

Habitare Homes Limited: Aids and Adaptations

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Policy Owner:	Board
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1 | Introduction

Habitare Homes Limited “**Habitare**” is committed to supporting and assisting tenants to maintain their independence and remain in their home by adapting their home to make it more suitable where they or a household member has a disability or impaired mobility.

The policy outlines:

- our aims and objectives in respect of adaptations
- the principles, values and constraints which we will apply

2 | Scope

This Policy applies to all Habitare’s rented property portfolio. It doesn’t apply to customers who are leaseholders (including shared owners), market rental or accommodation where we’re the leaseholder.

Any leaseholders who require aids and adaptations should directly approach their local authority for help and assistance.

3 | Policy Commitment

Habitare and our managing agents will:

Enable our tenants to continue to live independently in their homes and to enjoy a good quality of life through the provision of aids and adaptations, wherever it is feasible and cost effective to do so.

4 | General Principles

Minor Adaptations

Minor adaptations of up to the value of £1000 per customer will usually be funded by Habitare. This includes but is not limited to works such as grab rails, lever taps, stair rails, galvanised rails, seating in shower areas and improved access.

The works would be carried out by the managing agent's appointed contractors. This could be carried out without the recommendation of an Occupational Therapist or accredited trusted assessor, where there is a pressing need for such work and at the discretion of Habitare and the managing agent. This is in line with the National Housing Federation and College of Occupational Therapists good practice guidance 'Minor adaptations without delay'.

An Occupational Therapist is usually employed by the local authority and can advise on adaptations to allow the household to continue to live independently. Further advice on occupational therapy can be provided by your GP or local authority.

Major Adaptations

Major adaptations relate to substantial alteration often requiring structural changes to be made resulting in a permanent change to the property. This work could potentially cost more than £1000. They are adaptations that require more extensive works such as level access showers, access alterations, stair lifts, ramps and bathroom and kitchen conversions.

Funding

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is government funding available to disabled residents to pay for, or towards, adaptations to their home. Funding decisions are delegated to local authorities and can be applied for by anyone. We will signpost tenants to the local authority.

Where a tenant is eligible for full DFG funding, Habitare will not make a financial contribution to the Local Authority for any major adaptation required.

If a tenant is not eligible for DFG funding and unable to self-fund the adaptations, Habitare might consider providing the adaptation only on the recommendation of a qualified Occupational Therapist.

5 | Approach

Our managing agent will:

Ensure the availability of medical aids and adaptations for our customer and that good quality advice and guidance on the provision of such works, including their options and the likely timescale for completion of the works, is available to them.

In the delivery of this policy, we recognise that, in all situations, we have a responsibility to make best possible use of our existing housing stock. This principle, and testing against our values, will support our decision-making. Where a property is less than 12 years old, we will check any warranties to ensure the proposed work does not invalidate them.

Our managing agent will prioritise adaptations based on both the priority ascribed by the Occupational Therapist and the date order of the adaptation request. We will keep tenants updated with the progress of their adaptation request once a referral has been received from the Occupational Therapist.

Adaptations form part of the property and not part of the tenant's possessions and upon the termination of tenancy we will expect the property to be returned to its former state unless we have agreed to retain the adaptation. This agreement will be put in writing.

We will advise all tenants to put their adaptation request in writing via the managing agent.

Where applicable, we will ensure there is clear distinction between projects funded by Habitare/managing agent and those that are to receive an allocation of DFG.

The tenant will arrange for maintenance and certification of any equipment requiring such service unless agreed otherwise in writing.

Make every effort to allocate a vacant property with disabled facilities or adaptations to a tenant or applicant who can fully benefit from those features.

6 | Refusals

Habitare/Managing agent are unlikely to invest in the provision of adaptations where the benefit achieved for the resident is short term, it is not reasonable or practicable or where it is unfeasible to do so. Such circumstances may include:

- When the applicant is in rent arrears;
- When the applicant occupies a property that is scheduled for modification or major refurbishment within the next two years;
- Where the tenant is actively seeking rehousing;
- Where the tenancy is less than 12 months old unless an Occupational Therapist referral can support the need of the adaptation
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- Where the property is within the Defects period unless an Occupational Therapist referral can support the need of the adaptation
- When the adaptation requested is not structurally practicable;
- Where a property is under-occupied or over crowded and major adaptations are requested;
- Where a request is made to provide a level access shower above ground floor level. Future lettability becomes an issue as many disabled people with mobility problems who could benefit from such a shower may have problems negotiating stairs.
- Where provision is requested for use of a motorised scooter;
- Where a Long Ramp is required to provide access to the front door but is not practically possible.

- Where the tenant has applied to purchase the property under the Right to Buy

Where it is not reasonably practical to carry out the necessary adaptations to enable the tenant to live independently in their own home, we will aim to support the tenant to find alternative accommodation which matches their housing requirement and need. We will signpost the tenant to the local authority.

Seek to assist the transfer of a family / partner remaining in a substantially adapted or purpose-built property where the disabled person is no longer resident, perhaps through death or incapacity and where there is an identified need for the property. Habitare may take legal steps to enforce a transfer should the tenant household in this situation refuse to move. Take full account of any relevant legislation and Homes & Community Agency (HCA) regulatory Guidance or directive.

7 | Appeals

Habitare or its managing agent will not withhold unreasonable consent for an adaptation to take place, but should an application be refused as a result of not following this policy, the tenant has the right for the decision to be reviewed. They must put this in writing to Habitare Homes Chair or alternative within 10 working days and the Habitare Homes Chair or alternative will review it and provide a response within 10 working days also.

8 | Monitoring and Reporting

Considering the vulnerabilities and special needs of our tenants, or their household members, with illness and/or disability we will always seek to carry out adaptations works within our properties with the utmost care, sensitivity and with attention to the quality of the work being carried out.

As part of our wish to increase customer satisfaction, every tenant who has adaptations work carried out in their property will be given the opportunity to comment upon the quality of the work and the service received from the staff involved. This commitment and practice will apply equally to the contractors employed by Habitare.

9 | Background Documents

The Aids and adaptations policy ensures Habitare complies with the relevant legislation. The main provisions of the legislation which this policy is subject to are set out below:

- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Housing Act 2004 (Housing Health and Safety Rating System)
- Regulatory Consumer Standards

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following policies;

- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy

Version Control

Date	Amendment	Version
April 2023	New Policy Implemented	V1.0