

Aids & Adaptations Policy

Policy Statement

Purpose

This policy outlines the guidelines and procedures for providing aids and adaptations to tenants with disabilities or specific needs. It aims to ensure compliance with relevant regulations and promote inclusivity and accessibility for all.

Orwell is committed to providing an aids and adaptation service which assists tenants with a disability, and their household members who permanently reside at the address, to live independently in their homes. (Housing must have been made aware of the family member being resident, they should have been permanently resident for over 12 months. It should be apparent that they have not moved into a property knowing that the property would be unsuitable to meet their needs, including any mutual exchange.)

Orwell will look to assist a tenant or household member with a disability, so that they can continue to live at home safely. The purposes for which an adaptation(s) may be provided will be dependent on the suitability of the property.

Adaptations are split into two categories: minor and major. 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.

- Minor Adaptations defined as under £1000 and include: grab rails, lever taps etc.
- Major Adaptations defined as over £1000 and include: over bath showers, level access showers, cubicle showers and ramps and requiring an Occupational Therapists Recommendation.

Orwell aims to resolve issues as informally and as quickly as possible.

Orwell have a complaints procedure for escalating a complaint made regarding a decision regarding a request for a recommendation. Support will be provided to all parties involved in the process without judgement.

Legal Obligations

Consideration will be given to several statutes in the context of this policy.

- a) The Disability Discrimination Act 2005 (Part 3) places a duty on landlords to make 'reasonable' adjustments where it is otherwise 'impossible or unreasonably difficult' for a disabled person to enjoy the dwelling. These duties relate to:
 - Making changes to practice, policies or procedures
 - providing or assisting with the supply of auxiliary aids and services
- b) To have regard for special needs under S3 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- c) S8 Housing Act 2004 responsibility to provide reasonable adjustments

d) The Equality Act 2010:

This policy adheres to the provisions outlined in the Equality Act 2010, which prohibits discrimination against individuals with disabilities and requires organisations to make reasonable adjustments to accommodate their needs.

Section 6 (1) defines disabled if you have a physical or mental impairment that has a 'substantial' and 'long-term' negative effect on your ability to do normal daily activities.

- 'substantial' is more than minor or trivial, eg it takes much longer than it usually would to complete a daily task like getting dressed
- 'long-term' means 12 months or more, eg a breathing condition that develops as a result of a lung infection

e) The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (Section 23) provided for Disabled Facilities Grants, available from Local Authorities, to carry out works that are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of a disabled occupant, provided that it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the works having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling.

f) Building Regulations:

We will comply with the relevant building regulations, such as Part M of the Building Regulations 2010, which sets out requirements for accessibility and inclusive design in new and existing buildings.

g) Health and Safety Regulations:

All aids and adaptations provided will comply with applicable health and safety regulations to ensure the safety and well-being of individuals using them.

Orwell's Commitment is to

- Carry out aids and adaptations to the housing stock subject to budget constraints.
- Carry out minor adaptation works of under £1,000 without delay, not always requiring an Occupational Therapist's (OT) recommendation.
- Recognise faith based adaptations under this policy and follow the same financial criteria for these and other disabled adaptations.
- Restrict referrals for major adaptation works over £1,000 to those recommended by an Occupational Therapist's (OT), or other relevant experts who have the expertise to advise whether a major adaptation is both necessary and appropriate to the medical needs of the householder.
- For, all Occupational Therapist's (OT), or other relevant experts recommendations submitted to us for a major adaptation the suitability of the property for adaptation will be considered to protect the best use of our stock.
- Liaise with the relevant local authority over aids and adaptation requests and seek financing from the Local Authority under the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) for major adaptations where possible and appropriate.
- If works are to be directly funded by Orwell and not through the DFG, to introduce means testing of Orwell's Disabled Funding, passporting applicants to 100% funding if they can evidence that they are in receipt of a means tested Benefit or Tax Credit or have disabled child under the age of 19 mirroring the Local Authority DFG requirement. Orwell will pay the first £1,000 of any adaptation and thereafter require applicants who fail the means test to contribute

10% of their disposable income defined as income less housing costs, council tax and utility costs towards the cost of their adaptation.

- Ensure that as far as possible all adapted properties are let to people who require such a property.
- Where an appropriate letting is not achievable all incoming tenants will be required to accept the property with the adaptations in place. Those which are not manageable for future lettings of the property may be removed. (above ground floor level)
- Avoid the installation of stairlifts, preferring to work with the tenant to move onto more appropriate accommodation and fitting stairlifts as a last resort.
- Always discuss with the tenant whether alternative, purpose built accommodation would better meet their needs and work with them to achieve this move if appropriate.
- 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. Manager approval will be required. 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. Furthermore, tenants with mobility problems could have their needs best served with a move to more suitable accommodation such as a bungalow or ground floor flat. We will only fit Level Access Showers in properties on the first floor or above if practicable and after we are satisfied that all other options for the tenant have been explored and have been found to be inappropriate. A persons established support network i.e. relatives, schooling, neighbours, friends, and the degree of support provided will be taken into account. We do not consider that not wanting to move is an appropriate reason on it's own to install a Level Access Shower or Stair Lift to a house or upstairs flat. As an alternative our preference would be for a cubicle shower on the footprint of the bath.
- A tenant may be refused the right to mutually exchange under the Housing Act 2004 if "the dwelling house has features which are substantially different from those of ordinary dwelling houses and which are designed to make it suitable for occupation by a physically disabled person who requires accommodation of the kind provided by the dwelling house and if the assignment were made there would no longer be such a person residing in the dwelling house". This means that if a property has been adapted and the tenant wanting to move to that property does not need or would not benefit from the adaptations in the property then they may be refused the right to mutually exchange.

Procurement and Installation:

Aids and adaptations will be procured from reputable suppliers and installed by qualified professionals to ensure compliance with regulations and quality standards.

Training and Awareness:

Staff members involved in the implementation of this policy will receive appropriate training and awareness programs to ensure they understand the importance of inclusivity, accessibility, and compliance with regulations.

Monitoring and Review:

This policy will be monitored and reviewed every three years unless legislation or other factors require alterations prior to the anniversary

Conclusion:

This Aids and Adaptation Policy outlines our commitment to providing aids and adaptations that comply with appropriate regulations and promote inclusivity and accessibility. By adhering to the Equality Act 2010, building regulations, and health and safety regulations, we aim to create an environment that accommodates the needs of individuals with disabilities or specific needs.

Quick Guide

