

## Adaptations Policy

<b>Version</b> (for example, first draft, final report):	Final
<b>Authorities covered:</b>	Joint
<b>Applies to:</b>	<p>This document applies to all staff working for either Eastbourne Borough Council or Lewes District Council Homes First and Neighbourhood First.</p> <p>It applies to all tenants and leaseholders living in general needs and retirement accommodation managed by Homes First.</p>
<b>Responsible:</b> (Executive Lead)	Head of Housing Property Services
<b>Accountable:</b> (Operational Lead)	Works Delivery Manager
<b>Consultation:</b>	<p>Consultation has been with Neighbourhood Housing, Occupational Therapists at East Sussex County Council and Children's Integrated Therapy Services, Regulatory Services Lead, and Housing Needs Lead.</p>
<b>Final Equality and Fairness Analysis (EaFA) Report approved by and date:</b>	N/A
<b>Approval date:</b>	August 2023
<b>Approved by:</b>	Head of Homes First
<b>Date of publication:</b>	August 2023 and reviewed May 2025
<b>Next review date:</b>	May 2026

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## 1.0 Background

Lewes District Council and Eastbourne Borough Council have a duty to ensure the suitability of accommodation, having regard to the needs of disabled people and those living with long term illness. The purpose of this policy is to ensure our housing stock is utilised in a fair and consistent way to ensure and maintain the safety and meet the needs of our tenants.

The policy sets out how Homes First will manage Adaptation works to ensure that tenants may enjoy independence, privacy, and dignity in and around their home. It sets eligibility requirements, type of works that can be undertaken and the timescales and priorities for undertaking these works.

Funding available for private sector residents through mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) is not available to council tenants, therefore adaptations for council tenants are funded by the Housing Revenue Account and Capital Funding. However, this policy has been written to reflect the statutory requirements of the Disabled Facilities Grant, and in conjunction with the Homes First Private Housing Financial Assistance Policy to ensure cross tenure equality.

Homes First have responsibility for undertaking Aids and Adaptations as specified within this policy.

## 2.0 Policy Aims

The aim of this policy is to ensure that:

- Tenants are provided with a safe home that meets their short and long-term medical needs.
- All tenants are treated fairly with dignity and respect, maintaining excellent communication with tenants, and any supporting professional services and agencies.
- Maximise the use of Homes First resources and where possible obtain finance from alternative funding sources by working closely with internal and external partners.
- The retention of adapted homes within the Council stock for future reletting.

## 3.0 Legislative Framework and Guidance

In devising this policy regard has been given to the following:

### **Equality Act 2010**

The Equality Act 2010 defines a disabled person as someone who has a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal day to day activities.

In accordance with the Act, 'Long Term effect' refers to impairments that have lasted at least 13 months or will last for at least 12 months.

### **The Care Act 2014 (Section 1)**

This legislation places a duty on local authorities to promote the wellbeing and independence of disabled adults, including the physical, mental, and emotional wellbeing. Adaptations at home are acknowledged as a fundamental part of fulfilling this duty.

### **The Chronically Sick and Disabled Person Act (1970 Section 2)**

Applies to children and gives local authorities a duty to assist chronically sick and disabled children in arranging adaptations and additional facilities to promote safety, comfort, and convenience.

### **Housing Act 1985**

Schedule 5 of the above legislation gives details on right to buy exemptions and informs section 9 of this policy.

## 4.0 Assistance Provided Under This Policy

There are three types of assistance available under this policy:

- **Minor Adaptations - up to a value of £1000**  
Minor adaptations can include but are not limited to grab rails, lever taps and ramping.
- **Major Adaptations - over £1000, up to £30,000**  
Major adaptations can include but are not limited to level access shower, door widening, stairlifts and kitchen adaptations.

- **Asset Evaluation Adaptation - over £30,000** (where top up funding is required from other sources)  
These are likely to include significant structural changes to a property, such as the installation of lifts, or extensions.

