

- Adaptations for the storage of mobility scooters.
- Vehicular access, hard standings and driveways.
- Certain items of non-specialist fixtures, equipment and appliances will not be classed as adaptations. For example; ovens and hobs and other appliances forming part of an adapted kitchen.
- Safe play areas outside.

- Luxury fixtures that are not-essential to help the individual live independently.
- Where a suitably adapted property is vacant and available
- Decorative upgrades.

6. Eligibility for Major Adaptations

6.1 The council will only consider a request for adaptations within a council-owned property if the person experiences significant and long-term physical or mental health challenges that limits their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities in and around their home. Before approving a request, the Council will first consider whether a suitable alternative property is available taking into account the customer's specific needs and circumstances.

6.2 No age restrictions apply to the disabled person for whom the application is made.

6.3 In accordance with the Equality Act 2010, this policy defines a person as being disabled if they have 'a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities'. A 'substantial' effect is more than minor or trivial, e.g. it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed. The effect of an impairment is long-term if it has lasted for at least 12 months, it is likely to last for at least 12 months or it is likely to last for the rest of the life of the person affected.

6.4 Means testing

The council reserves the right to require applicants for major adaptations to complete a test of resources of their ability to contribute towards the cost of works.

6.5 Right to Buy applicants

Applications for major adaptations will not normally be approved during the time where a Right-to-Buy application has been received due to a potential conflict of the source of funding for the adaptations. During this period, the application will be considered and should the Right to Buy be completed, the application will be treated as having been made by an owner of the property and Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding should be used where the application is approved. If the Right-to-Buy application is withdrawn or cancelled, applications for major adaptations will be reconsidered under this policy

- 6.6 Moving in to or having the current property adapted may affect the eligibility and/or suitability of the property for future Right to Buy applications in accordance with the Housing Act 1985.

7. Prioritising Adaptations

- 7.1 Demand for adaptations is often high and therefore referrals from Occupational Therapists are prioritised by means of a points system which determines when the referral will be dealt with. The budget set aside for Aids and Adaptations is also limited.
- 7.2 In general terms, this means the highest priority cases have the greatest number of points, as determined initially by the Occupational Therapist in their assessment of the customer's needs. The points system takes into consideration the customer's ability to complete certain key activities and any risks they may be exposed to.
- 7.3 The council will also take into account the length of time a person has been waiting, and will add additional priority points over time to address this. The council will inform customers who are waiting for an adaptation to explain the position and give an indication as to how long they are likely to have to wait. Where necessary, the council will also work with the customer to explore alternative options such as rehousing or other sources of funding

8. Making Best Use of Available Properties

- 8.1 The council is committed to supporting residents in maintaining independence in their homes. In some cases, however adaptations may not be reasonable or practicable. In such circumstances alternatives to major adaptations will be discussed following the initial Occupational Therapist's visit and after consideration of the customer's health, mobility and living requirements.
- 8.2 If a property cannot reasonably be adapted, the council may offer alternative accommodation options that are better suited to the individual's needs. In such cases, relocation may be the most appropriate and viable option available to ensure the resident's safety and comfort.
- 8.3 In the interests of making best use of social housing stock and value for money the Council all instances will firstly consider where suitable accommodation is likely to be become available within a reasonable timescale.

8.4 Examples of why an alternative property may be considered:

- A property which has already been suitably adapted has become (or is likely to become) available.
- A property which is more suitable for adaptation to meet the essential needs of the customer has been identified.
- An extension can be avoided by moving to a larger property.
- The customer's property is not suitable for a specific adaptation.
- The existing property is currently under or over occupied.

These examples are not exhaustive and all decisions as to whether the works are "reasonable and practicable" will be made by the council on a case-by-case basis taking into account all relevant circumstances.

8.5 The council recognises that moving into another property can be a difficult process. Where relocation is agreed as the most appropriate solution, an officer will work with the customer to identify any support and assistance that may be reasonably offered to facilitate this.

Support may include:

- Financial assistance to cover relocation expenses such as removal costs within reasonable limits.
- Help with packing and moving belongings to the new property.
- Assistance in setting up utilities such as council tax, gas and electricity services and bills.
- Assistance with locating the nearest local centre.
- Assistance with changing address, such as with DVLA, bank and TV Licence.
- Assistance to register for healthcare services, such as GP and pharmacy.
- Payment for the redirection of post with Royal Mail.
- Assistance towards redecoration materials.
- Assistance through the Movement Incentive Scheme - customers living in a 3- or 4-bedroom house with at least 2 spare bedrooms, may be eligible for a £1,000 cash payment.

