

## Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy

**Policy ref:**

**Policy author /holder** Regional Head of Operations

**Date approved:** September 2023

**Approved by:** Customer Operations Group

**Effective date:** 13 December 2023

**Review date:** September 2025

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### **1 Purpose and anticipated outcomes**

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#### **1.1 The purpose of the Policy is to:**

- Assist the Association, Partner Agencies, and customers of LiveWest in the interpretation and implementation of adaptations to the homes our customers live in or have been allocated to.
- Ensure fair, equitable and consistent treatment for all our customers who require LiveWest or their Local Authority's assistance in adapting their home.
- We will encourage customers to live in properties that are suitable for their needs. This may require consideration for transferring to more suitable accommodation.
- We will however where possible help customers to manage more independently by adapting their home through minor and major adaptation works in line with this policy.

#### **1.2 Policy statement:**

Our approach to dealing with requests for adaptations to our housing stock will be in accordance with this policy.

We accept that there may be circumstances that warrant exceptions to this Adaptations Policy. A regional head of operations is authorised to assess individual cases and where appropriate and reasonable to do so, decide that an exception be made to the normal Adaptations Policy.

This Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents:

*Mobility Scooter policy.*

*Allocations & Lettings policy.*

*Equality Diversity & Inclusion policy.*

*Data Protection Compliance policy.*

*Service Charge Policy.*

*Vulnerable Customers policy.*

*Customer Service Strategy.*

*Repairs Service Offer*

*Lifts and lifting equipment safety standard.*

*Electric vehicle charge points for existing homes policy.*

*Customer alterations and improvements policy.*

### 1.3 **Scope of the policy:**

This policy recognises the impact adaptations have in helping someone with a disability or need to maximise their independence. The policy recognises that alternatives to adaptations will be explored with the customer and their household. Wherever possible and appropriate, customers where requesting Major works will be encouraged to move to more suitable accommodation. This should take into consideration the potential future needs of them and their household.

### 1.4 **Definitions:**

#### **Adaptation**

An adaptation is an alteration or addition to any part of a dwelling or communal area that is provided to make it easier or safer for use by a person with a disability or mobility problem. This may be a customer or a member of their household. (ref to a customer within this policy will include their household)

#### **Disability**

A disability is defined as a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on the ability to carry out normal day to day activities. This is defined within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

#### **Occupational Therapist (OT)**

A professional who works with a person who has a permanent or temporary impairment. An OT aims to help people perform daily tasks in their living and working environments, and to assist them to develop the skills to live independently.

## **2 Roles and Responsibilities**

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### 2.1 The role of LiveWest:

- 2.1.1 LiveWest will undertake at its own cost minor adaptations where considered appropriate and necessary, subject to budget provision.
- 2.1.2 LiveWest will consider all DFG (Disability Facility Grant) applications submitted for landlord's consent. LiveWest will approve these where the request is reasonable and presents a long-term solution to the customer. LiveWest may refuse permission of an adaptation but where appropriate and practicable will offer alternatives such as more suitable accommodation.
- 2.1.3 Where appropriate LiveWest will consider helping with costs to move to more appropriate accommodation.

## **3 Types of Assistance**

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### 3.1 **Minor Adaptations without delay (LiveWest assistance)**

- 3.1.1 LiveWest will undertake specified minor adaptations typically under the cost of £1,200, subject to budget availability. Minor adaptations are those which normally involve no structural alterations or additions to a property (refer to appendix A).
- 3.1.2 Customers can contact LiveWest direct to request a minor adaptation or use the online facility on the LiveWest website.
- 3.1.3 Some minor adaptations will require an OT assessment to ensure the customers need is met (refer to Appendix A).
- 3.1.4 We will agree at the outset a timeframe for the commencement and completion of the work with the customer. Most minor adaptations will be completed within 28 calendar days. However, where works prevent a customer being discharged from hospital, or there is an urgent need, we will respond within 2 working days.
- 3.1.5 We will seek the advice of an OT where necessary. In most cases we will follow guidance in 'Minor adaptations without delay – A practical guide and technical specifications for housing associations 2006' produced by the College of Occupational Therapists.

