

ADAPTATIONS POLICY

1. Purpose

- 1.1 This Adaptations Policy sets out Red Kite's approach to the provision of adaptations and specialist equipment in our homes and our intention to support the wellbeing and independence of our tenants, either in continued occupancy of their own home or in another property that is suitably adapted or that can be adapted to meet their needs.
- 1.2 Our aim is to ensure consistency, clarity and fairness in our approach when dealing with requests for adaptations in our homes.

2. Definitions

- This procedure relates to the Red Kite Community Housing Ltd
- 2.1 Adaptations are alterations or additions including the supply of specialist equipment to any aspect of a dwelling to make it easier or safer for use by a person with a disability.
 - 2.2 A person is formally defined as having a disability under the Equality Act 2010 if they have a 'physical or mental impairment', and 'the impairment has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on (the person's) ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.'
 - 2.3 A person may be eligible for help under this policy even if they are not registered as disabled, upon recommendation by an Occupational Therapist.
 - 2.4 Other eligibility criteria which apply to this policy are:
 - Those identified by social care, primarily the Occupational Therapy service in respect of the Care Act 2014.
 - Applicants must be a named tenant on our Tenancy Agreement or registered on our records as part of the tenant's household and living at the property on a permanent basis. If they are aged over 18 years, they should also be registered on the Council Tax records and/or electoral roll for that address. Individuals who have no recourse to public funds or do not have the right to rent will not be eligible for assistance under the terms of this policy.
 - In cases where a child is disabled, and the parents are separated, adaptation works will usually only be completed at the property of principal residence (normally the residence of the parent who is in receipt of child benefit for that child).
 - Where tenants have a starter tenancy or are new tenants nominated through Bucks Home Choice, works up to the value of £1,000 may be agreed when recommended by a Community Occupational Therapist or Housing Occupational Therapist. Works over this value would be considered by the Housing Adaptation and Lettings Panel (HALP).
 - Applicants who are registered for a transfer or mutual exchange will each be considered on their individual merit. This will include whether the applicant is requesting to move into a property which is not suitable

or less suitable for their needs, in which case they may not be eligible for assistance under this policy.

- We reserve the right to decline requests for adaptations where the cost of the work is considered too high, or not reasonable or practical, and the tenant can apply to move to a more suitable property. This also applies to requests for extensions or other changes to the tenant's home due to the household's welfare, social, or medical needs and circumstances such as over-crowding.
- We reserve the right to decline requests for adaptations for applicants who have moved from a previously adapted property or a property that was considered to be suitable for their needs.
- Tenants who are applying for works to their current home and are also registered for a transfer or mutual exchange to another property, would need to withdraw their application to move before works will be carried out on their current home.
- Where tenants are in arrears, a decision will be made on a case-by-case basis, including a risk review from our Home Budgeting service, considering their individual circumstances and repayment history.
- We will not usually carry out adaptations for persons transferring from another social landlord to one of our homes unless their circumstances have changed significantly after they became our tenant.

2.5 Categories

Category	Definition	Target completion (working days) from date of request
Minor	£0 - £1000	12 days
Routine	£1000+	27 days
Complex	Includes where external factors impact on completion or specialist works required	Individual targets set

3. Responsibilities

- 3.1 Assessment of disability need is primarily the responsibility of Buckinghamshire Council. Red Kite receives recommendation for adaptations from Buckinghamshire Council Community Occupational Therapy Service.

The table below sets out the roles and responsibilities when we receive adaptation requests:

Position	Role in process
Head of Property	Holds budget and determines spend, responsible for policy implementation and approval of adaptations over £10,000
Housing Adaptations and Lettings Panel (HALP)	Approval of adaptations up to £10,000 and up to £1,000 for new Red Kite tenants. Consideration of adaptations requests over £10,000 and recommendation to Head of Property or Director of Property
Project Manager, Assistant Project Manager and Housing Occupational Therapist	Designs adaptations, specification, compliance, cost and considers feasibility. Approval of adaptations up to £5,000
Relationship Advisors	Log adaptation requests and raise minor works orders (under £1000)
Tenants	Reports maintenance problems in a timely manner to ensure the longevity of adaptations

4. Legal Framework

4.1 This procedure has been developed in accordance with the following acts of Parliament:

- Care Act 2014
- The Equality Act 2010
- Children Act 1989
- Housing Act 2004

5. Key Principles

5.1 *Allocating Homes*

Where disposal of a property is under consideration, applications for adaptations will be considered on a case-by-case basis.

