

Appendix 8



EQUIPMENT AND ADAPTATIONS POLICY

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- 1.1 The Equipment and Adaptations Policy (the policy) outlines how Redditch Borough Council (RBC) will support tenants and their immediate households to remain independently in their current home by undertaking minor and major adaptations. This will enable tenants to carry out essential daily activities which may be hampered by long-term health issues or disability. If this is not possible or practical, the Council will assist them in finding suitable alternative accommodation.
- 1.2 This policy supports the following Strategic Purposes:
- Communities which are safe, well maintained and green
 - Finding somewhere to live
 - Living independent, active & health lives

2 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- 2.1 The key objectives of the Equipment and Adaptations policy are:
- To provide an equipment and adaptation service which assists tenants with a disability, and their household members, to live independently in their homes.
 - To set out the criteria by which we will assess all requests for equipment and adaptations to RBC housing stock.
 - To ensure the adaptations process is managed efficiently, effectively and provides value for money.
 - To make best use of RBC's adapted housing stock by ensuring that allocations are made in accordance with need by matching empty adapted homes with families/persons requiring, or having a documented future need for, adaptations.
 - To comply with legal and statutory requirements in relation to the provision of disabled adaptations.

3 POLICY STATEMENT

- 3.1 The Council's approach to dealing with requests for adaptations to our housing stock will be in accordance with this policy.
- 3.2 This policy recognises the impact adaptations in and around the home can have in helping someone with long-term health issues or a disability to maximise their independence. The policy recognises that alternatives to the provision of adaptations will be explored with the tenant and their household, and wherever possible tenants will be encouraged to move to more suitable accommodation if necessary. It confirms our commitment to respond to meet the needs of our tenants as these may change over time as well as effectively using our existing housing stock.
- 3.3 It confirms the council's commitment to meeting the needs of tenants, which may change over time, as well as effectively using the council's existing housing stock and ensuring a fair distribution of equipment and adaptations within finite resources. Whilst the needs of tenants will be given proper consideration it is

inevitable that the use of the councils housing stock must additionally be considered in parallel to ensure that all residents are being treated fairly particularly where the nature of the adaptation is substantial

- 3.4 The council acknowledges that the timely provision of minor adaptations can often sustain the independence of tenants and postpone the need for substantial major adaptations. The provision of minor adaptations is therefore seen as an important preventative service.
- 3.5 This policy is based on private sector housing policy and the legislation which governs the implementation of major adaptations made from the Disabled Facilities Grants under the "Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996" and aims to provide a consistent service across all housing tenures.
- 3.6 RBC as a landlord meets the cost to supply and fit equipment and adaptations to council homes. These costs are met through the Councils Housing Revenue Account. We will do all we can to ensure there is sufficient funding to meet the needs of tenants, however this may not always be possible.

4 LEGAL AND REGULATORY FRAMEWORK

- 4.1 RBC has to operate within the framework created by legislation and its own strategies and policies. It states that we shall:
- Offer tenancies or terms of occupation which are compatible with the purpose of the accommodation, the needs of individual households, the sustainability of the community and the efficient use of their housing stock.
 - Co-operate with the local authorities' strategic housing function and their duties to meet identified local housing needs. This includes assistance with the local authorities' homelessness duties and through meeting obligations in nominations agreements.
 - Co-operate with relevant organisations to provide an adaptations service that meets tenants' needs.
 - Develop and deliver services to address under-occupation and overcrowding in their homes within the resources available to them. These services should be focused on the needs of the tenants and will offer choices to them.
 - Provide tenants wishing to move with access to clear and relevant information about their housing options.
- 4.2 The Equality Act 2010 has repealed much of the previous disability legislation. It includes a new duty for public bodies when carrying out their functions to have due regard to promoting equality. Discrimination on grounds of disability can be justified in law if the council has appropriately balanced the needs of the person with a disability and those of others in need of accommodation. Making better overall use of the housing stock and meeting more needs, including those with disabilities, is a legitimate aim.
- 4.3 The Equality Act 2010 'Duty to make Reasonable Adjustments' applies to Landlords and Managers of rented premises or premises available to rent. This

duty is not anticipatory – it only arises if RBC are requested to make an adjustment by a person to whom the premises are let or by someone on their behalf.

4.4 There are two requirements under the Act:

- Providing auxiliary aids and services
- Changing provisions, criteria or practices (e.g. allowing a disabled person who uses an assistance dog to take a property that might otherwise have stipulated 'no dogs')

4.5 There is no legal requirement under the Equality Act for RBC to make any changes which would consist of or include the removal or alteration of a physical feature of the property which includes:

- Any feature arising from the design or construction of a building
- Any feature of any approach to, exit from or access to a building
- Any fixtures or fittings in or on a premises
- Any other physical element or quality

4.6 The cost of adaptations and the suitability of the current accommodation (including under occupation) are relevant factors when considering proportionality.

