



## WELFARE ADAPTATIONS POLICY 2025-28

### Policy Control

Policy reference	PD001
Department	Property Directorate
Author	Andy Higginbottom/Rachel Shardlow
Owner	Rachel Shardlow
Version	2
Reason for revision	Periodic
Status	Final
Intended recipients	
Training and dissemination	Planned Maintenance, Housing Management, Housing Options
To be read in conjunction with (other policies)	Allocations Policy, Decant Policy, Advocacy & Authority to Act Policy.
Has equalities impact assessment been considered? Please include within policy.	Yes, appended.
Policy approved by Designation Date	
Meeting approved Date	Operational Committee 06/03/2025
Implementation Date	
Review period	Triennial
Next review date	March 2028

## 1. SCOPE

This policy sets out Derby Homes' approach to the provision of aids and adaptations to those homes owned by the Councils Housing Revenue Account (and let for social housing) plus homes owned by Derby Homes.

It does not apply to homeowners, leaseholders, or private rental customers; these groups are eligible to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) from Derby City Council if they require financial support to install adaptations in their homes. Derby Homes properties can also be eligible for a DFG.

A Derby City Council or Derby Homes customer may also install adaptations in their home at their own expense. This must be undertaken in accordance with the Alterations and Improvement Policy.

## 2. AIM OF WELFARE ADAPTATIONS POLICY

This policy outlines Derby Homes' approach to enabling customers and their families to live independently, safely, and healthily in their homes for as long as possible. This will be achieved by facilitating the provision of aids and adaptations in homes, or by supporting moves to more suitable homes.

### **The aims of the policy are to:**

- Enable customers and their dependants with health conditions or disabilities to live independently and healthily in a home that meets the individual's needs.
- Make the best use of the council's housing stock and the budget available.
- Ensure that efficiency and value for money is a key consideration throughout the process.
- Set out a clear, efficient, and consistent process for handling requests.
- Help people to make informed choices about their housing options, facilitating moves to more suitable homes where appropriate.
- Ensure the availability of aids and adaptations is effectively communicated and available in accessible ways.
- Listen and talk to the disabled person; be empathetic and compassionate

### 3. KEY TERMS AND DEFINITIONS

#### Adaptation

A change made to a property to make it more accessible and safer for a customer or dependant with a disability or long-term health condition. This policy defines adaptations as minor, moderate or major.

#### Minor adaptations

A minor adaptation is a small, non-structural alteration or adaptation to a property. This type of adaptation has a value of up to £1,000 and does not require an Occupational Therapist assessment. Examples of minor adaptations include:

- Lever-operated taps.
- Handrails.
- Grab rails.
- Additional external lighting
- Flashing fire alarms.
- Key safe.

Minor adaptations are approved by the Planned Maintenance Manager. They will be completed in order of the date the referral or application was received.

Please note the £1,000 value relates to the total value of the adaptations required. If multiple minor adaptations are requested and the cost is greater than £1,000, this would be treated as a moderate adaptation.

#### Moderate adaptations

A moderate adaptation is larger scale alteration or adaptation to a property. These have a value of between £1,000 and £30,000 and require an assessment from an Occupational Therapist. Examples include:

- Installation of ramps
- Widening of doorways
- Stairlifts, Hoists, Through Floor Lifts
- Over-bath showers
- Installation of level access showers
- Hardstanding's (driveways) and footpaths
- Auto-wash toilet
- Soundproofing
- Triple glazing

Moderate adaptations are approved by Planned Maintenance Manager. Works will be completed in chronological order from the date that the referral is made unless the Occupational Therapist that undertook the assessment requests that it should be treated as a priority.

Please note the £30,000 value relates to the total value of the adaptations required. If multiple moderate adaptations are requested and the cost is greater than £30,000, this would be treated as a major adaptation.

Minor and moderate adaptations are statutory. Derby Homes must facilitate these types of adaptations, the Equalities Act 2010 refers to a duty to reasonable adjustments depending on a range of criteria including how practical the changes are, the cost of making them and the availability of budget and resources.

#### Major adaptations

Major adaptations are larger changes to the property that often involve structural alterations. These cost above £30,000 and requires an assessment from Occupational Therapist. An example of a major adaptation is an extension to the property to provide a ground floor bedroom.