## **3.2 Disabled Facilities Grant (Mandatory Assistance)**

- 3.2.1 Major adaptations, this is defined by local authorities as adaptations more than £1,000, include extensive structural alterations and would be facilitated by the local authority via a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).
- 3.2.2 LiveWest will review each application on its own merits and will consider suitability of the property, its location, current and proposed room standards, future use and/or reletting potential and any know future needs of the existing customers. On completion of the work, we will undertake an inspection of works to update our systems and check compliance with our DFG approval.

## **3.3 Disabled Facilities Grant (Discretionary Assistance) – ‘Top Up’ Grant**

- 3.3.1 Applications may be available for the provision of a ‘top-up’ to the Disabled Facilities Grant (Mandatory Assistance) where costs exceed the maximum amount of £30,000.
- 3.3.2 In certain cases where the cost of the works exceeds the top up facility LiveWest may be asked to contribute to the cost. LiveWest will consider this on the proposed works merits prior to approval and will be subject to the approval of the Investment in Existing Homes Group.

## **4 Adaptations in General**

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- 4.1 We will work closely with colleagues in partner organisations involved in ensuring customers can continue to live independently in our community.
- 4.2 Where minor or major adaptations are required to a property, adaptations will be considered so it is more suitable for a customer to live in and help them to live independently. All adaptations provided will comply with current legislation.
- 4.3 Any adaptation to a property that has been funded by the LA is usually owned by the customer (in some cases however the LA may retain ownership). In most cases where the LA has discharged ownership, LiveWest would take responsibility for the maintenance and servicing of such adaptations after the end of the warranty period. For mechanical breakdown of appliances and white goods please refer to our Repairs Service Offer.

4.4 Where customers are prepared to fund any adaptations themselves (to speed up the process i.e., a tenant improvement), we will encourage this subject to our written permission being obtained before any work commences. We will not withhold permission unless there are valid and substantial reasons to do so. Under the 'Right to Repair' customers may be able to claim reimbursement for all or part of the works subject to the conditions contained within the Act. Prior permission must be sought.

If work commences without LiveWest's permission, customers may find themselves in breach of their tenancy agreement and may be asked to return the property to its original condition.

4.5 Where we are seeking possession of the property because of a breach of tenancy conditions, we will review any major adaptation requests on a case-by-case basis

4.6 Where a property has changed hands by way of mutual exchange, customers will need to ensure that the property they are moving to is suitable for their needs. Any major adaptations will need to be applied for through the normal OT assessment and DFG route.

4.7 We will consider applications for major adaptations to a property from customers who are on a starter tenancy on a case-by-case basis.

4.8 Customer requesting adaptations must be registered as living at the property and registered within our CX system.

4.9 Adaptations for a child will only be carried out at the main residence of a child who has a disability whose parents are separated. This is normally the residence of the parent who is in receipt of child benefit, if applicable for that child.

4.10 In exceptional circumstances, when the budget for adaptations is fully committed in any one financial year, customers will be put on a priority need waiting list for adaptation works to commence in the new financial year. Where possible LiveWest will either signpost to other agencies for help and assistance or seek approval for additional funds where works are deemed to be urgent or essential as contained in section 3.1.4.

4.11 In addition, where it is not possible to provide adaptations to meet the need of the applicant, moving to more suitable accommodation shall be considered. Assistance for this move may be offered.

- 4.12 If a resident/tenant purchases a mobility scooter or electric vehicle that requires alterations to the home such as vehicular access, pathways or the provision of a 'shelter' or electricity for charging the vehicle. The customer is required to fund these works themselves. The customer must also request the appropriate permissions for such works to be carried out in the case of the property being a flat or the work involves alterations to a common area. *(refer to Mobility Scooter Policy , electric vehicle charge points for existing homes policy and customer alteration policy).*

## **5 Adaptations as part of a Planned Programme**

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- 5.1 Before we commence planned programmes of work, we will identify homes that have already been adapted as well as customers requiring adaptations. This will ensure that their needs are considered during the programmed works.

