

KEY POLICY: SERVICE DELIVERY

Last Reviewed: New Policy

Date: May 2009

Review: May 2012

AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS POLICY

1.0 Policy Statement

South Lakes Housing aims to help its long-term sick and disabled customers to remain in their homes and to carry out essential daily activities, or if this is not possible or practical, find them suitable alternative accommodation.

2.0 Key Strategic Links

Cumbria Housing Strategy 2006 - 2011

The Cumbrian authorities and their partners have traditionally worked in collaboration to develop housing services within the County.

All of Cumbria's stakeholders agreed that by working together they would be able to improve the planning, implementation and delivery of all housing services within the sub-region. Particular emphasis is on the way our housing and planning services can improve the ability of Cumbria's housing markets to respond to social and community needs.

To deliver sustainable communities our sub-regional fit-for-purpose housing strategy will be integrated with complementary planning and economic development strategies.

South Lakeland Sustainable Community Strategy 2008 – 2028

Statement and Executive Summary: Our shared Vision is that "By involving people and creating opportunities we will make South Lakeland the best place to live; work and visit..."

We are committed to:

Children and Young People

- Addressing the needs of young people and to create better opportunities for them.

Health and Well-being

- Continuing to improve the health and well-being of local people.

Housing to Meet Local Need

- Better use of housing stock.

3.0 Key Policy Links

This Policy should be read in conjunction with our Allocations & Lettings, Succession / Assignment, Transfer, Vulnerable & Special Needs and Complaints, Remedies and Compensation policies.

4.0 Key Points of Policy

4.1 Who is considered to be disabled under this policy?

A person is regarded as being disabled 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.

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;
- Which are likely to last for the remainder of a person's life.

4.2 Who qualifies?

SLH will normally only consider a request for aids and adaptations if the disabled person is the tenant, or their partner, or a member of the immediate family, who is permanently resident in the household.

Work for others, such as lodgers, will only be carried out in exceptional circumstances and then only if they have been resident with the tenant for three or more years.

Requests for major adaptations will not normally be approved where a Right to Buy application has been received. Applicants who are on the transfer list will each be considered on their individual merits.

4.3 Will I have to pay anything towards the cost?

SLH will normally carry out approved adaptations free of charge.

4.4 What if I want to install my own aids to carry out an adaptation myself?

Any adaptations to your property will need to be approved by SLH before you have the work carried out. You will need to send a written request stating what adaptation you wish to carry out.

If you install your own aids or adaptations these will not normally be maintained by SLH so you will be responsible for any servicing or repairs that are required.

At the end of your tenancy you may be required to remove them and make good any damage to the property. Alternatively, if SLH agrees to take responsibility for the alterations you would need to sign over ownership free of charge.

4.5 Are there any restrictions on adaptations?

In accordance with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, SLH will only carry out adaptations that are reasonable and practicable for the property.

SLH considers that approved "minor" and "standard" adaptations are reasonable and practicable to install in any of its accommodation, providing they can be carried out safely without having an adverse effect on the fabric of the property and where necessary have been recommended by an occupational therapist.

Major adaptations will be considered on a case-by-case basis. Generally it will not be considered reasonable and practicable to carry out major adaptations to a family house (where the adaptations would have to be removed from the property when re-let), if SLH can offer suitable alternative accommodation to the tenant.

If the decision is made that it is not reasonable and practicable to carry out a recommended adaptation, SLH will endeavour to offer suitable alternative accommodation that meets a customer's needs as soon as reasonably possible. (However if the customer restricts the areas, which they are willing to move to they may have to wait longer to be re-housed).

In exceptional circumstances, SLH will give assistance with moving to a more suitable property.

If your new home requires any adaptations to meet your specific needs, we will assess and adapt in accordance with the terms of this Aids and Adaptations Policy.

4.6 Can I have an adaptation removed?

Once installed, adaptations will not be removed from properties regardless of the need of existing/future tenants. South Lakes Housing reserves the right to remove an adaptation if it is cost effective to do so.