4.7 Under the terms of this policy, a person is regarded as being disabled if they 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, the effects of which last for at least 12 months, or which are likely to last for the remainder of a person's life.

4.8 Other legislation is shown below:

- The Care Act 2014
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- The Housing Act 1985
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- National Assistance Act 1948
- Care Act 2014

4.9 Non-legal influences on this Policy:

- Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People: A good practice guide 2013

5 SCOPE OF POLICY

5.1 This Policy:

- States clearly how new equipment and adaptations requests will be assessed, considered, prioritised, approved or rejected
- Makes best use of existing adaptations in council properties through the reallocation of those properties to those with needs most closely meeting the

property attributes

- Specifies threshold indicators and limits relating to types of adaptations
- Indicates what support can be offered in terms of re-housing to more suitable accommodation when an option appraisal makes the application nonviable for the existing dwelling or its occupants
- States clearly which adaptations will not be funded
- States clearly how tenants will be made aware of their responsibility to contribute towards the costs if this applies where adaptations will cost more than the maximum limit the council will fund

5.2 The following property types, as owned by Redditch Borough Council, are considered within the Policy:

- General needs accommodation with communal areas.
- Sheltered housing schemes.
- Leasehold properties with common parts.
- Temporary accommodation.

5.3 **This policy covers two areas**

Part 1 - Adapting existing homes

Part 2 - Allocation of and best use of existing stock currently part or fully adapted to meet housing demand

5.4 Adaptations are split into three categories: -

- Equipment and aids
- Minor
- Major

5.5 These distinctions are based on the nature and cost of the work required, as opposed to the impact the adaptation will have on the individual requiring such work.

5.6 Equipment and aids will be considered, provided a tenant meets the Fair Access to Care (FACS) criteria, Health or the Community Occupational Therapy Service will provide a range of freestanding portable or medical aids suitable for the functional requirements.

5.7 Minor Adaptations required for medical reasons can be referred from Worcestershire Health and Care Trust NHS, Community Occupational Therapists (adaptations, equipment and housing). **They will typically cost under £1,500.**

5.8 Major adaptations include extensive structural alterations such as extensions to properties, improvements to or additions to the fabric of the property that **will normally cost between £1,500 and £30,000**. The Council will not provide funding in excess of £30,000 for any adaptation. Any additional funding will need to be provided by a partner organisation, or the tenant unless agreed otherwise by the Housing Service Lead.

PART 1- ADAPTING EXISTING HOMES

6 POLICY DETAILS

6.1 The term Equipment and Adaptations covers a number of related activities including:

- Option appraisal and feasibility of recommendations received from the Community Occupational Therapy Service.
- Commissioning and installation of equipment and adaptations to council properties.
- Appropriate removal and reuse of equipment and adaptations in council properties.
- Developing and maintaining an adapted council property list to support new applications for council property.

- Supporting tenants through the various stages of the equipment and adaptations process.
- Receiving and prioritising new applications for re-housing from existing tenants requiring adapted or accessible housing solutions.
- Appropriately allocating adapted council properties.
- Assessment of new applications for housing

Eligibility

Who Qualifies and who doesn't?

- 6.2 Equipment and Adaptations will only be considered for RBC tenants, their partner or a member of the immediate family who is a permanent resident in the household

And

- 6.3 Have an impairment which has a significant long-term effect on their ability to
- Carry out normal day-day activities in and around their home
 - Access essential facilities within their home
- 6.4 Adaptations for children of tenants will only be completed at the property which is the principal home.
- 6.5 Major Adaptations will not be approved for individuals who are waiting for medical procedures which will improve mobility until their expected recovery is complete.
- 6.6 Adaptations will be considered when a tenant is waiting to be discharged from hospital and require their current homes to be adapted, however it may not be possible for them to be completed prior to discharge.
- 6.7 Adaptations will not be carried out for lodgers or temporary visitors.
- 6.8 Generally, adaptations will be carried out where a secure tenancy is held, although consideration will be given if tenants are introductory tenants. If the tenancy is in its introductory period and is less than 12 months old, adaptations may not be carried out if the tenant failed to declare that they or a member of their household had a pre-existing disability where it would have been reasonable for them to do so.
- 6.9 Requests for major adaptations will not be approved where a Right-to-Buy application has been received. Tenants in these cases will be signposted to the assistance available through the council's DFG programme once they have bought their home.
- 6.10 Tenants seeking to transfer, or mutual exchange will be considered on their individual merit and whether they are leaving or going to a suitably adapted property. This will form part of the consideration.
- 6.11 The council will not progress with an adaptation where possession proceedings have commenced, or a possession order is already in place. Where there are rent arrears, cases will be considered on their individual merit.

