



South  
Cambridgeshire  
District Council

# South Cambridgeshire District Council

## Council Tenant Disabled Adaptations Policy

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## COUNCIL TENANT DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY

### 1. Background

- 1.1. The purpose of a disabled adaptation is to modify existing homes to restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence, safety and dignity for individuals and their families.
- 1.2. This policy sets out the Council's approach to adaptations in Council owned homes.

### 2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy only applies to tenants of South Cambridgeshire District Council and their households who live with them. This does not include council owned companies Ermine Street Housing or Shire Homes or those living in a council shared ownership/leasehold property who would apply in line with other private sector housing via the Cambridgeshire Home Improvement Agency for assistance under the Cambridgeshire Adaptations & Repairs Policy 2019.

### 3. Legal Context

- 3.1. The Council has a duty to make reasonable adjustments to policies, practices, and procedures and to provide auxiliary aids and services to enable a disabled person to rent a property and facilitate a disabled person's enjoyment of the premises.



3.2. There is a range of legislation relating to the necessity for and delivery of aids and adaptations, the mains ones being:

- [Equality Act 2010](#)
- [Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996](#)
- [The Care Act 2010](#)
- [Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970](#)
- [The Regulatory Reform Order 2022](#)
- [The Housing Act 1985](#)

3.3. The Council as a landlord of residential properties needs to consider the housing conditions and housing needs of the district (S8 Housing Act 1985) and has a responsibility to provide reasonable adjustments for disabled tenants.

3.4. To ensure compliance with the statutory duties set out within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, the Council, in consultation with Social Care, will:

- a. Determine whether the works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, and.
- b. Determine whether the works are reasonable and practicable.

3.5. The purposes for which adaptations will be considered are contained within the above Act and set out at Appendix 1 to this policy.



## 4. Working with others

4.1. We will work with Social Care in relation to both minor and major adaptations (as appropriate) to assess and identify the adaptations to be provided. This is a consequence of Section 24 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 which places a duty on housing authorities who are not themselves a social services authority to consult the relevant social services authority.

4.2. Therefore, assessments for Major and Significant adaptations will be carried out by Cambridgeshire County Council Social Care and a referral submitted to the Council to carry out works. Within this document any reference to Social Care means the Occupational Therapy Service of Cambridgeshire County Council.

4.3. When making a referral, Social Care will classify adaptations as either minor or major. The Council will make a further distinction and regard referrals for major adaptations as significant when the costs exceed £5,000 (see paragraph 5 below for further detail on the classifications). At this level the adaptation may impact on the long-term future of the home, and this ensures that the tenant is aware of the implications on any future Right to Buy, mutual exchange and the security of tenure (see paragraph 7 below).

## 5. Minor Adaptations

5.1. Minor adaptations are works costing less than £900 AND where no specialised skills are required to specify the works. These include:

- Lever taps
- Grab rails
- Half Steps
- Additional banister rails



Note – because Housing Officers are not qualified to assess where a tenant needs a grab rail, if there is any doubt or a possibility a greater need may be present (for example, a need for a shower or bathing equipment such as a bath lift), then a referral should be made to Social Care for assessment,

5.2. Minor adaptation work can be carried out without the need for a recommendation from Social Care following a tenant request or referral, subject to the works required. The budget for all adaptations comes from the Housing Revenue Account (a ringfenced budget that can only be spent on council housing), and in most cases will be ordered from the Council's repairs and maintenance contractor.

## 6. Major Adaptations

6.1. Other adaptation work costing £900 or more (but less than £5000) or when specialised skills are needed to specify works are classed as a major adaptation and will only be considered once a recommendation has been received from Social Care. Examples of major adaptations include:

- Level access shower
- Ramps
- Stair lifts
- Adapted kitchens.

6.2. These adaptations may be carried out by the Council's main repairs contractors, or an alternative external contractor appointed by the Council via a tendering process.