Major adaptations are considered and approved the Housing Adaptations Panel They are discretionary and only approved by exception.

All adaptations will be delivered in accordance with this policy and subject to the availability of budget.

## 4. KEY RESPONSIBILITIES AND DUTIES

#### Requesting an adaptation

The adaptation request must be for a person with a disability or long-term health condition who is either the customer or their dependant. Under the Equality Act 2010, this covers any person who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to do normal, daily activities. The Act defines substantial as more than minor or trivial; it defines long-term as 12 months or more.

Applicants can self-refer, or a referral can be made by a family member, a friend, advocate or professional such as an Occupational Therapist (OT).

Requests for adaptations should be made by completing our online form at [www.derbyhomes.org/](http://www.derbyhomes.org/). If support is needed to complete the form, this can be accessed by emailing [adaptation.referrals@derbyhomes.org](mailto:adaptation.referrals@derbyhomes.org).

#### Occupational Therapist (OT) assessments

Moderate and major adaptations always require an OT assessment. These are undertaken by Derby City Council's Occupational Therapy service. If the service does not have a suitably qualified occupational therapist to undertake an assessment, Derby City Council will commission an external one. This may be required, for example, in situations where the occupant has a rare or specialist condition. In these cases, the external Occupational Therapist is acting on behalf of Derby City Council's Occupational Therapy service.

Private Occupational Therapist assessments and referrals obtained by the customer (costs are not refundable) will be accepted as a request for an adaptation. However, all referrals will be processed in line with Derby City Council Occupational Therapist procedures. Accordingly, if a private OT report is being submitted, the customer must provide written consent for it to be shared with Derby City Council's Occupational Service, in order for. Information within the assessment and/or referral will be reviewed by a Derby City Council Occupational Therapist and used as supporting information for submitting a Major Adaptation request to Derby Homes. To minimise duplication, Derby City Council's Occupational Therapist may contact and liaise with the private Occupational Therapist in relation to the assessment of need and recommendations.

Assessments will always be person-centred and will always consider the person's needs, views, values, cultural needs, and outcomes. For children and young people with a disability or long-term health condition, assessments will take their views into account wherever possible. Assessments of children will also consider their development needs and their progress towards maximum independence.

The initial assessment will consider what moderate or major adaptations are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the person. The Occupational Therapist will consider the needs of the disabled person and make recommendations on adaptations can be provided to enable the customer to live independently. Derby Homes will consider the property's age, condition, and structural characteristics as well as how cost-effective the proposed adaptations are. This element of the initial assessment will be undertaken by a Maintenance Surveyor and does not indicate a commitment that the requested adaptations will be progressed.

We will always consider the most reasonable and practicable solution to meet the identified needs. The assessment will consider a range of options; these could include how rooms in the property could be used differently to accommodate the person or whether a move to another property would best support their ongoing independence.

Where proposed adaptations will have potential to cause significant disruption to the home environment, the needs of all members of the household will be taken into consideration in the planning of proposed works. It may be necessary for members of the household to move to an alternate property on a temporary basis.

We will always consider how best to achieve value for money, considering:

- By designing adaptations that will meet current and anticipated future needs
- Projected costs of health and social care in the long term
- Alternative options, including moving to a different property.

Value for money is not always achieved by pursuing the cheapest option.

We will involve the customer of the property in all aspects of the assessment process.

Each application will be considered on its own merit and in accordance with this policy.

#### Approval of major adaptations

Major adaptations are discretionary and only approved by exception. The following points will be considered when making a decision:

- The needs of the residents as assessed by an Occupational Therapist
- Whether the adaptations identified are reasonable and practicable, in relation to the age and character of the property.
- The cost of the adaptations
- The likely medical prognosis and long-term usability of the adaptations
- The property type and level of demand
- Any under-occupancy or over-occupancy issues
- The likely availability of alternative, suitable properties
- The needs of the resident, and any personal factors that demonstrate a need to remain in their existing property.
- The availability of the customer's support network and carers

Approval of major adaptations will only be considered if:

- An Occupational Therapist completes an assessment of needs which outlines clear recommendations that the work is needed to sustain independent living.
- An assessment is carried out with the customer to check whether a move to a more suitable property may resolve the need for adaptations and present a better long-term solution to their circumstances.
- The proposed works comply with all planning permission and building regulation requirements; are subject to structural, flood risk and ecological conditions to gain planning and building regulations approval. This also includes highways and access requirements.

