



Lancaster City Council

Housing and Property: Council Housing

Housing Adaptation Policy

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. Housing adaptations can play an important role in allowing people to live independently, and in comfort and safety in their own home. This document sets out Lancaster City Council's policy for the provision of aids and adaptations to the homes of tenants living in council accommodation.

2. Aims and Objectives

- 2.1. Lancaster City Council is committed to ensuring that council tenants and their immediate families who experience health problems and/or have disabilities can continue to live safely and independently within their own homes.
- 2.2. The objectives of the adaptations service are to:
 - Provide a high quality aids and adaptations service to enable disabled tenants and their immediate families to live safely and independently in their own home.
 - To provide an efficient and cost effective adaptations service making best use of the council housing stock, and the budget available.
 - Assist those in need of adaptations to make informed choices about their housing options, facilitating transfers to more appropriate accommodation where required.
 - To raise awareness of the availability of the aids and adaptations service.
 - Set out the approach of Lancaster City Council to dealing effectively and consistently with requests for aids and adaptations.
 - Ensure that wherever possible, LCC makes best use of its housing stock to 'free up' adapted properties no longer in need.
 - Ensure that where possible vacant adapted properties are re-allocated to those who most need them.

3. Scope

- 3.1. This policy applies to Lancaster City Council tenants, applicants applying to be re-housed by Lancaster City Council, and their immediate families
- 3.2. Leaseholders, owner occupiers and tenants of the private rented sector should contact Lancaster City Council's Home Improvement Agency (Tel: 01524 582257).

4. Section 1

- 4.1. Lancaster City Council, in line with the statutory duties of the Housing Act (1985), The Disabled Persons Act (1986) and the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (1970), will arrange the provision of appropriate adaptations following assessment and recommendation by a qualified Occupational Therapist, and identify the needs of disabled people and housing provision in the Lancaster district.
- 4.2. In addition, we will ensure that we meet our duties under the Equalities Act 2010 to enable our customers to access an adaptations service which is fair and non discriminatory, through a process which is as simple as possible.

- 4.3. Any assessment concerning a financial contribution to be made by a tenant with regards to adaptation work will be made in line with The Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996

5. Financial Considerations

5.1. Minor Adaptations

5.1.1. Minor adaptations are works which cost £1000 or less.

5.1.2. The council's policy is to provide minor adaptations without charge to the customer. The provision of these adaptations is based on the recommendation of an Occupational Therapist following a referral from the customer's GP, or a self referral via Social Services. Minor adaptations are then usually funded by Social Services.

5.1.3. Examples of minor adaptations include:

- Grab rails
- Handrails
- Lever taps
- Path works
- Steps

5.2 Major Adaptations

5.2.1. Major adaptations are works which cost over £1000.

5.2.2. When an Occupational Therapy request highlights the need for major adaptations, the council will consider all such requests which are reasonable and practical and meet the essential needs of the customer.

5.2.3. Examples of major adaptations include:

- Level access showers
- Ramps
- Stair lifts
- Door widening
- Extensions

5.2.4. In the case of major adaptations a financial assessment is carried out by Lancaster City Council to determine whether the customer is required to contribute to the cost of the work. If no contribution is to be made the council will fund the cost of the works. If the customer is required to make a financial contribution this will be made clear prior to work commencing.

5.2.5. When considering request for major adaptations the council reserves the right to explore other alternatives to ensure that the service being provided is cost effective, and that best use is being made of the available housing stock (see 8.0).

6. Extensive Adaptions

- 6.1. Extensive adaptations are major adaptations which cost £10,000 or more. These often involve the provision of an extra bedroom or bathroom.
- 6.2. Where it has been identified that extensive adaptations are required, a meeting will be convened involving the Occupational Therapist, the customer, and relevant staff from the council's Housing Options and Repair and Maintenance services.
- 6.3. In these cases, the group will consider whether the work should go ahead, or whether an alternative solution can be found which will continue to meet the essential needs of the customer. Consideration will be given to whether any extensive adaptation work would prevent the best use of the current housing stock, would negatively affect the future ability to let the property, or would prove to be prohibitively expensive.
- 6.4. Before extensive adaptations are carried out to a property, other options will always be considered. These options will include the possibility of better use of space within the existing footprint of the property, and the potential for re-housing as an alternative (see 8.2).

