

AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS POLICY

1.0 Introduction

Ayrshire Housing recognises that the physical needs of tenants and other household members can change during their tenancy. Many people with physical or sensory impairments would prefer to remain in their own homes. Often, the use of aids or adaptations is the most effective way of realising this preference.

It is a fundamental objective of the policy that we will assist people to remain in their present home for as long as possible. Ayrshire Housing will consider carrying out repairs, improvements or adaptations to enable people to live in comfort and safety in the community. This will be done with the recognition that a person's independence, confidence and dignity can be maintained.

This policy primarily relates to adaptation works which will be met by HAG funding. Scottish Homes Guidance Note 2001/02 "Procedures for HAG Funding of Stage 3 Adaptations" and any other subsequent amendments provide further details on the procedures which should be followed for the approval of HAG funding for such works.

In addressing the demand for aids and adaptations, Ayrshire Housing will work on a partnership basis with other agencies and organisations. Key partners in this will be the local authorities, mainly through social work and occupational therapy staff, and the Scottish Government Housing Investment Division.

2.0 Types of Adaptations

The following list, although not exhaustive, provides examples of works which, when provided for a disabled person, are admissible for HAG funding.

General Alterations: extensions or alterations to property

Access to Property: forming ramps, fitting handrails

Staircases: handrails, stair lifts, hoists

Plumbing: replacement of taps with e.g. lever taps, thermostatic controlled showers

Electrics: re-fixing sockets and switches to more convenient heights, installation of alarms, flashing lights or bells for people who are hard of hearing

Kitchens: alterations to storage units, sink units and worktops to convenient levels, fitting non-slip flooring, installing waste disposal unit under sink

Bathrooms: shower in place of, or to supplement, bath, special shower unit, level access shower or wet floor area, wc fixture or wash hand basin, fixed bath hoist, handrails and grab rails, non-slip flooring

Storage: storage provision for wheelchair.

3.0 Legal and Regulatory Framework

In considering applications for aids and adaptations the association will aim to comply with all legislative, contractual and regulatory obligations including the following;

- Equalities Act 2010 – Duty to make “reasonable adjustments” for disabled people.
- Scottish Social Housing Charter.
- Housing (Scotland) Act 2014 – Part 2, paragraph 15 (amendment to Housing (Scotland) Act 2001 (Schedule 2, paragraphs 11 and 12 – Discretionary Grounds for Recovery of Possession).

4.0 Equality and Diversity

Ayrshire Housing is committed to equal and fair treatment of all sections of the community. Accordingly, no person will be discriminated against during the implementation of this policy on the grounds of sex, marital status, family circumstances, race, ethnic or national origins, disability, age, religion, political or sexual orientation. In delivering this policy, Ayrshire Housing’s staff and contractors will comply fully with the requirements of the association’s Equality and Diversity Policy.

This Policy will be subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

5.0 Links to Other Ayrshire Housing Policies

Other Ayrshire Housing policies which may be impacted by or have an impact on aids and adaptations works will include the Repairs and Maintenance Policy, the Voids Management Policy, the Allocations Policy and the Group Financial Regulations. Tenants’ rights to mutual exchanges, assignments, successions to tenancy and transfers may also be affected by this policy and associated legislation and/or statutory guidance.

6.0 Funding for Adaptations

Ayrshire Housing will bid for an annual funding allocation to cover the estimated costs for meeting requests and referrals for Stage Three adaptation works. This

will be submitted to the Scottish Government Housing and Social Justice Directorate each year through the Housing and Regeneration Programme (HARP) funding process. The Scottish Government funding process also allows for the association to claim separately for funding for “major/complex” adaptations such as extensions or alterations to provide suitable bedroom or bathroom for a disabled person, vertical through floor lifts, re-design of an existing kitchen or creation of hard standings or other extensive external alterations.

The allocated grant is not always sufficient to fund all adaptations and the limited funding often means that tenants may have to wait some time for an adaptation to be carried out. If the annual budget is fully spent and there remain further adaptations which have not been completed, Ayrshire Housing will request additional funding from the Scottish Government to meet the demand. If this is unsuccessful, a review of Ayrshire Housing’s maintenance budgets will be carried out to establish whether Ayrshire Housing would be able to fund further works from its own revenue.

Given the relatively low cost and volume of adaptations such as handrails, grab rails, accessible taps, accessible door handles, fitting doorbells, the association will consider these works as “making reasonable adjustments” for disabled people and will fund these from the association’s internal responsive repair budgets. This arrangement will be reviewed regularly to ensure that such works can continue to be funded from the association’s maintenance budgets.

7.0 Tenant Requests for Permission for Alterations or Adaptations

There may be occasions where tenants wish to carry out works to address some disabilities. Such requests should be considered under the association’s general policies for tenant permissions. Tenants who have been given permission to carry out such works including medical adaptations will also be advised of their rights under the association’s Right to Compensation for Improvements Policy.

Reasons for refusing such requests may include the following:

- The construction type of the property might prohibit the successful adaptation of the property.
- Best use of the property might be significantly compromised by permitting the adaptation.
- The future lettable of the property might be compromised by the works carried out.