In all cases the assistance available must be the most cost-effective solution to meet the needs of the disabled person. Major adaptations will only be considered where the property can be adapted to meet the long-term needs of the tenant and it is not possible to offer more suitable accommodation within the existing housing stock.

To reduce pressure on adaptation budgets any bathrooms that are due to be replaced in Retirement Housing will be replaced, where possible, with level access showers to reduce the risk associated with baths for current and future tenants.

#### 4.1 Who can apply?

Home First will fund works where Occupational Therapist (OT) Recommendations have been made regarding a tenant to address a specific medical need, subject to the relevant matters outlined in the rest of this policy.

- Adaptations for household members will be considered, having regard to the following: Length of time that they have been living at the property.
- The long term needs and intentions of the household member. All other matters listed in section 6 and 7 of this policy.

#### 4.2 Eligible works

When deciding on eligible works Homes First will use current guidance in place for DFGs. In line with guidance the types of works that can be considered are:

- Access into and out of the property – for example, ramps and doors.
- Ensuring Safety – for example, adapting a room to allow a disabled person to be safely left unattended, or improving lighting.
- Improved heating system for the needs of a disabled person.
- Providing or improving access to the living room, bedroom, kitchen, and bathroom – for example, stairlift
- Adapting heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use.
- Improving access for caring.
- Facilitating access to and from the garden (where feasible)

#### 4.3 Partial adaptations to non-suitable properties

In cases where it is not deemed reasonable or practical to undertake adaptation to the property to meet long term needs of the disabled person, Homes First may consider carrying out partial adaptations, based on an assessment with OT, to reduce the risks whilst alternative accommodation is sought.

Tenants will be assisted to make a new housing application to join the register and await a suitable alternative. Priority will be awarded as per the Allocations Policy.

Consideration will be given to cost, timescales for moving and if the adaptations can be recycled for future tenants.

#### 4.4 Equipment

The provision of mobile equipment is not covered by this policy. This will be considered by Occupational Therapists during the assessment process, and referral made to ESCC (East Sussex County Council) for provision and funding of this. Referrals will be made for adaptations in cases where the needs of the tenant cannot be met by equipment.

The provision of hoists and lifts will be considered as per the OT recommendations. Servicing of these is covered in 4.5.

## 4.5 Servicing

Homes First will take on the maintenance and servicing of any adaptations installed by their contractors but will not take on the maintenance or servicing of any tenant installed equipment without prior written agreement.

## 4.6 On road parking

Requests for disabled parking spaces on council land will be considered on a case-by-case basis taking into consideration the available parking, and the type and number of properties that this serves. Disabled spaces will be available for general use and not allocated to a specific property.

OT recommendations are not required to support the need for a disabled parking space, but all requests must be supported with evidence that the applicant is a blue badge holder.

## 4.7 Mobility scooters and associated access and storage

Homes First will only provide adaptations for equipment that has been prescribed by a Health Care professional. Tenants that chose to purchase mobility aids such as scooters will need to ensure that they make appropriate arrangements for the safe storage and charging of these in line with the Homes First Mobility Aids Policy.

## 5.0 Referrals and Assessment

Homes First have a procedure guide on the assessment and processing of adaptation requests that will be used in conjunction with this policy.

### 5.1 Adult Social Care referral

Before Homes First will consider a Major Adaptation, the tenant must request an assessment from an Occupational Therapist (OT) through East Sussex County Council (ESCC). The OT will assess the level of disability and may recommend works that are necessary and appropriate to meet the tenant's needs and pass these through to Homes First for consideration.

When adaptation requests are received from other health and social care professionals such as GPs, or social workers. These will only be considered when ESCC are unable to accept a referral and there is a risk to the household's safety. These are exceptional cases and must be signed off by the Senior Surveyor or Repairs Manager.

Referrals can be made online at - [Assess yourself | East Sussex County Council](#) or by calling 0345 608097.