Tenants moving into properties where an adaptation is in place may apply to SLH to request permission to remove it. This would be carried out at the tenant's expense and permission will only be granted in certain circumstances e.g. where the adaptation has been installed in a property where SLH would not normally install such an adaptation.

Tenants who have had an adaptation installed where the household member requiring the adaptation is no longer resident are likewise entitled to apply for permission to remove an adaptation at their own expense.

Permission will not be granted to remove adaptations from ground floor flats, bungalows and sheltered flats.

4.7 What if I want to move after the adaptations have been carried out?

Following a major adaptation we would normally expect the customer to remain in the property for a minimum of five years.

However, there may be exceptions where the individual's needs have changed and the occupational therapist and SLH agree a move is necessary e.g. if your family size changes or you need to move into supported housing. Then, if your new home requires any adaptations to meet your specific needs, we will assess and adapt the property in accordance with the terms of this Aids and Adaptations Policy.

4.8 What is an Adaptation?

There are 3 categories of adaptation:

4.8.1 Minor Adaptations

These include:

- Grab rails (internal and external)
- Handrails
- Lever taps
- Small ramps
- Over bath showers
- Stair rails
- Intercom systems

- External lighting
- Step alterations
- Door widening
- Sliding doors
- Electric sockets

4.8.2 Major Adaptations

These include:

- Wet room showers
- Stairlifts (Straight/curved)
- Complex ramping
- Through floor lifts
- Heating
- Internal alterations e.g. doors
- Kitchen adaptations
- Smaller extensions e.g. toilet
- Ground floor toilet
- Shower/loo cubicle combination
- Hardstanding

Major adaptations will only be fitted in certain properties.

4.8.3 Major Adaptations Costing Over £10,000

These include:

- Extensions
- Major internal alterations and combinations of shower, lifts, access,
- Wheelchair access etc.

4.9 Where Will Adaptations Be Installed?

4.9.1 Minor adaptations

Minor adaptations will be installed on request for tenant(s) or a member of a tenant's household (to include spouse or partner, child, parent) or upon the recommendation of the Occupational Therapist.

4.9.2 Major adaptations

Major adaptations will be installed upon the recommendation of the Occupational Therapist.

4.9.3 Property Types

Any type of ground floor accommodation is suitable for adaptation (flat, bungalow, sheltered flat – see table).

Houses, maisonettes and upstairs flats are not normally considered to be suitable for adaptation. Options for re-housing the tenant in alternative, more suitable accommodation should first be exhausted before consideration is given to carrying out an adaptation to a house, maisonette or upstairs flat.

4.9.4 Adaptations Costing Over £10,000

These will be considered only in exceptional circumstances where there are no properties which could be adapted more cost effectively/easily within the area. (See below for definition of area.)

4.10 What Adaptations Are Suitable For Sheltered Schemes?

Scheme	Stairlift	Wet Room
Bifold Croft	No	Yes
Gladstone House	N/A	Yes
Tyson Square	Yes	Yes
Mill Dam/Southergate	No	Yes
Fell Close/Ellerside	N/A	Yes
Yewbarrow Lodge	N/A	Yes
Cross Lane	No	Yes
Edgecombe Court	No	Main Building only, Not in external flats
Castle Walk	No	Yes
Gallowbarrow	Yes	Yes
West Ing	N/A	Yes
School Knott	N/A	Yes
Birthwaite	N/A	Yes
Drummermire	Yes	Yes

4.11 When Is It Appropriate For A Tenant To Transfer To More Suitable Accommodation?

If the tenant requiring an adaptation lives in a property where that adaptation would not normally be fitted, they will be offered suitable alternative accommodation. If a number of adaptations are required they will be offered a property where the adaptations have already been installed if a suitable property is available within the area.