- 6.12 We will only consider carrying out major adaptations that have been recommended by an occupational therapist.

7 THE APPLICATION PROCESS FOR ADAPTATIONS

- 7.1 How to enquire or make an application – tenants should:
- 7.2 Contact Equipment and Adaptations Team, the Neighbourhood Tenancy Team, Doctor or other health professional to complete a referral. Tenants can also self-refer by completing an application for assessment available on Redditch Borough Councils website. Once a referral is received and reviewed by Equipment and Adaptations Team, an initial screening will be arranged with an Occupational Therapist. An appointment to visit (if required) will be made with the tenant to identify any adaptations that are necessary, appropriate and qualifying. If a need for adaptations is identified the Occupational Therapy Service will in turn send a written recommendation to the Council for consideration.

8 QUALIFICATION FOR ADAPTATIONS

- 8.1 An assessment of needs, by an Occupational Therapist (OT) must be undertaken for all major adaptations identifying any necessary and appropriate adaptations required to meet the needs of the disabled person. Following the assessment, the OT will provide a written recommendation to the council. The council must be satisfied that the recommended works are:
- Reasonable Feasible and Practicable with regards to the type, age and condition of the dwelling
 - Necessary and appropriate to meet the needs and prognosis of the disabled occupant, having regard for end-of-life care protocols.
- 8.2 For example, the council would not normally provide a level access shower to the first floor or above in a house or first floor flat unless the access to this facility has been assessed. Has a stair lift assessment been undertaken or is there use of a lift. The council will also consider the wider impact of the requested adaptation in relation to issues such as others in the family tenancy, regular visitors to the property, under-occupancy levels. Some of the council's properties are unsuitable by design for adaptation. We will only fit Level Access Showers in properties on the first floor or above after we are satisfied that all other options for the tenant have been explored and have been found to be inappropriate.
- 8.3 If a tenant has expressed the intention to move from the property, e.g. by way of transfer, mutual exchange or other method, the council may decide not to approve major adaptations at their current property. However, each application will be considered on its individual merit.

9. TYPES OF ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

- 9.1 There are three categories of Equipment and Adaptations for existing tenants covered by this policy.
- 9.2 Equipment and Aids Provided a tenant meets the Fair Access to Care (FACS) criteria, Health or the Occupational Therapy Service will provide a range of freestanding portable or medical aids suitable for the functional requirements including:

- Portable Hoists
- Hospital Beds
- Toilet frames and Specialist seats
- Bed levers
- Wheelchairs
- Shower chairs
- Chair risers
- Walking frames
- Reaching devices
- Door entry systems

Minor Adaptations Works which cost £1,500 or less.

9.3 The provision of these adaptations may be based on the recommendation of an OT whilst assessing for major adaptations or be requested by a tenant direct to RBC.

9.4 Examples (non-exhaustive) of minor adaptations include:

- Grab rails
- Handrails
- Lever taps
- Stair rails
- Lowering/repositioning of light switches and sockets (wheelchair users only)
- Steps
- Small ramps or removable ramps
- Bath lifts
- Flashing or amplified doorbells
- Door and wall protectors

Major adaptations are works that cost over £1,500 up to £30,000

9.5 The works usually involve structural alterations, improvements to, or additions to the fabric of the property. For all Major adaptations a written recommendation from an OT must be received.

9.6 Major adaptations are provided in line with the provisions of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 for disabled facilities grants (DFG) and in summary help to facilitate:

- Access to and from the home.
- Making the dwelling or building safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with him/her.
- Access to a room used or usable as the principal family room.
- Access to or providing for the disabled occupant, a room for sleeping.
- Access to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room(s) in which there is a lavatory, a shower and or bath, a wash hand basin, or facilitating the use of such facilities by the disabled occupant.
- The preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant.
- Improving/providing a heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the disabled occupant.

- The use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of one or more means of access to or control of that source or by providing additional means of control.
- Access and movement by the disabled occupant around the dwelling in order to enable him/her to care for a person who is normally resident in the dwelling and is in need of such care.
- Facilitating access to and from a garden by a disabled occupant

9.7 Examples (non-exhaustive) of major adaptations include:

- Level access showers
- Large permanent ramps
- Door widening
- Stair lifts
- Kitchen refurbishment with low level units (appliances excluded)
- Through floor lifts
- Tracked Hoists (works associated with strengthening the structure and additional electric points only – hoists are a medical aid)
- Swing doors or doors operated electrically
- Extensions – Ground floor level only

10. **THRESHOLD INDICATORS AND OPTIONS APPRAISAL PROCESS FOR MAJOR ADAPTATIONS**

10.1 In assessing the recommendations received from the OT Service, RBC will consider in more detail a number of factors and threshold indicators to establish if it is willing to proceed. To do this it will undertake an Options appraisal process which includes.