## 7. Significant Adaptations

7.1. Any adaptation work costing £5000 or more, or when additional permission such as planning are required, are classed as significant adaptations, and will only be considered once a recommendation has been received from Social Care. Examples of Significant Adaptations are:

- Extensions
- Door widening
- The need for more than one type of major adaptation

7.2. These may be carried out by the Council's main repairs contractors, or an alternative external contractor appointed by the Council.

7.3. Where significant adaptations are being considered the tenant will be informed, in writing, of the impact that this may have on any future Right to Buy (RTB) application, mutual exchange or security of tenure.

- RTB ground for refusal: that the property is adapted for Special Use - Schedule 5 of the Housing Act 1985
- Mutual Exchange ground for refusal: where the property has been substantially adapted for occupation by a physically disabled person and if the assignment went ahead a physically disabled person would not be living there - Ground 7 of the Housing Act 1985 and Ground 11 of the Localism Act 2011
- Security of tenure ground for possession: where a property is specially adapted for the disabled and there is no longer a disabled person living there and the property is needed for someone who is disabled) – Ground 13 of the Housing Act 1985



## 8. How to request an adaptation

8.1. Tenants wishing to request a minor adaptation should contact the Council directly. For major or significant adaptations, an Occupational Therapy recommendation is needed, and the tenant is required to contact Social Care for an assessment:

### **Minor Adaptations**

South Cambridgeshire District Council

Tel: 01954 713000

Email: [duty.housing@scambs.gov.uk](mailto:duty.housing@scambs.gov.uk)

### **Major/Significant Adaptations**

Social Care – Cambridgeshire County Council

Self-Referral Form: [https://cambridgeshire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Adult\\_Services\\_contact\\_form](https://cambridgeshire-self.achieveservice.com/service/Adult_Services_contact_form)

Tel: 03450 455202

Email: [careinfo@cambridgeshire.gov.uk](mailto:careinfo@cambridgeshire.gov.uk)

## 9. General Principles

9.1. The Council does not require tenants who are applying for adaptations to their home to undergo a means test. The agreed adaptation and, if needed, any maintenance costs will be covered by the Council for tenants.

9.2. Any adaptation that is specified by Social Care will be fitted in line with that specification unless variations have been agreed. For example, a particular type of handrail may be specified, and this will be the only type fitted.

9.3. The Council will not carry out work that is more extensive than the work proposed by Social Care.



- 9.4. If a tenant wishes to carry out other work to their home, they will need permission from the Council to do so, and the cost of such works will not be paid by the Council. For example, the Council will not provide storage for a mobility scooter as an adaptation but would consider a request from a tenant who wanted to provide their own storage. Each case would be considered on its own merits and in accordance with the council's policy or procedure for tenant alterations.
- 9.5. We recognise the importance of maintaining good communication with the tenant and their families. Tenants who are waiting for Major or Significant Adaptations will be allocated a named officer to support and progress their adaptation once the referral from Social Care is received. All applicants will be provided with clear timescales.
- 9.6. In determining requests for major and significant adaptations, the Council will consider whether the adaptations requested are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, in consultation with Social Care, and reasonable and practicable having regard to the age and condition of the property. Steps will be taken to consider, at an early stage, and in liaison with the tenant, whether moving to alternative accommodation might be a better option. In these circumstances, the Council will work with the tenant to identify alternative council accommodation and will offer financial support to help cover the costs of moving, such as removal costs, re-connection of white goods, relaying of carpets, etc. The maximum cost payable will be £2,500 and will be payable direct to the tenant upon receipts received.
- 9.7. Similarly, if a tenant leaves a property that has significant adaptation, as they no longer require the adaption and move to an un-adapted property, a grant of up to £500 may be offered. Each case will be assessed on its merits and will take account of the demand for the adapted property, and the age and



condition of the adaptation. Any payment will be paid on top of any other downsizing incentive offered by the Council.

9.8. In deciding whether adaptations are reasonable, and practicable, and whether they are likely to meet the person's needs, an assessment of the internal layout of the existing property will be carried out. Consideration will only be given to providing additional sleeping and/or bathing accommodation by way of an extension to the existing dwelling where an internal reconfiguration is not reasonably possible and/or moving to an alternative property is not feasible.

