

HIGH PEAK BOROUGH COUNCIL

Housing Board

15 May 2024

TITLE:	Disabled Adaptations Policy
EXECUTIVE COUNCILLOR:	Councillor Fiona Sloman Executive Councillor for Housing and Licensing
CONTACT OFFICER:	Helen Core - Head of Housing Services Matt Trewartha – Head of Assets
WARDS INVOLVED:	All

Appendices Attached –

Appendix A Disabled Adaptations Policy
Appendix B Equality Impact Assessment

1. Reason for the Report

- 1.1 The purpose of the report is to propose the adoption of a formal policy in relation to the provision of Disabled Adaptations within the Council's Housing Stock.

2. Recommendation

- 2.1 That the Housing Board approve the policy, enabling us to achieve a balance between supporting those who need adaptations to live comfortably within their homes and best use of our financial resources and housing stock.

3. Executive Summary

- 3.1 There is not currently a clearly defined policy around when disabled adaptations will/won't be made, nor are the decisions to complete adaptations made collaboratively with the Housing team
- 3.2 This has led to adaptations such as wet rooms being installed in family homes with only one occupant, which may have been removed with a change of tenant. This is not best use of either stock or financial resource
- 3.3 This policy seeks to strike a balance between the needs of those requiring adaptations and making best use of housing stock and financial resource.

3.4 Adaptations should only be made when that is the only solution to meet the needs of the tenant and their household.

4. **How this report links to Corporate Priorities**

4.1 As part of the Corporate Plan aim 'Supporting our communities to create a healthier, safer, cleaner High Peak', where one of the key priorities is to deliver Future Proof Housing.

Key objectives in delivering this aim:

- Fit for purpose housing that meets the needs of HPBC tenants.
- Increased supply of good quality homes.

In adopting this policy, the Council is ensuring that properties meet current and future need whilst also making the best use of its limited housing stock.

5. **Alternative Options**

5.1 There are two options:-

- **Adopt Policy (RECOMMENDED)** – this will enable us to give clear consistent decisions around adaptations, achieving a balance between those needing adaptations and making best use of limited resources
- **Do Not Adopt Policy (NOT RECOMMENDED)** – continue without clear guidance around when alternative solutions to adaptations may be considered, leading to adaptations being made that do not suit the type of property nor address the overall issue being experienced by the tenant

6. **Implications**

6.1	<u>Community safety, including safeguarding and prevention of terrorism</u> Clear policy for agreement of disabled adaptations enables us to target resource where it is most effective and so safeguard those requiring adaptations
6.2	<u>Workforce</u> Increased involvement from the Housing team at the front end, however this should be manageable given current volumes
6.3	<u>Equality and Diversity/Equality Impact Assessment</u> Please see Appendix B
.	<u>Financial Considerations</u>

6.4	The current budget for disabled adaptations is £295,000 per annum. By adopting this policy, we can make best use of the spend.
6.5	<u>Legal</u> Detailed within section 4 of the Disabled Adaptations Policy
6.6	<u>Climate Change and Sustainability</u> Ensuring that adaptations are only made, when necessary, impacts positively on sustainability of tenancies
6.7	<u>Conservation and Enhancement of Biodiversity</u> No direct impact
6.8	<u>Consultation</u> Comments were invited from residents in the December 2022 newsletter The policy has been agreed with the Tenant Engagement Group Derbyshire Law Centre have acted as a critical friend in reviewing this report
6.9	<u>Risk Assessment</u>

Martin Owen
Executive Director (Resources)

**Web Links and
Background Papers**

INSERT NAME OF ANY PAPERS AND WEB LINKS

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7. Detail

- 7.1 HPBC, as a local housing authority in discharging its duty under Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985, must consider housing conditions and needs in the High Peak and have respect to the provision of further housing accommodation, and also have regard to the special needs of the chronically sick or disabled persons.
- 7.2 Section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 imposes a duty on a public authority, where it must in the exercise of its functions, have due regard for the need to eliminate discrimination and promote equality.
- 7.3 The Equality Act imposes a 'reasonable adjustment' duty on service providers to ensure they do not put disabled people at a substantial disadvantage. Where a physical feature makes it impossible or unreasonably difficult for disabled people to access goods or services, the organisation is required to take reasonable steps to: -
- remove the feature; or
 - alter it so it no longer has that effect; or
 - provide a reasonable means of avoiding the feature; or
 - provide a reasonable alternative method for making the service available.
- 7.4 Requests for adaptation are made from Occupational Therapists directly to Alliance Nurse via N-Able. Historically there has been little collaboration between N-able and the Housing team, nor clear parameters around when an adaptation may or may not take place.
- 7.5 In 2023/4 we received 288 requests for adaptations against a budget of £295,000, of which 240 were completed. This demonstrates the importance of ensuring adaptations are only completed when this is the best solution to the issues the tenant/household are experiencing.
- 7.6 If the property is substantially under-occupied (more than one bedroom not utilised full time) preference will be given to a move to more suitable accommodation rather than complete adaptations. To make the best use of the housing stock, HPBC may refuse to undertake certain adaptations if alternative can be offered.
- 7.7 It is proposed that, following adoption of this policy, once an adaptation request is received it will be passed to the Housing team. A desk top review will take place against the criteria at section 8.6 of the policy at Appendix A. If this adaptation requests in line with the policy, it will be agreed and passed back to N-able
- 7.8 Where an adaptation is not in line with the policy, a Tenancy Health Check will take place to clarify the areas of concern and enable a decision to be made.
- 7.9 Once a property has been adapted and becomes vacant, we will make the best use of any adapted properties when they become empty, this may include making a direct let or bypassing applicants on the waiting list who do not require such adaptations. If there is no one waiting for adaptations or which the property is suitable then these may be removed and recycled.