- Establishing if the equipment and adaptations are feasible, reasonable and practicable.
- Where necessary, gather further information through an application form, site visits, case conferences and key professionals.
- Identify if any threshold indicators have been reached, and if they have, recommend options appraisal be undertaken.

10.2 On deciding whether it is reasonable and practicable to undertake major adaptations the council will consider the following threshold indicators:

10.3 The Building/ Property

- a. The age and structural condition of the property.
- b. Existing adaptations at the property.
- c. Cost of adaptations necessary to make the property suitable.
- d. Length of time the adaptation will take and incumbent void rent loss if the tenant has to be decanted.
- e. Property constraints in terms of its adaptability.

- f. Architectural and structural characteristics of the dwelling, some of which may render certain types of adaptation inappropriate, for example properties with narrow doors, stairways and passages, or steep slopes and flight of steps.
- g. If the adaptation is for a level access shower is on a first floor storey or first floor flat the means of accessing the facility i.e stair lift or lift
- h. Where a sheltered scheme has an adapted communal bathroom, and that bathroom would meet the needs of the tenant and it is reasonable that the tenant can use the facility the council will not further adapt the bathroom within the tenants accommodation
- i. Where works would require planning permission or building regulation approval which has not been, or would not be, granted
- j. Whether adaptations make the best use of the council's housing stock and future let ability of a property
- k. Whether adaptations affect the amenity of the area for other residents
- l. Whether there is a 2nd reception room which could be utilised as a bedroom /bathroom when a stair lift and wet room to the 1st floor is being recommended

10.4 The Demand

- a. Property type and demand.
- b. Availability of more suitable alternative adapted or part adapted accommodation.
- c. A suitable, alternative adapted property is offered and refused
- d. Whether the property is a ground floor home in a block of flats
- e. Whether the property is a bungalow

10.5 The Person/tenancy

- a. Availability of the disabled person's existing support network and carers
- b. Affordability (rent increase and under occupation for instance)
- c. The tenants' intentions regarding the long-term use of the property
- d. Where the council is taking possession proceedings against the tenant for example, for rent arrears (in line with general needs transfer requests) and anti-social behaviour
- e. Any competing needs of different members of the family which cannot be met in that particular home.
- f. Whether the property and proposed adaptations will meet the long-term needs of the disabled person. For instance, if a tenant has a deteriorating condition which means ground floor rooms would meet their future needs better than adapting the first floor.
- g. Current occupancy of a property, for example is it under-occupied or will it be over occupied on completion
- h. The request is to address specialist medical needs of an individual other than basic needs (Example of specialist needs: self-washing facilities, hospital beds or hoists)

10.6 An options appraisal process will automatically apply to cases that hit one or more of the following triggers but may also be referred through the process if a larger number of other threshold indicators are in question:

- a. Where the property is currently under or over-occupied or will become under or over occupied if the adaptations are undertaken
- b. Where a possession order has been obtained or is in the process of being obtained

- c. Where the estimated cost of adapting a property is £1,500 or above
- d. The property cannot be adapted because of design constraints
- e. If there are likely to be excessive costs

- 10.7 The options appraisal will be undertaken by Housing Services and Housing Property Services. A short report with officer recommendations on the options available will be presented to the Repairs and Maintenance Manager and the Neighbourhood Tenancy Manager for adaptations over £5000 but below £10,000. Approval from the Housing Services Manager and the Housing Property Services Manager will be required for adaptations costing more than £10,000.
- 10.8 In these cases, consideration will be made as to whether the work should go ahead or whether an alternative solution can be found which will continue to meet the essential needs of the tenant. Consideration will also be given to whether any extensive adaptation work would be the best use of the current housing stock or would negatively affect the future let ability of the property or would prove to be prohibitively expensive.
- 10.9 Fitting Level Access Showers in properties on the first floor or above does not represent the best use of our housing stock and they rarely meet the long-term needs of our tenants. Families generally require baths and not level access showers; therefore, our experience is that when properties with a Level Access Shower are re-let, they can be less desirable to potential tenants.
- 10.10 Furthermore, tenants with mobility problems could have their housing need best served with a move to more suitable accommodation such as a bungalow or ground floor flat. We do not consider that not wanting to move is an appropriate reason on its own to install a Level Access Shower or Stair Lift to a house or upstairs flat.
- 10.11 Before extensive adaptations are carried out to a property, other options will always be considered.
- 10.12 These options include the possibility of better use of space within the existing footprint of the property, for example utilising a second reception room/dining room, or whether a move to a more suitable property would resolve the need for adaptations and present a better long-term solution for the applicant. Only one main family room is necessary to meet a household need as such the council will consider the use of one of any additional reception rooms in a property to provide adaptations.
- 10.13 Tenants will be expected to remain in their adapted property if it is reasonable for them to do so.
- 10.14 Wherever possible the council will seek to carry out the most cost-effective adaptation to the property which adequately meets the applicant and households needs, this usually means that an adaptation is carried out within the existing footprint and structure.
- 10.15 The options appraisal will make a decision as to whether the adaptations will be undertaken or recommend/approve an alternative option.