### 5.2 Children's Integrated Therapy and Equipment Service (CITES) referral route

Referrals for adaptations for disabled children must be made through CITES. The OT will assess the level of disability and recommend what works are necessary and appropriate.

Referrals can be made at - [East Sussex Children's Integrated Therapies referral form | Kent Community Health NHS Foundation Trust \(kentcht.nhs.uk\)](#) or by calling 0330 123 2650.

### 5.3 Referrals from other routes

On occasion adaptation requests are received from other health and social care professionals such as GPs, mental health professionals, or social workers. In most cases it will be appropriate for the tenant to self-refer through to ESCC. In cases where this is not possible, or ESCC will not accept a referral and there is a risk to the household's safety then adaptations will be considered when referred from another source. These are exceptional cases and must be signed off by the Senior Surveyor or Repairs Manager and the reason documented against the tenancy on W360.

Minor Adaptations do not require an Occupational Therapist (OT) assessment before being undertaken. Tenants may self-assess their own needs for the likes of handrails, grab rails and lever taps which will be supplied and fitted by our repair contractors.

## 6.0 Property Assessment

Homes First will consider each request for adaptation individually and determine if the request is reasonable and practical. Each application will be considered on its own merits and with reference to this policy.

It should be noted that works recommended by an OT does not constitute an undertaking by Homes First to complete the works required.

In assessing an application for adaptations, consideration will be given to the following:

- Cost of works - the threshold limit for Homes First funding is £30,000, subject to budget availability. Additional funding available from the Better Care fund, in line with the Private Housing Financial Assistance Policy in place at the time of the application, and/or from East Sussex County Council and will be considered if adaptations are the most cost-effective and appropriate option.
- The technical viability of adaptations when having regard to the size and layout of the property. Location and type of property, and the availability of other more suitable properties.
- Under-occupancy.
- Likelihood the tenant will need further adaptations in the future.
- Whether alternative accommodation would provide a better long-term solution, value for money and less upheaval for the applicant.
- Rent arrears.

An adaptation may be refused due to any of the above reasons, any refusal to undertake adaptation works will be communicated in writing to the applicant detailing the reason and alternative options.

## **6.1 Under occupying**

When a tenant is under occupying by two or more bedrooms and requires adaptations that are likely to be over £10,000, Homes First may be able to offer an incentive to move to a more suitable property. This is offered over and above the usual Tenant Incentive Scheme and will be decided on a case-by-case basis by the Property Services Lead but could include carpets and curtains and/or a cash incentive up to £5,000.

## **7.0 Alternatives to Adaptations**

Whilst Homes First appreciate the desire, particularly of older residents to remain in the home they have enjoyed for several years, we also must:

- Have a view to the longer-term needs of the disabled and their family members.
- Make optimum use of the housing stock and budgets available to fund adaptations.
- Be mindful of the acute shortage of affordable family sized accommodation.

Therefore, the following will be considered alongside the request for an adaptation.

Homes First may refuse an adaptation when an offer of suitable alternative accommodation has been made and refused by the tenant.

## **7.1 New developments**

Homes First will work proactively with the commercial and development teams within the Councils to ensure that, where possible, properties are built to meet the needs of those on the housing register and/or are built to a standard to ensure that they are adaptable for future tenants.

## **7.2 Moving home through the housing register**

There may be occasions where a property is deemed to be unsuitable for adaptations and it is more appropriate for a tenant to move. In these cases, the Senior Caseworker will support tenants in making an application and a property will be allocated in accordance with the Homes First Housing Allocations Policy.

Tenants that are downsizing may qualify for a payment under the Tenant Incentive Scheme, subject to availability and budgets.

Additional support for moving may also be available through the Private Housing Financial Assistance Policy.

Where a tenant is moving to a new property and requires major adaptations, Homes First will take reasonable efforts to ensure that these are completed prior to moving. There may be some exceptions such as when a move is urgent and the risk of remaining in the existing property is greater than undertaking the works whilst the property is occupied.