4.12 What Accommodation Is Considered To Be Suitable?

The accommodation will be suitable for the size of family (as defined in the Allocations Policy). It does not have to be the same size as the property the tenant currently occupies.

The tenant will be entitled to one offer of suitable accommodation. The selection of property will be made by SLH/Occupational Therapist.

The tenant can be expected to move to a suitable property within their local area as defined below:

Kendal & Surrounding Area

Kendal, Milnthorpe, Arnside, Beetham, Storth, Burton, Holme, Kirkby Lonsdale, Casterton, Sedbergh, Burneside, Staveley and villages within this area.

Lakes & Surrounding Area

Ambleside, Grasmere, Langdales, Coniston, Hawkshead, Bowness, Windermere, Troutbeck and villages within this area.

Ulverston & Surrounding Area

Ulverston, Grange-over-Sands, Flookburgh, Cartmel, Kirkby-in-Furness, Broughton-in-Furness, Backbarrow, Swarthmoor, Great Urswick and villages within this area.

The tenant can choose to move to an area outside their local area but cannot be required to do so by SLH.

4.13 Who Will Not Be Required To Move?

SLH will consider the composition of the household in relation to the size of the property they currently occupy. Consideration will be given to the family member requiring the adaptation and the availability of suitable alternative accommodation when making the decision.

The decision will be made by SLH/Occupational Therapist who will consider the long term needs of the household member requiring the adaptation, the suitability of the property and the cost effectiveness of the adaptation.

4.14 What Can The Tenant Do If They Do Not Wish To Accept The Alternative Accommodation?

If the tenant refuses the offer of alternative accommodation they can carry out the adaptation at their expense. They would need to apply to South Lakes Housing for permission giving details of their proposal and would be required to return the property to its original condition at termination of tenancy at their expense. Permission will be granted only if SLH considers the property suitable for the adaptation.

Consideration will be given to alternative accommodation potentially available to the applicant e.g. accommodation provided by other registered social landlords.

4.15 What If There Is No Alternative Accommodation?

If no alternative accommodation has been identified within a 12 month period SLH may have to consider adapting the property.

The decision will be made by South Lakes Housing and the Occupational Therapist and the suitability and cost effectiveness of the property for adaptation will be taken into consideration.

4.16 Who will carry out the work?

Only SLH's own staff or our approved contractors will carry out adaptations to South Lakeland District Council's homes.

4.17 Moving On

Tenants who occupy a property which has had major adaptations where the household member requiring the adaptation is no longer resident will be required to move to suitable alternative accommodation.

The alternative accommodation to which they are entitled is as determined by the current lettings policy. However, the tenant will be expected not to be unduly restrictive in their choice of areas.

4.18 Appeals Procedure

If a tenant is not satisfied with the decision made over an adaptation they have a right to appeal. Any appeal will be dealt with in accordance with South Lakes Appeals Procedure For Customers.

5.0 Key Targets and Performance Indicators

- Customer satisfaction with equipment & adaptations work undertaken.
- Number and type of adaptations fitted and timescales from date of request to date of fitting.
- Numbers and type of complaints and length of time taken to investigate.

6.0 Equality and Diversity

South Lakes Housing recognises that there is a broad range of visible and non-visible differences that characterise its tenants. Some of these qualities include race, religion, culture, nationality, ethnic background, colour, disability, sex, sexual orientation, age, literacy and income level. By understanding and respecting this diversity it is able to set a policy which ensures that all tenants are able to access services provided by South Lakes Housing in an equitable manner.

South Lakes Housing is committed to providing information and services equally and without discrimination so that they meet the needs of all sections of the community. These include our tenants, leaseholders and those living nearby or seeking access to or information on housing services in the South Lakeland area. In carrying out all housing management policies, South Lakes Housing's Equality and Diversity Policy will be adhered to.

7.0 Monitoring, Review and Consultation Process

An annual report will be made to the Board detailing South Lakes Housing's position with regard to the agreed key targets and performance indicators.