11 FUNDING AND PRIORITISATION OF ADAPTATIONS

- 11.1 The council will normally only fund major adaptations up to a maximum limit of £30,000. The maximum is set in line with DFG limits, currently £30,000. Anything not being funded by the council, e.g. over the maximum limit, or having a client contribution, will need to be funded by other means. In such circumstances, the council will discuss with the tenant the options of self-funding, alternative funding available or re-housing.
- 11.2 An options appraisal will be invoked for all adaptations over £1,500.
- 11.3 The annual funding of equipment and adaptations is a fixed amount, with demand often exceeding the financial resources available. Therefore, the council will prioritise the demand in a way that best meets the greatest needs. All major adaptations are subject to budget availability.
- 11.4 Prioritisation of adaptations will be by means of a waiting list and the Occupational Therapists assessment of how critical and urgent the adaptation is. This will include critical needs cases, which are when there is a risk to a patient with life limiting conditions, that makes a likelihood of injury high and the outcome severe if that person does not have an adaptation. When evaluating a request for an adaptation, the council will consider individual, technical and other relevant factors to enable a balanced decision to be taken to ensure best use is made of the available financial resources
- 11.5 In general terms, this means dealing with the highest priority cases first and will take into account the length of time a person has been waiting. Should funds be depleted the council will inform tenants who are awaiting 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 tenant to explore alternative options such as re-housing or other sources of funding.
- 11.6 Whilst occupational therapists have the expertise to advise whether a major adaptation is both necessary and appropriate for the medical needs of the householder, it is not a guarantee that the adaptation will be done. Approvals for major adaptations will only be made on receipt of an occupational therapist's assessment and clear recommendation that the work is necessary to sustain independent living, addressing basic needs only (with critical needs assessments receiving the greatest priority).

12 APPROVAL OF WORKS

- 12.1 If adaptations qualify and are considered the most appropriate solution, the council will:
- Instruct the production of any schemes, costs and drawings as necessary.
 - Ensure relevant permissions are obtained.
 - Approve the undertaking of such work with relevant contractors.
 - Agree and implement where applicable the need to reclassify the property in terms of adaptations undertaken and any reduction in bedrooms due to the adaptations.

- Work with relevant partners, such as our housing maintenance service provider, to facilitate the adaptations to properties
- Add the recommendation to the waiting list
- Inform the tenant of the outcome and estimate a timeframe within 6 months of receiving the recommendation

13 TIMESCALES

- 13.1 All requests for an adaptation will be acknowledged within ten working days in writing, email or by text.
- 13.2 Minor adaptations (typically under £500) are easily installed and do not affect the future use of the property e.g lever taps, grab rails, half step and mop stick handrails. They will be raised as a planned repair job, to be completed within 28 days of a request.
- 13.3 The council will look to facilitate a tenants' discharge from hospital by fast tracking approved recommendations in order to minimise any delay to ensure they are able to return home as quickly as possible and prevent bed blocking where adequate notice, communication and information has been received.
- 13.4 With the after effects of the Pandemic from 2020 the Council is working to clear the backlog of cases and works. The following timescales are envisaged to be invoked within 2024/5. Under normal circumstances and the financial resources being available the council will aim to complete all approved major adaptation recommendations within 9 months of receipt of the recommendation. Cases will be dealt with in chronological order. More urgent cases highlighted as a critical need by an occupational therapist will be prioritised.

14 EXCLUSIONS

- 14.1 The following are examples of equipment and adaptations that will not be funded:
- Adaptations for the use of or storage of mobility scooters.
 - Vehicular access, hard standings and driveways.
 - Certain pieces of non-specialist fixtures or equipment and appliances will not be classed as equipment and adaptations. In general, this applies where the fixture, equipment, or appliance has the same use for another occupant who is not disabled. For example, ovens and hobs and other appliances forming part of an adapted kitchen.
 - Safe play areas inside or outside.
 - Extensions and loft conversions would only be considered if a suitably sized property did not exist in the councils housing stock
 - If the proposed adaptation results in the disabled person still being unable to access a significant proportion of the home

- The request is to address specialist medical needs of an individual other than basic needs (Example of specialist needs: self washing facilities, hospital beds or hoists)

15 TENANTS - CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS MAJOR ADAPTATIONS

- 15.1 Where a tenant has a contribution to make towards works over the maximum limit or in relation to preferred choice, this will be discussed with them. Any costs not funded by the Council must be paid for prior to works commencing.
- 15.2 In the majority of cases tenants will make no contribution to the cost of an adaptation. However, a service charge may be levied against ongoing servicing and maintenance costs to ensure the adaptation or equipment is well maintained, safe and provides the service requirements needed.
- 15.3 Service charge increases will be subject to annual review.