9. Application Process

- 9.1 In the first instance, the customer or a member of their household should contact the Social Care Occupational Therapy Service to request an assessment of need by an Occupational Therapist.
- 9.2 Following this, an Occupational Therapist will arrange a visit to assess the person's needs and to identify any necessary and appropriate equipment and/or adaptations.
- 9.3 If the request is considered necessary and appropriate, a recommendation will be passed to the council's Home Improvement Agency (HIA) who will carry out a visit to the property. At this visit, the property will be assessed to determine whether adaptations are reasonable and practicable, and a more detailed discussion will take place to assess the applicant's individual needs and to manage their expectations through the process.
- 9.4 Council tenants are not required to make a Disabled Facilities Grant application under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, however they have a right to do so, if they choose.
- 9.5 In order to enable the effective matching of customers requesting adaptations to their home to potential alternative properties, all customers will be required to make an application to the Council's housing register. Requests for adaptations under this policy will not normally be considered without an accompanying housing application.
- 9.6 **To request an Assessment of Need contact:**

Social Care Occupational Therapy Service

Tel: 0800 561 0015 (option 1)

Email: scotsfrontdoor@stoke.gov.uk

10. Maintenance and Repairs

- 10.1 Certain equipment and adaptations will be subject to agreed servicing and maintenance programmes. This will be coordinated by the council's Repairs and Maintenance Service (RMS). It generally applies to large pieces of equipment including stair lifts, through floor lifts, step lifts, wash/dry toilets, and hoists.
- 10.2 Customers will be expected to allow reasonable access for council staff or contractors to enable servicing and maintenance of equipment and adaptations. Should this not be permitted, customers may be liable for the

cost of any deterioration or fault which is attributed to the inability to perform necessary servicing and maintenance. Customers may also be liable for charges in the case of inappropriate call outs or aborted pre-arranged visits.

11. Complaints

- 11.1 If a customer is dissatisfied with a decision made about their application they have the right to request a review.
- 11.2 If a review is requested, the application will be reconsidered by a panel consisting of housing managers, led by a head of Housing service.
- 11.3 If the customer is still not satisfied with the review decision, they may register a complaint through the council's formal Complaints Procedure. In line with this procedure, the initial complaint will be acknowledged in writing within two working days. The council will aim to respond within 10 working days. If the complaint is more complicated, it may take longer to sort it out but the complainant will be kept informed.
- 11.4 **Comments or complaints can made via:**
- Online: [Feedback/Information Request Form | Stoke-on-Trent](#).
 - Tel: 01782 234234.
 - Any member of housing staff.
- 11.5 If customers remain dissatisfied with the outcome of the complaint, the case can be considered by the Housing Ombudsman who will ensure that the decision is in line with the principles set out within this policy.

12. Exclusions

- 12.1 The council may refuse to adapt a customer's home in certain circumstances.

Examples of reasons for refusal are (the list is not exhaustive):

- Structural Feasibility – if the proposed adaption is not structurally feasible.
- Cost – If the costs are deemed unreasonable or disproportionate relative to the benefits provided.
- Under Occupancy – If the customer is under-occupying the current property.
- Over Occupancy – If the customer is living in an over-occupied property.
- Alternative Solutions – If a more cost-effective or practical solution is available, and with the customer's consent e.g. relocation to an already adapted property.

- Adaptations will not normally be considered for High-Rise buildings due to structural feasibility and health and safety concerns.
- Where an adaptation would adversely affect the council's ability to relet the property in the future.

12.2 Where the Council refuses to proceed with an adaptation under this policy, customers retain the right to submit a Disabled Facilities Grant application under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, however, customers should still seek the approval of the Council before a grant can be approved.

13. Measuring Performance

- 13.1 Performance and delivery of the major adaptations service is monitored by the council's Home Improvement Agency and reported to the Corporate Director of Housing, Regeneration and Operations on a monthly basis.
- 13.2 This information is also reported on a quarterly basis as part of the council's Strategic Performance Framework. The framework is intended to enable effective performance management by ensuring that the Council's vision and priorities are translated into clear plans and measurable outcomes. This is reported to the Chief Executive at Senior Management Team meeting, then to Councillors at the Performance Board and finally to Cabinet.
- 13.3 In addition, any issues relating to performance will also be reported to the Housing Revenue Account Tenants Voice.