



Aids and Adaptations Policy

1. Policy

- 1.1 As an organisation, we have the responsibility to uphold and protect the rights of individuals in all aspects of our operations. Our mission is to “support people to reach their potential (by) providing great homes in good neighbourhoods and helping customers to live successfully in them”. Our Aids and Adaptations Policy (known as the Policy), will help us achieve this mission.
- 1.2 Through our Aids and Adaptations Policy, Irwell Valley Homes (IVH) aim to provide a fair, transparent and easily accessible aids and adaptations service to existing customers, their family members and new applicants – one that promotes choice to enable them to live in their home as independently, and for as long as possible, with privacy and dignity within all statutory and regulative requirements.
- 1.3 This Policy is aimed at our customers who live in our social housing properties, and those people living with them as part of their household on a permanent basis. We will provide support to other customers (such as shared ownership, market rent, partner agency managed and leasehold), in their referrals to their local Social Services teams for further guidance and assistance.
- 1.4 IVH will not process any new requests for aids and adaptations where a current application for Right to Buy or Right to Acquire is active.
- 1.5 IVH will work with our partners and other agencies, to promote a co-ordinated approach in the provision of adapted properties.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 We will work within the framework of legislation and guidance on disability, and follow the existing definition, as follows:

“A person has a disability if they have a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities, and any new and emerging definitions”.
- 2.2 All aids and adaptations will be categorised as either minor or major adaptations and will be dealt with separately according to our established procedures, to ensure that they are processed in an efficient manner.
- 2.3 Appendix A provides examples of classifications of each.

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3. Major Adaptations

- 3.1 We define major adaptations as works involving structural alteration to a property, which typically cost more than £1,000, in order to allow an individual to live safely in their home. These alterations will normally be recommended by an Occupational Therapist, who has assessed the needs of an individual within their home.
- 3.2 We will ensure that any aids and adaptations that have been made to our homes are adequately maintained, where it is our responsibility to do so (more information can be found in appendix B of this policy), as different local authorities have different approaches to maintenance. We will ensure that customers are aware of who will be responsible when we provide our approval to the proposed alterations. IVH reserves the right to levy annual service charges for any major adaptation that has an ongoing maintenance liability, such as a domestic stairlift within a customer's own home. This will be discussed and agreed with customers prior to any works taking place.
- 3.3 Where major alterations requiring structural or multiple adaptations are required, we will work with our customers and discuss their requirements and any alternatives and other options available to them. Where we have an existing alternative property available, which matches the needs of the individual and their household and fulfils their adaptation requirements, they will be given priority in relation to a transfer request. In offering alternative accommodation, we will be mindful of sustaining local community and social contacts, where these are important to the applicant, their family, extended family or other support networks.
- 3.4 Where the customer's existing home is structurally unsuitable for the aid or adaptation required, or the cost/resource involved is disproportionate to suitable alternatives, we will work with the applicant to look at all suitable alternatives, including a transfer to another property which meets their needs, or investigating whether there is availability with another housing provider who may have more appropriate accommodation.
- 3.5 We will be transparent about the aids and adaptations process and timescales involved and be clear that a transfer, when available, may be a more effective long-term solution. The timescales for this will be discussed with the customer.
- 3.6 In a situation where the medium or long term ability to re-let the property in the future is likely to be seriously affected by the provision of the adaptation, and cannot be realistically reversed, we reserve the right to refuse the adaptation and will work with applicant to seek all other suitable alternatives. This may also include situations where the property is under occupied and in high demand.
- 3.7 In cases where we need to consider an alternative solution, we will convene a one-off aids and adaptation panel to be sure we are making a fair and open decision. This panel will consist of members of the Independent and Community Living, Tenancy Services and Asset Management teams. This process will be open and transparent, and details of the decision will be made available to the customer during communication with them over the outcome.

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- 3.8 Major adaptation works will not be carried out in communal areas, due to the potential for damage and fire risk. We will, however, work with customers who live in buildings with shared communal spaces to ensure the best solution for their long-term needs is found, including providing suitable alternative accommodation options and support for this, where required.

4. Minor Aids and Adaptations

- 4.1 We define minor adaptations as non-structural alterations or additions to a home (such as grab rails). Examples of minor adaptations are available in appendix A. IVH will refer customers who require non-fixed equipment (such as a portable hoist) to their Local Authority.
- 4.2 Whenever possible, minor aids or adaptations will be provided without the need for specialist (OT) advice and items ordered and provided direct at point of need up to a value of £250 per home. Where the projected cost is likely to be more than this, we will investigate further to consider appropriateness and where alternative solutions might be more practicable. Unless specialist work is required, the Homes team will carry out the work in accordance with the Associations' usual day to day repairs processes.

5. Resourcing

- 5.1 IVH will set a specific budget each year for major adaptation work (see appendix A for examples of major adaptations). Minor adaptation work will be funded via the day to day repairs function.
- 5.2 The major adaptation budget will be used to contribute to work that is requested from and carried out by our local authority partners to our customers' homes. We will be guided by Occupational Health professionals as to the level of need of the individual requiring the adaptation and, where required, we will use this to prioritise funds. IVH will endeavour to provide our approval and confirmation of how much we are contributing within a month of receipt of the request.
- 5.3 Where major adaptations requests are received, and approved, IVH will contribute towards the cost to a value of 40% up to a maximum of £5,000 per request. Our approval will last for a period of 12 months for the work to be completed by the Local Authority. If the work is not completed and relevant handover information provided within that time period, we may request that the application is reviewed and new approval in sought, prior to us committing to the funding of work, to ensure it meets the best needs of our customer.
- 5.4 Should the annual budget be exceeded, we will explain the situation clearly to customers and work with them and their local authority to ensure there is funding available as soon as practicably possible within the next financial year.
- 5.5 We will ensure the effective use of resources and best practice, whilst continuously striving for improvement, achieving value for money and finding practical solutions to enable the maximum number of people possible to gain from the aids and adaptation service. This will include working in partnership and with other agencies, looking to match customers with properties that have existing major adaptations when they become empty and re-using minor adaptations, where possible.