16 UNDERTAKING MAJOR ADAPTATION WORK

- 16.1 Where the Council is funding adaptation works, partially or in full, the council will contract these works through our internal work force and/or their relevant specialist contractors.

17 ADAPTATIONS TO COMMON PARTS/COMMUNAL ACCESS

- 17.1 Common parts relate to those areas outside of an individual dwelling but within the structure of the building, for example, entrance hallways or communal staircases to blocks of flats. Communal access relates to shared access to a group of properties, for example, shared paths and steps. Stair lifts on communal stairwells will not be installed.
- 17.2 Equipment and adaptations to common parts and communal areas including handrails or ramps to a shared path will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis via an option appraisal. The council will consider the health, safety and needs of all affected occupants as well as the local area needs, and the most appropriate funding agreed where necessary.

18 INSTALLING OWN AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS – PERMISSIONS

- 18.1 In some circumstances tenants may wish to install their own aids and adaptations such as showers over baths or stair lifts. The Council will need to give the tenant permission in writing, through the alterations application process, for adaptations they wish to make to the property before the work is undertaken. Introductory tenants may also be able to undertake these works if supporting evidence is provided from their OT or GP.
- 18.2 When tenants wish to install their own aids and adaptations and before work begins the internal work force will advise on the application and where they are of a technical nature, these will not normally be maintained by the RBC, therefore the tenant will be responsible for any servicing or repairs costs that are required because of the adaptation. Any Planning or Building Regulation fees and costs will be met by the tenant if applicable.

- 18.3 In the case of tenant installed equipment and adaptations, at the end of the tenancy the tenant will be required to remove them and make good any damage to the property. Alternatively, if RBC agrees to take responsibility for the alterations the tenant will need to agree to sign over ownership free of charge. Agreement to accept any equipment or adaptation will be dependent on its age, condition and demand.

**PART 2 – ALLOCATION OF AND BEST USE OF EXISTING STOCK
CURRENTLY PART OR FULLY ADAPTED TO MEET HOUSING DEMAND**

19 ALLOCATION MANAGING AND RE-LETTING OF PROPERTIES – THIS POLICY:

- 19.1 Identifies the appropriate matching of customers' needs on the housing register to adapted and void properties via the allocation's process.
- 19.2 Requires acceptance of the adapted property 'as is' unless a new tenant's disability at a later stage requires it to be altered. This could mean a part adapted property could be offered that doesn't meet exact needs but could do with additional adaptations. A recommendation for additional adaptations will not have any priority and will go onto the waiting list
- 19.3 Ensures the adapted property list will be kept up to date.
- 19.4 Considers if current adapted properties make best use of available stock
- 19.5 Provides financial help to existing tenants where a move to more suitable accommodation is the most appropriate option.
- 19.6 Allows the direct Matching of adapted properties to meet current tenants needs when a decision has been reached not to adapt the tenants current home.

20 RE-LETS, MATCHING NEED AND RE-HOUSING ADAPTED PROPERTIES LIST

- 20.1 A list of adapted properties confirming the type of purpose built or part adapted council accommodation detailing the type of adaptations by area, will be kept up to date by the council. Adverts will clearly describe adaptations to interested bidders
- 20.2 The internal work force will provide details of adaptations undertaken once complete
- 20.3 Allocation of properties will be based on the criteria set out in the Council's current Allocations Policy
- 20.4 It is expected that there will be appropriate matching of applicants needs on the housing register to an adapted void property to ensure best use of the Council's facilities and resources. This could mean a part adapted property could be offered that doesn't meet exact needs but could do with additional adaptations. An example of this includes where a wet room has been installed in a 1st floor bathroom which would meet bathing needs however due to mobility problems accessing it would be difficult. With the provision of a stair lift the property would meet all essential needs.

20.5 Accessible Housing List:

- 20.5.1 There will be a list of applicants that will be available to all in housing requiring an adapted property detailing what is required, this will be shared with the Allocations Team.
- 20.5.2 The Allocations Team will share details of any approved Direct Match tenant for whom the decision has been made not to adapt their current property

21 **DIRECT MATCHING /DISCRETIONARY LETS**

- 21.1 If a property becomes vacant and has extensive or specific adaptations, the decision may be made not to advertise the property and offer a direct/discretionary let.
- 21.2 The council will hold a list of all the applicants who require extensive or specific adaptations. When a property is identified as not being suitable for a normal let an attempt will be made to match it to the applicant most in need, based on priority banding and waiting time (reasonable preference).