Examples where approval for major works may not be granted include:

- If an extension is required to provide additional facilities and there is suitable accommodation available in the locality or alternate area the customer wishes to move to
- Where the practicalities of carrying out the adaptations to properties that have narrow doors, stairs and passages that would make wheelchair use around the property difficult.

We will always seek to ensure the best possible and practicable outcome for the individual, whilst balancing value for money.

For adaptation works, all works requested/approved must be directly linked to the needs of the individual. Any wider housing issues affecting the household, for example overcrowding, will not be considered as part of this process. If a major adaptation request is received for a household who is also an accepted Crowding and Hazard Space case, we will make a joint referral to the Major Adaptations New Build and Extensions group.

#### Alternative housing options

It is essential that the comprehensive housing stock that Derby Homes manages is fully utilised. This means that alternative housing options will need to be considered where an adaptation is not considered necessary, appropriate, or practical.

Examples of situations where this may be considered include:

- The cost of required adaptations does not provide best value.
- An empty property that is already adapted and meets the needs of the applicant is available.
- An extension can be avoided by a move to a larger property.
- The property is not suitable for a particular adaptation or extension, for example, properties with a non-traditional construction.
- An extension request has been rejected by the Housing Adaptation Panel

If rehousing is the only option, we will work with customers to explore their housing needs and options. There is very limited supply of available social housing in the city, along with significant high levels of demand. All possible options will be considered. This may include social housing, seeking a mutual exchange, or securing a suitable private rented sector property, depending on individual circumstances.

#### Major Adaptations, New Build and Extensions group

The Major Adaptations, New Build & Extensions (MANBE) Group is comprised of senior officers representing Derby Homes' Housing Management, Housing Options and Property directorates. This group oversees the delivery of adaptations in accordance with this policy. The group considers requests for major adaptations and make recommendations to progress them to the Housing Adaptations Panel. All works considered by the MANBE Group is subject to the availability of budget.

#### Housing Adaptations Panel

The Housing Adaptations Panel provides a forum to consider and approve major adaptations, that have been recommended by the MANBE Group. The panel is comprised of Derby Homes Directors.

If a customer wishes to appeal a decision made by this group, it will be heard by the Managing Director of Derby Homes.

### How we will notify customers of a decision

We will notify customers of a decision as soon as reasonably practicable. This is usually no later than six months after the date we received the application.

If the application is refused, we notify the customer in writing. We will clearly outline the reasons for the decision and include information about the appeals process and our complaints process.

If the application is approved, we contact the customer directly and give information on the what the next steps are and likely timescales.

Prescribed customer touchpoints will provide timely updates on progress. Update will be at least every three months until any work starts. During the work we will give monthly updates as a minimum. Customers will be given details of an officer as a point of contact if they have any questions.

### Appealing a decision

Appeals against the decisions must be made within 28 days of the date on the decision letter. Their appeal must be in writing and outline the reasons for their appeal, they should also include any relevant evidence or supporting information. Appeals should be sent to the Head of Capital Works.

The Head of Capital Works will acknowledge receipt of the appeal within 5 working days of it being received. The Head of Capital Works will consider the appeal in consultation with relevant colleagues and endeavour to provide a written decision within 20 working days. On rare occasions, it will not be possible to respond within 20 working days, we will advise accordingly and propose an alternative deadline for a response.

If the customer is dissatisfied by the appeal decision, the case will be considered by the Housing Adaptation Panel. If the customer continues to be dissatisfied, that decision will be considered by the Managing Director of Derby Homes.

### **Complaints and feedback**

If a customer is dissatisfied with the decision about their adaptation request, the first course of action is the appeal procedure described above.

If they remain dissatisfied following an appeal, they will be able to escalate via our complaints process. We will provide details about our complaints process in the decision letter and appeal decision letter but is also available on our website.