Where planned programmes are being delivered by an external supplier the requirements will be picked up at the pre survey/consultation process by the supplier and approval will be sought for any adaptations by the Investment Project Manager. *(process to be contained within the Investment procedure manual)*

- 5.2 We will protect or replace existing adaptations where they are affected by the planned works.
- 5.3 Where new adaptations are required in homes affected by the planned works (but are outside of the original scope of planned works) we will consider providing these as part of the programme where this makes sound practical and economic sense. Where Major works these need to be subject to an OT assessment and recommendation. For Minor Works, a health practitioner ( ie GP ) will be adequate.
- 5.4 We will plan any environmental and communal area improvements to make them as inclusive as possible.

## **6 Reletting Adapted Homes**

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- 6.1 The Allocations Team will identify adapted properties through searches through the Asset Database at the earliest stage possible, together with pre-void visits, files and other IT record checks. *(Please refer to Voids A & A process map)*
- 6.2 We will work with Occupational Therapists and other partner organisations to identify new or existing customers who would benefit from the adaptations in empty homes.

- 6.3 Where a property could be easily adapted for a customer, we will notify relevant partner agencies and comply where possible with any local procedures for reletting.
- 6.4 Where an adapted property requires further adaptation to meet the needs of a new customer, we will consider funding the work to avoid delays in reletting and to ensure the reuse of the existing adaptations, but this will be subject to an OT assessment and recommendation.

## **7 Servicing, Maintenance and Replacement of Fixtures & Equipment**

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- 7.1 Where appropriate LiveWest will take responsibility for the servicing of adaptations of specialist WC's and lifts in line with our lift and lifting safety standards. This will include the covering of costs for such servicing and repairs.
- 7.2 Where appropriate LiveWest will maintain fixtures such as loose handrails and wet rooms that have been installed through LiveWest or an external agency such as the local authority.
- 7.3 Where appliances have been installed by the customer to their individual home or if they have been fitted as part of the grant funded adaptation, the customer is responsible for repairs, maintenance and replacement of the appliance as outlined in our repairs service offer.
- 7.4 If it is found that equipment or appliances can no longer be effectively maintained we will signpost the customer to the local occupational therapy agency for reassessment. The OT will determine whether the customer is eligible for replacement under the disabled facilities grant funding.

## **8 New Housing Developments**

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- 8.1 When letting new build properties, consideration should be given to the current and future needs of those living in the property to avoid costly adaptations being required and/or relocation in the early part of their occupation.

## **9 Recycling of Equipment**

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- 9.1 Wherever possible we will work with Local Authorities and Occupational Therapists to recycle redundant equipment.

9.2 Where a customer no longer requires the adaptations and these are deemed to be a risk or liability to the household or LiveWest, consideration will be given to remove such items from the property and where possible recycled.

## **10 Exclusions**

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10.1 We will not approve major adaptations to a property subject:

- To a Right to Buy application.
- Where a customer is registered as waiting for a transfer.
- Where the property is above ground floor level without suitable means of access for the customer's needs.

10.2 In exceptional circumstances individual cases may be considered and approved by a regional head of operations.

10.3 Adaptations will not be considered for visitors to a property – the applicant must be a customer or a registered occupant of the property, but we will proactively work with the customer to find accommodation to suit their needs.

10.4 LiveWest will not provide minor adaptations to leasehold or shared ownership stock. Any applications for major adaptations that are successful in obtaining grant funding will be considered and are not liable for any top up funding from LiveWest.

10.5 We will consider minor adaptations to temporary accommodation.

## **11 Budget Management**

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11.1 When budgets are nearing full expenditure, further budget approval will be requested but it may be necessary to set up a waiting list. This is unlikely, but if this proves to be the case, LiveWest will give customers a clear indication of when the work is likely to be completed. Where possible, customers will be supported in achieving alternative solutions to their immediate needs and/or LiveWest will endeavour to seek additional budget approval when deemed urgent and essential as per section 3.1.1.