## 8.0 Top Up Funding Available for Asset Evaluation Adaptation

Where a need is identified for adaptation works, there are the following options for additional top up funding to be added.

### 8.1 Private Housing Financial Assistance Policy

This is available in accordance with the Private Housing Financial Assistance policy in place at the time of the application, this is reviewed annually.

The discretionary element of the Private Housing Financial Assistance Policy is funded by the Better Care Fund, which enables Councils to support the wider prevention agenda of housing, social and health authorities.

### 8.2 ESCC top-up funding

Funding may be available depending on the qualifying criteria in place at the time of the application.

## 9.0 Authorisation of Major Adaptations

Major adaptations of up to £10,000 can be authorised by the Surveyor, this is in line with current authorised limits.

Works over £10,000 must be approved by one of the following post-holders:

- Head of Housing Property Services
- Works Delivery Manager
- Surveying Services Manager

## 10.0 Commencement of Works and Timescales

Homes First has set timescales to complete Minor and Major Aids and Adaptation works as outlined in the table below.

Type of Adaptation	Timescale for completion
Minor Adaptation	15 working days - from the date the tenant (or other) requests the works.
Major Adaptation	60 working days from the date Homes First receives signed OT recommendations for works not requiring planning permission.
Asset Evaluation Adaptation	Determined by scope of works

Tenants are responsible for providing all reasonable access to allow works to commence as agreed. Failure to allow reasonable access after 2 recorded attempts may result in loss of funding and/or works being cancelled.

### 10.1 Monitoring

Homes First will review the Aids and Adaptations Policy and associated procedure at regular intervals to ensure that they meet current legal and regulatory requirements and best practice.

All relevant procedures will be transparent, fair and ensure an auditable process for the management and completion of all such works.

10% of Minor Adaptations and 100% of Major Adaptations undertaken will be subject to quality checks by Homes First. Quality checking of works will be arranged by Homes First and where possible carried out with the Contractor who undertook the works and the tenant present.

### 10.2 Complaints and review of decisions

The policies and procedures referred to within this document are subject to the usual corporate complaints procedures, details of which can be found online at <https://www.lewes-eastbourne.gov.uk/about-the-council/make-a-complaint>.

## **11.0 Recycling of Equipment and Product Innovation**

Homes First will work with its Contractors, Suppliers and Occupational Therapist to identify new products and innovations to assist with the completion of Adaptations. This will enable Homes First to maximise the level of Adaptations completed from its resources and provide better value for money.

Property Services will work with the Council's Allocations Team to ensure that they are made aware of any properties that become available for re-let where Adaptation works have been previously undertaken or may be possible. Where possible, adapted properties will be advertised and allocated to ensure that the Adaptations remain in use. If the Adaptations cannot be utilised and need to be removed, then these will be stored, and where possible used again in other Homes First properties or the equipment may be sold.

## **12.0 Removing Adaptations**

If a tenant no longer requires adaptations or would like to remove some or all of aids or adaptations installed, this should be done with advice from an Occupational Therapist to ensure that the removal does not create an increased risk to the tenant.

Homes First may refuse the removal of adaptations due to the costs that are incurred based on any future need of the current or any subsequent tenants.

## **13.0 Adaptations for Leaseholders**

Leaseholders can apply for Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). Homes First will not unreasonably refuse permission for such adaptations, where this is required.

## **14.0 Adaptations to Common Area in Blocks of Flats**

Requests for adaptation to communal areas made by leaseholders will be considered on a case-by-case basis, with regard to the following:

- Impact on other tenants.
- Impact on the structure of the property and future maintenance issues.
- Impact on the Fire Risk Assessment.

## **15.0 Related Policies and Procedures**

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies and procedures:

- Homes First Mutual Exchange Policy
- Homes First Allocations Policy
- Private Housing Financial Assistance Policy
- Homes First - Repairs Team - Adaptation Procedure
- Tenant Incentive Scheme