Derby Homes complaints process adheres to the Complaint Handling Code from the Housing Ombudsman and contains details on how the Ombudsman can be approached to review and investigate complaints about Derry Homes. We will provide information about the Housing Ombudsman in our decision letter and appeals decision letter.



We recognise that some people may need additional support to raise concerns informally or via the complaints process. We will signpost people to locally available support where necessary.

We are committed to continuously reviewing our processes and delivering quality services, so welcome feedback and comments from anyone who has engaged with the adaptations service. Similarly, we are always happy to receive compliments if you feel our service was delivered to a high standard.

### Communal areas

Where a request for an adaptation in a communal space is received, the request will be considered on an individual basis, but also on the subsequent impact on other users of the space. It may be necessary to consult other before a decision can be made.

### Timescales

Derby Homes aim to complete the different types of adaptations within the timescales detailed below:

- **Minor** – within 25 working days
- **Moderate** – within 90 days
- **Major** – start within 26 weeks (subject to planning approval and successful appointment of a contractor)

Completion of any work is always subject to the availability of a budget. If our annual budget is already fully committed when we receive a request for an adaptation, the work may have to be deferred to the next financial year. We will advise customers if this is the case.

### Works that will not be delivered

Adaptation work delivered in accordance with this policy will be to the fabric of the building. The fabric of a building is made up of the elements which characterise the structure as a building. This includes walls, roofs, internal surfaces, floors, stairs, landings and all doors and windows. It also includes plumbing and central heating systems, electrical mains wiring, and lighting systems.

We will not undertake adaptations in the following circumstances:

- If the adaptation is not possible for technical reasons, for example some properties of non-traditional construction
- Where the customer has a live Right to Buy application.
- Where the customer is actively seeking a home swap or move.

### Maintenance of adaptations

Derby Homes will meet the cost of all routine maintenance and repairs to equipment it installs under this policy. There is an annual programme for servicing and repairs of stair lifts and lifting equipment.

If equipment is wilfully damaged by the customer, members of the household or visitors to the property, the customer will be recharged for any repairs that are required.

### Removal and recycling of adaptations

Where possible, equipment that has been installed as part of an adaptation will be reused by letting the property to a future applicant who also requires the adaptation. If this is not possible, consideration will be given to removing the adaptation and storing it for future use. The cost of the equipment, its expected life span and the availability of storage space will be considered.

Some adaptations will not be removed when the customer who required them leave the property; for example, if a bath has been replaced with a level access shower, or if a ramp has been provided.

### Letting adapted properties

Adaptations to properties are recorded on Derby Homes housing management system, this allows properties that become vacant to be advertised to make the most appropriate use of existing adaptations.

Adapted properties will be allocated through the Council's choice-based lettings scheme, and applicants that require adaptations will be prioritised in accordance with the Allocations Policy. This is particularly important for properties with significant adaptations such as those that have ground floor bedrooms and showering facilities, or where an external or through floor lift have been installed.

## 5. MONITORING COMPLIANCE AND EFFECTIVENESS

We will monitor the compliance and effectiveness of this policy and the service provided by it in a variety of ways. These include alignment with relevant Derby Homes policies and procedures, the strategic and operational targets contained in the Derby Homes Delivery Plan, the Consumer Standard, which are set by the Regulator for Social Housing.

## 6. REFERENCES AND GLOSSARY

- **Adaptations** - changes that can be made to a home to make it safer and easier to move around and do everyday tasks
- **Aids** - pieces of equipment to make it safer and easier to move around and do everyday tasks,
- **Disabled person** - under the Equality Act 2010, this is any person who has a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to do normal, daily activities. The Act defines substantial as more than minor or trivial; it defines long-term as 12 months or more.
- **Housing Adaptation Panel** – an internal Derby Homes group who consider the approval of major adaptations.
- **Minor adaptation** is a small, non-structural alteration or adaptation.
- **Major adaptation** is a larger change to the property that often involve structural alterations.
- **Moderate adaptation** is a larger scale alteration or adaptation to a property.
- **Occupational Therapist** is a health professional who helps people of all ages live independently by improving their ability to perform daily activities.