5.2 We will take all reasonable and practicable measures to provide housing that is suitable for meeting the needs of our tenants or members of their household who become disabled or who have a disability that affects the enjoyment of their home. We will ensure tenant choices are available in respect of materials and products, where possible. We will work with tenants to ensure that the adaptations provided are suitable for their current needs, with a view taken to any changing or future needs. Social Services have a duty under the Care Act 2014 to arrange practical assistance in the home, as well as any adaptations designed to secure greater safety, comfort, or convenience. Buckinghamshire Council's Occupational Therapy Team provide this service.

5.3 We will actively seek to understand any specific needs to ensure that the correct standard and type of home is offered. We will not offer a tenancy if a

property is unsuitable or if it cannot be adapted reasonably and practically to meet the needs of the proposed new tenant. If the estimated costs are over £1000 works will not usually be agreed for new tenants, including those from another social landlord. In exceptional cases the decision to undertake works over £1,000 may be agreed by HALP. Priority for spend will generally always be for existing Red Kite tenants.

- 5.4 We will work in partnership with the local authority (and Bucks Home Choice) to assess applicants' needs and seek to match properties appropriately.
- 5.5 We will not directly allocate adapted properties to applicants, except in circumstances described in section 6.6 below, all on a case-by-case basis to prevent bed blocking (priority / management moves). For cases where a move is required, the tenant will be advised to register on the transfer list to ensure their circumstances are considered alongside any other households who may have comparable needs. The household's needs will then be assessed, and the application banded to take account of requirements.
- 5.6 The severe shortage of our properties means it is critical that we treat everyone according to their needs and fairly. As well as ensuring a consistent approach, this will enable the applicant to bid for other properties (not just Red Kite homes).
- 5.7 Where a move to a larger property is required, we will undertake a financial viability assessment to establish whether it is affordable, including whether there are any exemptions from the benefit cap.
- 5.8 Priority will be given according to the banding of each case as assessed on Bucks Home Choice, with those with the highest bands receiving priority when bidding for another property. Where banding is the same then the application date will determine which case is given priority.
- 5.9 In exceptional circumstances we may consider making a direct offer. A direct offer will normally only be considered where:
 - a. Our tenant is registered on Bucks Home Choice and has been awarded a medical priority
 - b. They have been bidding for other suitable properties but have been unsuccessful
 - c. An adapted property or a property suitable for adaptation becomes available and the cost of works is less than adaptations to their current home.
- 5.10 A direct offer may also be considered where a Red Kite tenant who occupies an adapted property no longer requires such features, and the property would be better suited to others e.g., where the person requiring the adaptations no longer lives in the property.
- 5.11 On occasion, we may decide to make a direct offer without conditions 5.9 a, b and c being met because it will enable us to make investment choices that

deliver value for money for Red Kite. This is consistent with the offer flexibility set out in our Allocations Policy.