9.9. If an adaptation is carried out which results in the installation of a piece of equipment that requires ongoing servicing beyond the period of the initial warranty the cost will be met by the Council. If equipment is damaged, beyond normal wear and tear, the Council will charge the tenant for repairs, for example where a stair lift has been misused by moving heavy goods.

9.10. Major and significant adaptations will not usually be removed at the end of a tenancy providing they are in good condition. When reletting these properties, the adverts will include a description of the adaptations. In some cases, properties will be offered to people with a need for such adaptations as a Direct Let.

## 10. Special Limitations

10.1. The Council will not provide adaptations to facilitate the use of mobility scooters, nor provide storage or charging facilities for scooters, as this sits outside of the purposes specified within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (see Appendix 1). Tenants who are considering purchasing scooters should be aware that they will be responsible for the



safe storage of the scooters, and that not all properties are suitable for storage of scooters. Mobility scooters present a fire hazard and as such any inappropriately stored scooters will ultimately be removed. Under no circumstances will the Council allow mobility scooters to be stored or charged in communal areas. Should a tenant wish to undertake their own alterations they will need to seek written permission from the Council's [Housing Services](#).

10.2. Work to fence gardens will be limited to 10 linear metres and hardstanding will be limited to 3 square metres.

10.3. We cannot commit to adaptations which are reliant on external permissions, for example where planning permission is required to provide structural changes/extension to the property. The relevant permissions will need to be approved prior to the Council being able to commit to the work.

## 11. Refusal of Adaptation

11.1. There are some circumstances where a 'Significant' Adaptation will be refused. The list below includes some examples of where a Significant Adaptation may be refused, but each request will be considered on its merits, which may include asking Social Care to consider alternative proposals.

- Where a resident or their family is deemed to be under occupying by one or more bedrooms and where suitable alternative accommodation will likely become available within 12 months.
- Where a resident or their family are overcrowding and there is every likelihood that they would be rehoused in a suitable alternative property within 12 months.



- Where the adaptation is unreasonable (for example, structural alterations which are not possible due to the condition or age of the property).
- Where the residents' needs can be met through amendment of the original proposal/recommendation, such as using a ground floor second reception room as a bedroom.
- Where the adaptation would require alteration to common areas, and this would have fire, health and safety implications or it would impact upon the use of the common area by other residents.
- Where there is suitable alternative adapted, or part adapted accommodation or where it is considered likely that a suitable property will become available within 12 months of the request being made.
- Where an adaptation would adversely affect the council's ability to make the best use of the stock and to relet the property in the future without removing or altering the adaptation(s).
- Where the residents' requirements are such that further adaptations will be required within 12 months and during that time it is considered likely that alternative suitable accommodation will be available.
- Where an adaptation would place others at risk (e.g., communal stair lifts with no alternative access for other first floor residents).
- Where a tenant has previously moved from a council property (through their own choice or a mutual exchange) that had previously been adapted for their needs within the last 8 years and is requesting similar adaptations in another council property.



- If an application is made for adaptations for a child with disabilities, adaptation works will only be completed at the property of principal residence. An assessment will be made by the Council in the line with the Council's Lettings Policy as to the principal residence.
- When a tenant moves to a council property (through an allocation or exchange) when the property is not suitable for their needs, and the tenant has knowingly not made us aware of their needs during the allocation or exchange process.
- Where the property is unsuitable for adaptation due to its construction form or type.
- Where the property is used for temporary housing and the tenant requires major/significant adaptations.
- Where the Council intends to dispose of the property within the next 36 months, or the property forms part of a redevelopment proposal.
- Where the Council is taking legal action to end the tenancy. For avoidance of doubt this will be when a NOSP (Notice of Seeking Possession), or NOPP (Notice of Proceedings for Possession) for introductory tenancies, has been served on the tenant, and the breach identified in the NOSP/NOPP has not been rectified. This will include notices issued for rent arrears.
- Where the tenant has a 'live' Right to Buy application



## 12. Timescales

12.1. Where the Council receives a direct request for adaptations, we will acknowledge the request within 10 working days, setting out the process, likely timescales and the dedicated officer where applicable.