8.0 Request for Adaptations – Eligibility for Assistance

All applications for approval of HAG funding for Stage Three adaptations must be based on specialist advice, or on medical opinion, and must comply with specialist recommendations. This will routinely be in the form of a letter or report from an Occupational Therapist (OT). Ayrshire Housing may also receive requests which are supported by other health care professionals e.g. Health Visitors, District Nurses and GP’s. Such requests will only be considered on an exceptional

basis and it is anticipated that there will be very few occasions when this would occur. However, if it is accepted that there are reasonable grounds for such requests, Ayrshire Housing may additionally seek the opinion of an OT prior to instructing works.

For minor adaptations which may be funded directly from the association's maintenance budgets a self-referral process will be introduced. In some circumstances e.g. where the association is of the opinion that the request is unreasonable or the work is not needed, Ayrshire Housing may contact the OT service for additional comments on the request.

8.1 Shared Ownership Properties

The association's Sharing Owners are not eligible for assistance or funding from the association or from the Grant received from the Scottish Government. Sharing Owners will be directed to South Ayrshire Council's Occupational Therapist service for further advice and assistance.

9.0 Prioritising Applications

Adaptations will normally be instructed on the basis that the highest priority recommendations are carried out first, providing that sufficient funding is available.

Medium and Low priority recommendations will then be carried out in that order, providing there is adequate funding available. There may be occasions where there is inadequate funding left to carry out any further Urgent or High priority works but the funding is sufficient to carry out some Medium or Low priority works. In such circumstances it would be acceptable to proceed with ordering the lower priority works.

When the annual funding has been exhausted requests for additional funding for any outstanding Urgent or High priority works should be made to the Scottish Government.

10.0 Instructing the Works

The work that will be specified will, in the majority of cases, follow the specification from the Occupational Therapists. South Ayrshire Council provided guidance for the Occupational Therapists covering items such as showers, handrails, ramps, lever taps and the widening of doors. This will form the basis of the work that we will instruct contractors when carrying out adaptations.

Where a shower is being installed, a non-slip floor covering will also be fitted by Ayrshire Housing. If a tenant does not wish this floor covering, this must be confirmed by written agreement between Ayrshire Housing and the tenant.

In exceptional cases there may be work carried out which deviates from the standard specification e.g. fitting coloured tiles rather than the basic white tiles.

This will only be done following written agreement between Ayrshire Housing and the tenant. This agreement will detail any costs related to the work which may require to be met by the tenant.

No work will be instructed which does not meet the adaptation specified by the Occupational Therapist though the association may seek further information or clarification. For example, if the work specified includes the fitting of a shower curtain, Ayrshire Housing will not agree to fit a shower screen.

Costs will be obtained for each adaptation prior to any work being instructed. Quotations, authorisation and tendering will be done in accordance with the Group Financial Procedures and Regulations:

- Works up the value of £3,500 may be ordered without the requirement to gain more than one quote.
- Works to the value of between £3,500 and below £7,500 will require two written quotations prior to being instructed.
- Works above £7,500 will require to be tendered by three contractors approved by the Head of Housing Services.

11.0 Timescales for Completing Works

Ayrshire Housing will monitor the time taken to complete works in relation to aids and adaptations.

Where funding is available the target for completing works will be as follows:

Adaptations should be completed within 31 days from the job being instructed.

Major/complex works which may require planning permission or building warrant will be carried out as quickly and efficiently as possible, however as the association has no control over the time taken to issue warrants or to approve planning permission, no fixed targets will be set.

Examples of major/complex adaptations as defined by the Scottish Government include the following:

- Extensions or alterations to provide a suitable bedroom or bathroom for a disabled person.
- Vertical through floor lift.
- Redesign of an existing kitchen.
- Creation of hard standings or other extensive external alterations.

12.0 Customer Satisfaction

Ayrshire Housing will monitor customer satisfaction with adaptation works within the procedures in place for regular maintenance and repair works. This will ensure that tenants who require adaptation works to their property will receive the same standard of service as if it were a standard repair in respect of having the opportunity to give feedback on the completed works.

13.0 Maintenance of Adaptations

Ayrshire Housing will maintain and replace adaptations in accordance with the association's maintenance policy.

Ayrshire Housing will also be responsible for ensuring and funding annual service contracts where appropriate and/or required.

14.0 Removal of Adaptations

Scottish Government guidance states that "RSLs should re-use and/or recycle adaptations wherever possible".

Where an adaptation has been fitted and there is no longer anyone in the household requiring such or where the property has been void and there is no applicant being offered the tenancy who requires the adaptation, consideration should be given as to the practicality of removing the adaptation and utilising it elsewhere e.g. for an applicant on the waiting list for aids and adaptations.

There may be works carried out which are of such a minor nature that it would be either impractical or not cost effective to remove and/or recycle. These might include handrails, grab rails, stair rails, door entry systems. However, where there is clear evidence that the fixture could be removed and significantly benefit another individual residing elsewhere then the appropriate arrangements should be made to remove and recycle the fixture or equipment.

15.0 Allocation of Adapted Properties

When a property that has been adapted becomes vacant, the association will endeavour to offer it to applicants who would benefit from such adaptations. It would be expected that such applicants will be registered on the association's Special Needs Waiting or Transfer Lists. If a local authority nomination is being sought for the property, information regarding the particular adaptations should be included in the nomination request to help the local authority identify and nominate an applicant whose needs may be met by the presence of such aids or adaptations. Depending on the extent of the adaptations or alterations the association may also consult with social workers regarding the re-let of the property.

16.0 Complaints

Complaints about the implementation of this Policy should be dealt with through the association's Corporate Complaints Handling procedures, further details of which are available from the association's office and on the association's website.