7. Prioritising Adaptations

- 7.1. Where a need for extensive adaptations has been identified, an assessment is made as to whether the adaptation is urgent or non-urgent. This assessment is made by the Occupational Therapist involved with the case and is based on medical grounds
- 7.2. Lancaster City Council will then deliver extensive adaptations in line with the prioritisation awarded by the Occupational Therapist. The urgent adaptations will be carried out in date order, followed by the non-urgent cases.
- 7.3. Major adaptations which do not involve extensive works are not prioritised based on need, but are added to the waiting list in date order. These works are then carried out in this order.
- 7.4. All major adaptations are subject to budget availability.

8. Making Best Use of Available Stock

8.1. Responsibility

- 8.1.1. Lancaster City Council has a responsibility to all residents and all those currently on the housing waiting list to make best use of the limited social housing stock available.
- 8.1.2. While the essential needs of the customer are the key consideration, the use of the available housing stock should be taken into account when considering major or extensive adaptations.

8.2. Re-housing as an alternative

8.2.1. In certain cases re-housing will be identified as an alternative to carrying out major adaptations to a property. This could be to another Lancaster City Council property, or that of an alternative registered provider of Social Housing.

8.2.2. Examples of why this decision may be made include:

- A vacant property which is already suitably adapted to meet the essential needs of the customer can be identified
- A vacant property which is more suitable to be adapted to meet the essential needs of the customer can be identified*
- An extension can be avoided by a move to a larger property
- The current property is not suitable for a particular adaptation. For example, level access facilities in upper floor properties.
- Adaptations to a property may reduce its potential to be let in the future

**Once works have commenced on adaptations to an alternative property the customer will be expected to take up the tenancy and move in to this property as soon as is practical.*

8.2.3. Such cases will be dealt with on an individual basis, taking into account all circumstances and involving discussion between the Occupational Therapist, Housing Options, RMS and the customer.

8.2.4. Customers who take up the option to be re-housed may receive financial assistance to cover relocation expenses. Assistance will vary according to circumstances but may include

- Removals
- Disconnection and reconnection of cooker
- Refitting of carpets
- Redecoration allowance

8.2.5. If the customer refuses a reasonable offer of more suitable alternative accommodation which meets their essential needs, major or extensive adaptations will normally not be carried out at their current property (except under exceptional circumstances).

8.2.6. The suitability of an offer of alternative accommodation will be agreed through discussion between the Occupational Therapist, Housing Options, Estate Management, RMS and the customer.

8.3. Exclusions

8.3.1. Unless exceptional circumstances dictate otherwise, major, or extensive adaptations will not be carried out in cases where:

- The customer has a Right to Buy application
- The customer is under-occupying the current property
- The property is above ground floor level, and has no lift
- The layout and/or location of the current property make it unsuitable

- The works would negatively affect the future ability to let the property

8.3.2. In such cases, the customer will receive advice and assistance regarding their housing options, exclusions applied, and the alternatives open to them. This is signed off by the Senior Service Manager.

8.4. Use of the adapted property

8.4.1. Once major or extensive adaptations have been completed at a property it is expected that the customer requiring the adaptation will continue to live at the address unless circumstances do not allow this (for example, no longer able to use the property due to a worsening medical condition).

8.4.2. If the customer then applied to be re-housed, unless their circumstances have changed, they would normally be considered to be adequately housed and would have no priority on the housing register.

8.4.3. Where significant work has taken place at a property and the person(s) requiring the adaptation(s) dies or is unable to remain at the property and permanently resides elsewhere, the remaining family members will be offered a move to alternative accommodation.

8.4.4. Offers of alternative accommodation in order to 'free up' an adapted property for a household in need will not affect a household's right to succession or assignment, and is an incentive to families no longer in need of an adapted policy.