12.2. The timescales for receipt of a referral from Social Care is not within the Council's control. You will be notified within 10 working days following the Social Care referral, setting out their recommendations and next steps.

12.3. **Minor Adaptations** – Where no referral from Social Care is required, an order will be placed within 10 working days of request received, with works starting within 20 working days from the date of the order.

Where a referral is required from Social Care, upon receipt the Council will place an order within 10 working days, with works starting within 20 working days from the date of the order.

12.4. **Major Adaptations** – Works to be started within 4 months from the date of the completed referral from Social Care.

12.5. **Significant Adaptations** – Works to be started within 6 months of the date of the completed referral from Social Care There are exceptions to this:

- when planning permission is required
- when specialist equipment or contractors are required, and they have a long lead time.

12.6. In these cases, no absolute timescales are set, but we aim to start work within 6 months from the later date of the granting of planning permission, or completion of tenders. We will ensure the customer is kept informed of progress and start dates.



**Note:** The Council will be flexible with start dates for work to meet the need of customers. The above targets will not apply if a date has been moved at the request of the tenant to start later. In these cases, we will work with the tenant to agree timescales. Once contractors make a start on site, customers must provide daily access until the work is completed.

### 13. Complaints

13.1. If a tenant is not happy with any aspect relating to how their adaptation has been handled, they should follow the Council's [Complaints policy](#).

13.2. Any complaint can be reported via My South Cambs online, or by using any of the following methods:

- ▶ Email at [feedback@scamb.gov.uk](mailto:feedback@scamb.gov.uk);
- ▶ Letter to South Cambridgeshire Hall, Cambourne Business Park, Cambourne, Cambridge, CB23 6EA; and
- ▶ Over the telephone - Contact Centre on 01954 713 000

### 14. Data Protection

14.1. Personal information collected as part of an aids & adaptation request will be used and stored in line with SCDC Customer Privacy Notice, which can be found [here](#).



## 15. Monitoring Performance

- 15.1. Delivery of aids and adaptations will be reported on a quarterly basis as part of the Housing Service performance management meetings, detailing delivery timescales and customer satisfaction against the Operational Performance Indicators detailed below:

Performance Measure
Minor Adaptations – order placed within 10 working days of referral/request
Minor Adaptations – works started within 20 days of order
Major Adaptations – works to be started within 4 months from the date of referral
Significant Adaptations – works to be started within 6 months of the date of the referral
Customer satisfaction with minor adaptations
Customer satisfaction with major adaptations

## 16. Reviewing this Policy

- 16.1. This policy will be reviewed no later than 5 years after the date of publication and may be reviewed earlier. Minor amendments, including the financial thresholds that differentiate types of adaptation, may be agreed by the Lead Member for the Service, without a formal review of the policy. (Note: The Lead Member for Housing is the Councillor who is responsible for Housing and is a member of Cabinet and has been given delegated authority to approve minor amendments).



## APPENDIX 1 - Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

### Section 23 - Disabled facilities grants: purposes for which grant must or may be given.

a) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to and from the dwelling, or the building in which the dwelling or, as the case may be, flat is situated;
b) making the dwelling, or the building, safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with him;
c) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to a room used or usable as the principal family room;
d) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room used or usable for sleeping;
e) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a lavatory, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
f) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a bath or shower (or both), or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
g) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a wash hand basin, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
h) facilitating the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant;
i) improving any heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the disabled occupant or, if there is no existing heating system or any such system is unsuitable for use by the disabled occupant, providing a heating system suitable to meet his needs;
j) facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of one or more means of access to or control of that source or by providing additional means of control;
k) facilitating access and movement by the disabled occupant around the dwelling in order to enable him to care for a person who is normally resident there and is in need of such care;
l) such other purposes as may be specified by order of the Secretary of State.