22 **LETTING ADAPTED PROPERTIES**

- 22.1 If a person requiring adaptations applies to join the housing register, they may, after being assessed by an OT, be granted priority banding for any suitable adapted properties in line with the Council's current allocation scheme
- 22.2 If a tenant no longer requires the adaptations and would prefer to move from an adapted property to an un-adapted home, the council will consider awarding priority if it has someone else who needs that type of adapted home under exceptional circumstances
- 22.3 Future tenants must accept the adapted property 'as is', unless after taking up the tenancy a new recommendation identifies additional adaptations are required.
- 22.4 Where the adaptation is preventing the property from being relet, after 2 advertising cycles and Direct Match offers being made, the council may consider offering it to applicants without a need for the adaptations. Applications to remove the adaptation will not be approved. In most cases the adaptation will not be removed but in some cases, it may be appropriate to remove part or whole the adaptation.
- 22.5 Each case will be considered on a case-by-case basis with input and advice from relevant officers.

23 **RE-HOUSING CURRENT TENANTS**

- 23.1 For all requests for major adaptations, the council will discuss with the tenant the option of a transfer to alternative accommodation that better meets the needs of the disabled person. This will be done on receipt of an OT recommendation. This could include arranging a suitable alternative home

within the council's stock or through Nomination to a partnered registered provider, for which a discretionary direct match or priority medical banding may be given. Examples of why this may be considered:

- A vacant property which is already suitably adapted to meet the essential needs of the tenant can be identified.
- A vacant property which is more suitable to be adapted to meet the essential needs of the tenant can be identified.
- An extension can be avoided by a move to a larger property.
- The current property is not suitable for a particular adaptation.
- Adaptations to a property may reduce its potential to be let in the future.
- There is under occupation by at least one bedroom or more

- 23.2 Where it is considered that a move to more suitable accommodation would be possible and/or is the best solution, a priority banding may be given to the tenant to enable them to move more quickly.
- 23.3 If suitable accommodation is available, the tenant would be expected to accept the an alternative suitable property.
- 23.4 Once an offer has been accepted on an alternative property, the customer will be expected to take up the tenancy and move into this property as soon as is practical.
- 23.5 If a tenant refuses a reasonable offer of alternative accommodation, the council will inform the tenant that they may be excluded from any further considerations. Under such circumstances, the council may also discuss with the tenant the options of self-funding or alternative funding.
- 23.6 In cases where re-housing is being looked at as the approved/preferred option, then this must be possible within a reasonable timescale (based on an assessment of risk and availability of accommodation). If it is not possible to find suitable alternative accommodation within a reasonable time, adaptations to the existing property or another property will be considered. A reasonable timescale is deemed to be no longer than 12 months from the date the decision not to adapt has been made.
- 23.7 If any additional equipment and adaptations are required to the new property these will not be undertaken until confirmation of the tenant's intention to move has been received. Until they have moved in or any reviews under Part 7 of the Housing Act 1996 have been completed up to and including Judicial Review.

24 FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE TOWARDS MOVING

24.1 Where an offer is accepted to transfer/re-house under the Equipment and Adaptations Policy, the council may help with the cost of moving to the other home. Tenants who take up the option to be re-housed may receive financial assistance to cover relocation expenses. Assistance will vary according to circumstances but may include:

- Removal costs
- Disconnection and reconnection of cooker, and essential appliances
- Refitting of carpets
- Redecoration allowance or where appropriate redecorating of rooms in a new home
- Associated disposal costs of redundant items

25 ADAPTING VACANT PROPERTIES

25.1 There may be occasion where a property would be suitable if additional adaptations were installed. However, under the council's current allocation scheme unless a property meets the needs of the household, they would not be nominated to it. This does limit the choices disabled applicants and current tenants have to move. If adaptations were undertaken in a vacant property, they may not be suitable for all. Many adaptations are recommended according to the individuals needs and are not a generic assumption. As part of the matching process throughout the void period the Council will make assessments of the suitability of the property and or timescales of making the property suitable in order to make an offer.

25.2 If the council is considering offering applicants or a current tenant a vacant un-adapted or partially adapted property which may require further adaptations to address needs, council officers, the OT and Housing Surveyor will firstly assess the suitability of the property to meet essential needs.

25.3 Once the OT and Housing Surveyor have made their assessment of a vacant property, the council reserves the right to offer the property to the best suited applicant.

