

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 enabling residents to live safely and independently in their homes by providing or facilitating aids, minor adaptations and major adaptations in a timely, transparent and person-centred way.

To do this we will provide 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.

This policy applies to:

Tenants of Orwell Housing (including fixed term / lifetime tenancies) and members of their household who normally reside at the address; and
Residents where Orwell has repair/maintenance responsibility (including leasehold/common parts where applicable), subject to the lease and statutory duties.

We will consider evidence of residence and caring arrangements on a case-by-case basis and will not apply rigid time-based rules where doing so may disadvantage a disabled person.

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.

- We will provide a fair and consistent service.
- We will make decisions on a case-by-case basis, based on assessed need and property suitability.
- We will keep clear records and provide written decisions with reasons.
- We will work in partnership with local authorities, social care and Occupational Therapists (OTs);

We will make reasonable adjustments in how we communicate and deliver services, as well as in physical changes to the home, where required.

Orwell will resolve issues promptly wherever possible. Decisions will be case-by-case, based on assessed need, risk, property suitability, sustainability, and value for money, and will be recorded and explained in writing.

Definitions

Aids, Adaptations and Reasonable Adjustments

“Aids” are equipment or products that help a person undertake day-to-day activities (for example bathing aids and raised toilet seats). “Adaptations” are changes to a property’s fixtures, fittings or fabric (for example grab rails, ramps, or level access showers).

“Reasonable adjustments” may include:

- (a) changes to policies/practices (“provisions, criteria or practices”);
- (b) providing auxiliary aids/services; and
- (c) physical changes where required and reasonable in the circumstances.

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 require an Occupational Therapists or other relevant experts recommendation.

Complaint Process

Residents can ask us to review an adaptations decision by providing further information or evidence. Residents may also use our complaints process. We will respond in line with the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code timescales (Stage 1 response within 10 working days; Stage 2 within 20 working days, following acknowledgement timeframes), unless there is a valid reason to extend.

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.

Equality Act 2010 (England): Orwell will meet its duties to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people, including adjustments to the way we deliver services and, where appropriate, provision of auxiliary aids and physical adaptations, where reasonable in the circumstances.

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG): Where major adaptations are funded/managed via a local authority, the statutory tests include whether works are “necessary and appropriate” and “reasonable and practicable” having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling/building.

Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970: Local authority duties include assistance in arranging home adaptations and housing authorities must have regard to the special needs of disabled people when considering housing conditions and need.

Building Regulations (Approved Document M): Orwell will have regard to Approved Document M guidance on access and inclusive design where relevant to the works, property type and feasibility.

Fire safety (where applicable): For specified residential buildings, Residential PEEPs duties may apply from 6 April 2026 to support residents who may have difficulty self-evacuating. Where relevant, we will support referrals into the Responsible Person process, subject to role responsibilities and resident consent.

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.

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.
- Where Orwell funds adaptations directly, we will publish clear eligibility and any contribution methodology, ensuring it is fair, transparent and consistently applied. We will not charge residents for adjustments where this would conflict with Equality Act duties (for example where an adjustment is required as a reasonable adjustment).
- 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 considered. 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.
- Reasonable adjustments to communication and service delivery (for example accessible formats, preferred contact routes, appointment flexibility, and use of advocates).
- We will consider whether adaptation or rehousing is the best option. Rehousing may be appropriate where it better meets the resident's needs in the long term or where adaptation is not reasonable/practicable. However, we will not apply blanket rules; instead, we will assess each case, record the rationale, and involve the residents in decisions.

What we may not provide

- We may not provide works that are not disability-related, are solely for preference, or are not reasonable/practicable for the property. If we refuse, we will explain the decision in writing and advise of review/appeal routes.

Access, Requests and Triage

How to request

- Residents can request aids/adaptations by contacting Orwell via phone, email, online or in person. We will make reasonable adjustments to the way requests can be made where needed.

Triage (initial assessment)

On receipt, we will triage the request into one of three routes:

A) Advice/signposting (including social care equipment routes) where equipment rather than property alteration is indicated.

B) Minor adaptation — surveyed/assessed by Orwell (or trusted assessor) and arranged through our repair contractor.

C) Major adaptation — OT recommendation and property suitability assessment; funding route agreed (DFG or Orwell-funded)

Orwell service standards

We will publish target timescales for: acknowledgement, assessment appointment, ordering and completion for minor adaptations, and will keep residents informed of progress and reasons for any delay.

DFG statutory expectations (local authority)

For DFG applications, local housing authorities should notify the applicant in writing of approval/refusal as soon as reasonably practicable and within expected statutory timeframes; and approved works are generally expected to be completed within 12 months of approval (subject to complexity and access).

Procurement and Installation:

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

Handover and user instruction

Upon completion, we will ensure the resident receives appropriate instructions (including accessible formats where needed), operating manuals, warranty information, and details of any servicing requirements.

Records

All works and relevant documents (specifications, certificates, warranties, servicing schedules) will be recorded in Orwell's asset management and compliance systems.

Maintenance, Servicing, Removal and Reinstatement

Landlord and resident responsibilities

We will set out (and provide to residents) who is responsible for ongoing servicing, maintenance, and reporting faults for any installed adaptation. Where adaptations form part of the building/services under Orwell's control, Orwell will arrange servicing and managing contractors.

Removal/reinstatement

Where adaptations are no longer required or on vacation, we will assess on a case-by-case basis whether to retain or remove adaptations, considering future letting ability, safety and cost. Where the adaptation is removed, we will make good the area to a safe standard.

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.

Training will include

Equality Act reasonable adjustments, communicating with residents with vulnerabilities, and record keeping requirements.

Monitoring and Review:

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

We will monitor volumes, timescales, refusals, outcomes, complaints, and equality impacts to inform continuous improvement.

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