11.2 LiveWest's Aids and Adaptations team will monitor expenditure and service delivery against this policy.



## **12 Record Keeping**

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- 12.1 Details of all major adaptations will be recorded through stock condition surveys and on completion of works within the Asset Database to enable the Asset Management and Allocations Teams to identify adapted homes as part of their routine work.
- 12.2 In addition, we will work with Occupational Therapists and our Information Team to ensure we record details of our customers support needs so that our colleagues, contractors, and other partner organisations are made aware when visiting and, where appropriate, adjust the service delivery. Such information will be recorded within CX subject to GDPR requirements.

## **13 Service Feedback & Publicity**

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- 13.1 We will publicise and promote this service through our internal web pages to colleagues. The Aids and Adaptations team provides regular training sessions and updates to internal colleagues via team meetings. Through dealing with complaints and customer feedback we ensure that we identify learning outcomes. In addition, we will provide information about the service through the LiveWest website.

## **14 Resident & Community Involvement**

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- 14.1 This policy has been developed with input from colleagues, a Customer Focus Group and is comparable to those of other Registered Providers in the region.
- 14.2 All requests for adaptations whether from Local Authorities, customer or LiveWest colleagues must be forwarded to the Aids and Adaptations team.
- 14.3 All requests internally must be submitted to the Aids and Adaptations team on the appropriate, minor works assessment form. (*appendix B – internal*)

## **15 Applying Fairness**

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- 15.1 LiveWest's policy is to treat all those that apply for assistance fairly and on an equitable basis founded on case by case needs assessment, regardless of gender, sexual orientation, marital status, race, nationality (including citizenship)<sup>1</sup>, disabilities or religious or political affiliation.

15.2 Where there may be language barriers, we will use the support of Language line to support our service.

## 16 Review & Revision of this Policy

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16.1 This policy will be reviewed and revised as and when required but at least every two years.

### Version control

Version ref	Date of change	By whom	Reason
1	16 Nov 2021	Director of Asset Management	Created and approved
1.1	March 2022	Director of Asset Management - Operations Housing Development	Para 2.1.2 update to wording
2	August 2023	Regional Head of Operations (South)	HoS determination to review and provide clarity within the policy on the mechanical breakdown and replacement of white goods. General update.

## Appendix A: Minor adaptations (threshold of £1,200)

Without an OT assessment	With an OT assessment
Internal grab rails (300mm, 450mm, 600mm (other sizes available upon request) - internal blue/white, external yellow) – weight capacity applies (15.5 stone/97 kilos). Heavy duty grab rails available	Small ramps
Newel rails	Reconstruction or new external steps
Fold down rails	Low level external threshold & new external door (excluding a ramp)
Internal stair rails (mop sticks)	Enhancement of existing heating (e.g., radiators/heaters)
Floor to ceiling poles	WC plinths
External handrails (yellow)	Door intercom system with 1-2 handsets
Lever taps (WHB, bath, KSU)	Improved internal lighting for visual impairment
Key safe (Supra C500)	Electronic door closers
Slip resistant flooring (kitchen, bathroom & WC)	Radiator covers to prevent scalding
Wall fixed shower seats	Automated door entry systems
External sensor lighting	Relocation of radiator/heater
Low level internal thresholds	Rehousing of appliances and white goods
Relocation of consumer unit	
Additional/relocation of electric sockets	
Automatic window openers	
Safety glass in internal doors	
Rehanging of internal doors	
Door & wall protectors for wheeled equipment (inc wheelchairs)	
Additional spy hole	
Lowering & relocation of internal light switches/pull cords	
Additional handsets to existing door entry systems	
Pull out/drop down baskets for kitchen cupboards	
Alternative door & window handles	
Smoke and CO alarms with accessible hush/test switch	
Minor internal lighting adjustments (e.g., strip light to pendant)	
Concrete half step or platform	
Parking bay (on LiveWest land for blue badge holders)	
Shower screens for wet rooms	
Change of thermostat	
New internal doors	
Louder/flashing doorbells	
Flashing/vibrating smoke alarms	
Door sensors	
Letter catcher	
WC flush alternatives	
Minor path adjustments	
Window restrictors	
Medical cabinet (for controlled drugs)	