- 5.12 Where a direct offer is agreed we will make one suitable offer only. If a suitable offer is refused no further direct offer will be considered unless there is a significant change in circumstances.
- 5.13 If an applicant is subsequently successful in bidding for another property that requires adaptations, we may not agree to fund the work if the cost is greater than those required at the property they refused.
- 5.14 Housing Adaptations and Lettings Panel (HALP) will consider all direct let requests where the cost of adaptation works required is up to £10,000. For any requests where the cost is greater than this the decision will be made by the Head of Property or the Director of Property.
- 5.15 Where homes need to be adapted, we will aim to complete works according to agreed timescales which are commensurate with the complexity of the work.
- 5.16 We will ensure that all adaptation works carried out represent value for money, are of good quality, meet the needs and aspirations of tenants and minimise future maintenance costs and conform to all relevant standards.
- 5.17 If our Housing, Adaptations and Lettings Panel (HALP) do not consider the proposed adaptation works will provide value for money, or if we cannot obtain planning consent for the adaptation, we will advise the applicant to apply for suitable alternative accommodation. This may be a property from within our stock, or alternatively from another provider, where available. We will recommend that the tenant registers to transfer to a more suitable property via the Bucks Home Choice process (HALP terms of Reference).
- 5.18 Assessment for most adaptations is undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council Community Occupational Therapy Team, the second option from private Occupational Therapy in exceptional circumstances or specialist services. Referrals are also accepted from Occupational Therapists working in Paediatric Services, the Learning Disability Team, the Falls Programme Team, and Rehabilitation Services. The Occupational Therapist will advise if priority needs to be given due to individual circumstances.
- 5.19 We will provide tenants with such choice of product as those offered to other tenants but there will be some products due to their specialist nature where choice will be limited. These will be reasonable within the context of the results of a joint assessment (with the tenant) of their particular needs, as well as other factors such as building regulations and value for money.
- 5.20 We recycle major adaptations wherever possible, practical, and safe to do so, including stair lifts, wash and dry toilets and modular ramps, etc. All equipment will be checked and serviced before reuse and strict hygiene standards adopted to ensure against the spread of infection and disease.
- 5.21 We store information regarding homes that have been adapted on our asset management database. In the event of requests for housing from disabled

applicants we endeavour to assess their needs by undertaking a visit to the property with them and the Housing Occupational Therapist (HOT).

- 5.22 We are responsible for the maintenance and replacement of all the equipment our approved contractors install unless we agree otherwise with the tenant and Buckinghamshire Council's Social Services. We will only replace equipment where:
- a) the equipment requires it and
 - b) the tenant for whom the property was originally adapted is still living in the property
- 5.23 Some minor works adaptations are undertaken by Buckinghamshire Council Occupational Therapy Service. We record all minor and major adaptations (contractor installations) on our housing management database.
- 5.24 We will work with other providers of equipment to ensure that relevant works are properly undertaken and that where necessary appropriate certification is provided and that our property records are kept up to date.
- 5.25 Approval must be granted before any works are undertaken on our homes including works carried out and funded by the tenant, except for minor adaptations carried out by Buckinghamshire Council directly e.g., internal grab rails.
- 5.26 For significant works and adaptations such as bedroom extensions, we will advise the tenant of any likely increase in rent and council tax charges as a result of such works and ensure that the property remains affordable before undertaking any work. We will review the rent on completion. If equipment is installed which has specific maintenance requirements, we will consider whether service charges apply.
- 5.27 On completion of the adaptations work we will carry out a tenant satisfaction assessment to help us improve our tenant service performance.
- 5.28 We will publicise and clearly communicate to tenants seeking adaptations how they are able to access appropriate services and assist them to access support as relevant through the local authority or other relevant agencies.

6. Policy details

- 6.1 We will consider the level of funding for adaptations on an annual basis.
- 6.2 In considering funding for adaptations, we will also consider the tenant's income/savings etc, and if appropriate will expect them to contribute or fund significant adaptations. We will work with and assist tenants in seeking support from the Local Authority or other agencies to help to deliver adaptation works.
- 6.3 There will be a limit to the total amount of expenditure per annum in accordance with the approved annual budget, rather than a limit set by the number of cases received. We will use the maximum limit applicable through

a Disabled Facilities Grant as a guide when considering requests to fund adaptation works from our own budget, although each application will be assessed on a case-by-case basis. The budget allocated for individual adaptations will be inclusive of specialist advice or additional support requirements, and fee.