8.5 Letting adapted properties

8.5.1. When they become vacant, most adapted properties (e.g. those with a wet room) will be let through the choice based lettings service in the district (Ideal Choice Homes).

8.5.2. If an applicant requiring adaptations applies to join the housing register, they can provide an Occupational Therapy assessment to support their application. Their application will be updated with the adaptations that their household needs, following assessment by an occupational therapist, be granted eligibility for particular types of adaptation. Any medical information applicants provide, including Occupational Therapy assessments will be assessed for medical priority for rehousing in line with our Allocation Policy.

8.5.3. Vacancies will be advertised with details of what adaptations the property has, and the system will give priority to applicants who have an assessed need for them for those adaptations over applicants who do not.

8.6 Adapting Vacant Properties

8.6.1. If a customer is offered a vacant un-adapted property and the need for adaptations is then identified, the customer will be referred for a priority assessment by an Occupational Therapist to identify their essential needs and the suitability of the property.

- 8.6.2. If major adaptations are required and the property is deemed suitable, this work will be carried out as a priority where possible and practical, to minimise void times. The customer will be expected to take up the tenancy as soon as is practical. If the customer is able to live in the property whilst awaiting the adaptation work they will be expected to do so. They will need to sign a tenancy agreement and rent will be due from the tenancy start date.
- 8.6.3. If major adaptations are required and the property is not deemed suitable or there is no funding available to carry out the works, the offer of accommodation may be withdrawn. The customer will be advised regarding their housing options.
- 8.6.4. If minor adaptations are required the customer will have to take up the tenancy prior to the adaptations being carried out.
- 8.6.5. Once the Occupational Therapist has made their assessment of a vacant property, Lancaster City Council reserves the right to withdraw an offer of accommodation if the property is not deemed suitable.
- 8.6.6. If the customer disagrees with the assessment made by the Occupational Therapist regarding the works required (see 12.2), the council reserves the right to withdraw an offer of accommodation if this is not resolved within a reasonable timescale.

8.7. Direct Lets

- 8.7.1. In line with our Allocations Policy, if a highly adapted property becomes vacant the decision may be made not to advertise the property.
- 8.7.2. Ideal Choice Homes holds information on applicants who require particularly extensive or specific adaptations, and information about all stock which has been extensively adapted. When a highly adapted property is available for reletting, we would look to match this an applicant whose household has matching needs. We would consider their needs, priority for rehousing and waiting time. We may seek advice from the Occupational Therapy teams. to match it to the applicant most in need, based on priority and waiting time (see 7.0).

9. Customer Satisfaction

- 9.1. Each customer is invited to complete a satisfaction survey following adaptation work. The results of these are monitored by the service management team to respond to any specific problems or trends, and to identify the potential for service improvement.

10. Service Standards

- 10.1. We will:
- Advise you that we have received a recommendation from your OT
 - Inform you of the progress of your proposed adaptation
 - Give you 7 days notice before commencing work
 - Start adaptation work at the time we say we will
 - Leave your home in a clean and tidy state and carry out the work in a way that minimises disruption to you

11. Performance Indicators

11.1. The indicators used to monitor the housing adaptations service are:

- Number of days' notice given before starting work
- Average number of weeks wait for major adaptations (from receipt of OT8 by RMS to work beginning)
- Customer satisfaction surveys

12. Appeals and Complaints

12.1. The council has an established corporate complaints procedure. Details of this are available on our website or by request.

12.2. Where the customer disagrees with an assessment by an Occupational Therapist regarding the nature of adaptation works required or the suitability of a property, they will be advised to pursue this as a complaint with Lancashire County Council where appropriate.

13. Reviewing this Policy

13.1. This Policy and associated procedures and guidance will be reviewed every two years or sooner if there are significant changes to legislation, regulatory changes, national policy changes or there is an operational need to do so. Any amendments will be appropriately consulted on and signed off, and clearly communicated to the wider LCCHS staff groups as well as our tenants and residents.