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6. Promoting the service

- 6.1 We will ensure that all customers and prospective customers are aware of the Aids and Adaptations Policy, and will provide information through various platforms including on our website, sign up pack and social media.
- 6.2 We will provide information about our service clearly, in writing and/or verbally at every stage of the process. We can arrange for alternative formats to be made available, if required.

7. Responsibility

- 7.1 The Customers and Communities Director Experience is responsible for the effective implementation of this policy.
- 7.2 Relevant colleagues within the Independent and Community Living, Tenancy and Letting Services, Asset Management, Homes and Customer Service and Support teams have a responsibility to be aware of this policy and be able to sign post any customer queries that may arise.
- 7.3 In the event of an adaptation request review being required, the Asset Management team have the responsibility of co-ordinating an internal panel and liaising with the Local Authority, who will instruct and manage the works. The Asset Management team will receive and review all handover documentation and ensure records are kept in the relevant IVH systems.
- 7.4 The Independent and Community Living are responsible for communicating any decision to our customer, and liaising with the Lettings team, if a property transfer is considered to be the best outcome for our customer.
- 7.5 The Customer Service and Support and Homes teams are responsible for progressing and completing minor adaptation works.
- 7.6 Where required, the Compliance team (part of the Asset Management function) will ensure relevant servicing and maintenance of the major equipment, and the Income teams will support where there are service charge requirements.

8. Performance Indicators/Targets/Standards

- 8.1 We will undertake regular reviews of this policy and related procedures, including colleague training requirements, every two years (or sooner if there is a change in best practice/regulation) to ensure that it continues to operate best practice and that service improvements are made and implemented.
- 8.2 When reviewing and assessing the effectiveness of the policy and procedures, we will consult with recognised residents' groups (including the Resident Scrutiny Panel), community groups and other agencies such as Social Services and the local authority.
- 8.3 We will involve and consult with customers, resident representative groups and the Resident Scrutiny Panel and individuals when we review this policy in line with our Customer Voice Strategy.
- 8.4 We will measure our performance on areas such as:

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- Time taken to make a decision on an adaptation (within 4 weeks of an application being received)
- Demonstrate evidence that any aids and adaptations to be carried out provide value for money
- Document the re-use of any adaptations to evidence our contribution towards the Sustainability Strategy

9. Current Legislation

9.1 We will adhere to all relevant legislative and regulative requirements including the:

- Equality Act 2010 and its Public Sector Duty
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Housing Act 1996
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Care Act 2014

9.2 In any individual case we will ensure that in reaching a decision, that it is acting within the law and if there is any potential breach of a person's rights they are proportionate and justified in the interests of one or more of the matters under the Article concerned. It is important that each case is determined on its own merits and we are prepared to consider exceptions to policy, as appropriate

10. Equality and Diversity Implications

10.1 Irwell Valley Homes is committed to treating people with honesty, dignity, respect, and trust. This applies to colleagues, customers potential customers, contractors, and Board Members. At IVH:

- Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents.
- Diversity is recognising difference and responding positively to those differences.
- Inclusion is about creating an environment where our services and employment opportunities are accessible to all.

10.2 IVH will be mindful of the Equality Act 2010 in all its actions and will consider all the protected characteristics of the Act which are: Race, Sex, Gender Reassignment, Disability, Sexual Orientation, Religion or Belief, Age, Marriage/Civil Partnership and Pregnancy and Maternity explicitly. Further to the protected characteristics, IVH will be mindful of socio-economic disadvantage and will do everything in its power to minimise this and other forms of disadvantage.

10.3 We will ensure that all customers requesting aids and adaptations are dealt with fairly, equitably and within our commitment to equality and diversity.

10.4 An Equality Impact Assessment will be undertaken to ensure that any barriers to individuals or groups are identified and the impacts on these are reduced or eliminated.

11. Cross Reference Documents/Good Practice

Lettings Policy
Customer Voice Strategy
Repairs Policy

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Appendix A – Classification of Adaptations

Major adaptations include (but are not restricted to):

Over bath and level access shower facilities (large scale bathroom upgrades)
 Wet rooms
 Modular ramps
 Permanent lifting equipment
 Extensive door widening (3 or more doors)

[Note: As a general guideline, major adaptations would be those in excess of £1000 and of a permanent/fixed nature to a building]

Minor adaptations include (but are not restricted to):

Grab rails
 Mop stick handrails
 Plinth for WC
 Lever taps
 Additional external steps
 Door entry systems and/or additional handsets
 Key safes
 Silent bells
 Visual smoke alarms

Appendix B – Major Adaptation Maintenance Responsibilities

All major adaptations are subject to at least a 12-month defect period following their installation. After this period, responsibility for service and/or maintenance will fall to IVH, subject to the following, which would be in writing and recorded on IVH's housing management system:

- Individual arrangements made with customers to take responsibility of specialist equipment.
- Bespoke arrangements with a local authority
- Domestic lifting equipment (as detailed in below table)

Information for defect liability will be stored on IVH's housing management system.

The only difference is with domestic lifting equipment where different local authorities each have their own approach, as detailed below.

Who is responsible for maintaining and managing the lifting equipment, once warranty has expired?		
Council	IVH	Local Authority
Bury		✓
Bolton	✓	
Tameside		✓
Trafford		✓
Salford		✓
Manchester	✓	

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