25.4 If major adaptations are required and the property is deemed suitable, some or all of the adaptation work will be carried out as a priority where possible and practical, to minimise void times. The customer will be expected to take up the tenancy as soon as is practical. If the tenant is able to live in the property whilst awaiting some or all of the adaptation work, they will be expected to do so. If minor adaptations are required, the customer will be expected to take up the tenancy prior to the adaptations being carried out.

- 25.5 Prior to undertaking major works, applicants who are existing council tenants will be provided with a tenancy allocation letter which explains that they will be expected to take the tenancy offer once the adaptations are completed and they are able to move into the property. The potential tenant will be advised to accept the tenancy offer, as it guarantees you a home, as if it is decided that the offer is suitable, you will not receive any further offers of accommodation on the Allocations policy as a Band 1 applicant.

26 FUTURE OCCUPATION AND SUCCESSIVE APPLICATIONS

- 26.1 Once major or extensive adaptations have been completed at a property it is expected that the tenant requiring the adaptation will continue to live at the address, unless circumstances do not allow this (for example, no longer able to use the property due to a worsening medical condition and further adaptations are not possible).
- 26.2 If a tenant applies to be re-housed, it will be subject to the Housing Allocations Policy unless their circumstances have changed, they would normally be considered to be adequately housed and would have no priority on the housing register.
- 26.3 Tenants living in an adapted property requesting consideration to undertake a mutual exchange will be subject to the Mutual Exchange Policy. To a property without adaptations when it is clear they have been provided for them in their current property will be refused consent if they chose to move to an un-adapted/unsuitable property.
- 26.4 Where significant work has taken place at a property and the person(s) requiring the adaptation(s) dies or is unable to remain at the property and permanently resides elsewhere, the remaining family members may be asked to move to alternative accommodation to allow the adapted property to be let to a disabled tenant or applicant. Similarly, where the disabled person remains after death of a partner in a joint tenancy, the disabled person may be required to move to alternative adapted accommodation if for example, the property is grossly under-occupied.

27 MAINTENANCE AND SERVICING

- 27.1 On relet of any adapted property there will be routine inspection and maintenance undertaken of the aids and adaptations in place.
- 27.2 Certain equipment and adaptations will be subject to agreed servicing and maintenance programmes. This generally applies to large pieces of equipment including stair lifts, through floor lifts, step lifts, showers and fixed tracked hoists.
- 27.3 Tenants will be expected to allow reasonable access to enable servicing and maintenance of equipment and adaptations. Should this not be permitted, tenants may be liable for the cost of any deterioration or fault which is attributed to the inability to perform necessary servicing and maintenance.

- 27.4 Tenants may also be liable for charges in the case of inappropriate call outs, aborted pre-arranged visits and damage caused by themselves.
- 27.5 After 12 months maintenance/repair of new major adaptations to the structure of a property will be undertaken as responsive repairs in accordance with the Repairs Policy.

28 REMOVAL OF AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS

- 28.1 Equipment or adaptation to a property that has been funded by the council is owned by the council and must not be removed by the tenant during or at the end of their tenancy. If a tenant removes an adaptation without approval, then they will be recharged the full cost of replacing it.
- 28.2 In circumstances where equipment or adaptation is no longer required, the council will consider removing it if it may be used in another home. Otherwise, it will be left in place. If equipment or adaptation is no longer working and beyond reasonable repair, then approval will be given for it to be removed following a reassessment of need. The council will not normally remove structural adaptations to a property,
- 28.3 RBC reserve the right to remove adaptations if this is viewed as the best use of its resources to meet local housing need.

29 COMPLAINTS

- 29.1 Where an applicant or legal occupier is not satisfied with any matter such as standard of service, actions, or lack of actions by or conduct Council officers or its partners or contractors, then a complaint can be made. This section should be read in accordance with the Housing Services Complaints and Enquiries Standard.

- 29.2 Complaints can be made in writing to:
Housing Services Review and Improvement
Redditch Borough Council
Town Hall
Walter Stranz Square
Redditch
B98 8AH

Or emailing: housingreviewsandcomplaints@bromsgroveandredditch.gov.uk

30. PERFORMANCE & REPORTING

- 30.1 Stretching targets for key areas of this policy will be set annually to monitor performance against target. Performance will be reported in line with legislation or as directed corporately.

31. EQUALITY

- 31.1 The Council promotes equal opportunities in the services it provides. Our aim is to implement and maintain services which ensure that no resident is treated less favourably on the grounds of gender, being or becoming a transsexual person, being married or in a civil partnership, religion, belief or lack of religion or belief, race, nationality, ethnic or national origin, colour, disability, age, being pregnant or having children or sexual orientation nor is disadvantaged by the application of a rule, condition, or requirement, which has a discriminatory effect which cannot be justified by law.