- 6.4 A value for money judgement will be made to ensure that the best available use of any allocated budget is considered, so to balance the needs of the individual with the appropriate use of our limited funds. We will consider external funding options and innovative solutions such as mobile pods or temporary structures, which could replace traditional construction methods such as brick and block extensions.
- 6.5 If a property is offered through the lettings process described above but refused by the tenant, the applicant is entitled to remain on Bucks Home Choice and can continue bidding in accordance with the Bucks Home Choice policy. It is therefore the tenant's responsibility to find a suitably adapted property themselves or one with the necessary attributes that meets their needs.
- 6.6 Any offer made, will be subject to confirming that the property is suitable and that any works required for that home are appropriate. The tenant will be expected to sign their new tenancy agreement for the property before any agreed works commence.
- 6.7 Where medical information in support of any adaptations is received further advice may be sought from an independent medical specialist before a decision is made to fund the requested works. At this point other options may also be considered.
- 6.8 Requests for adaptations exceeding the limits set out in 3 above will be approved by the Director of Property.

7. Resources management

- 7.1 An annual review will take place for the allocation budget to fund this type of work.
- 7.2 All work will be managed by trained staff as appropriate and where required only specialist contractors will be employed.

8. Policy Statement

- 8.1 The purpose of the policy is to set out our approach to the provision of adaptations and additional equipment in our homes and our intention to support the wellbeing and independence of our tenants, either in continued occupancy of their own home or in another property that is suitably adapted or that can be adapted to meet their needs.
- 8.2 Our aim is to ensure consistency, clarity and fairness in our approach when dealing with requests for adaptations in our homes. We will clearly communicate to tenants and other organisations how we will assist in helping

tenants to access services from the local authority and other partners agencies.

- 8.3 Adaptations will only be undertaken for the benefit of our tenants and/or family members living in one of our homes or linked to a specific communal area they use.

Adaptations will not be carried out where:

- A Right to Buy application has been made
- There is a Right to Acquire Application with a live status
- There is a short life leased property, or it is occupied on an assured short hold tenancy basis
- There is a severe tenancy breach
- If the tenant is in rent arrears (this will be assessed on a case-by-case basis)
- The layout and/or location of the current property make it unsuitable
- The works would negatively affect the future let ability of the property
- The applicant is under or over occupying and they can apply for suitable alternative accommodation
- The household is being investigated for possible fraud or non-occupation
- The works would not resolve the issue for the long-term or make a significant improvement to the current situation
- Tenancy is temporary or the first year of a tenancy (starter tenancy)
- The cost of the adaptations is considered excessive, and needs could be better met through other options

9. Appeals and Complaints

9.1 If a customer disagrees with an assessment outcome by the Housing Occupational Therapist or HALP, or any decision made by Red Kite regarding the nature of an adaptation, or the suitability of a property, and the dispute cannot be resolved informally, the customer may request an appeal.

9.2 The appeal will be first heard by the HALP Panel then if this cannot be resolved, a formal complaint can be made to Red Kite, where it will go through formal complaints process.

10. Equality and Diversity

All involved recognise our commitment to actively work towards the elimination of discrimination on the basis of the protected characteristics of age, sex,

sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage, and civil partnership.

Staff roles listed in the **Competency Standards section** must be acquainted with contents of this document and have had documented instructions and training on its use. Authority to amend can only be undertaken by the **Process owner** with the relevant **Delegated approvals**.

For information on interpretations and instructions staff should contact the **Subject Matter expert** or **Process owner** and under no circumstances should any deviation be permitted without prior approval as above.

Document Controls			
Version:	7	Effective date:	May 2024
Subject matter expert drafter:	Assistant Head of Property	Process owner:	Head of Property
Related Pod	Property	Related Policy	Repairs Policy Allocations Policy
Review period	3 Years	Next review due by:	May 2027
Delegated approvals			
<i>The 3 lines of defence have been checked within the framework and are valid</i>			<input type="checkbox"/>
Approved by EMT	<i>Mark Haines, Director of Property</i>	Approved Date:	08/05/24
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