



Exeter City Council Housing Services

Home Adaptations Policy 2025-2030

Contents

1. Introduction	3
2. Aims and objectives	3
3. Types of assistance available	4
4. Categories of Adaptations	5
4.1 Minor adaptations	5
4.2 Major adaptations	6
5. Eligibility requirements	7
6. Assessment of applications.....	7
7. Restrictions	9
8. Terms and conditions	10
9. Maintenance of equipment	11
10. Void properties	11
11. Access to gardens	12
12. Awareness of the Home Adaptations Service	13
13. Performance monitoring	13
14. References	14
Appendix A.....	15
List of minor adaptations	15
Appendix B.....	16
List of major adaptations	16
Appendix C.....	17
Moving allowances	17
Appendix D.....	18

1. Introduction

1.1 Exeter City Council (ECC Housing) recognises that adaptations to a home can improve the independence, well-being and dignity of our tenants. Adaptations can improve access to and facilitation of essential functions of a home which can often prolong the ability for someone to remain in their own home independently and safely.

1.2 Sometimes simple adjustments and adaptations are all that is needed to achieve this and the timely provision of minor adaptations can often postpone the need for more substantial adaptations. The way in which this policy will be implemented is described in the Home Adaptations Procedure.

1.3 This policy contributes to the Corporate Plan in the following areas:

- Promoting healthy and active lifestyles
- Building great neighbourhoods
- Providing value for money services.

1.4 This Policy sets out the:

- Types of assistance available within the categories of Minor and Major Adaptations
- Eligibility requirements
- Assessment of applications
- Terms and conditions
- Monitoring and review arrangements
- Procedure if ECC Housing is unable to meet the assessed needs of the tenant.

2. Aims and objectives

The aims and objectives of this policy are:

2.1 To enable tenants to live safely and independently in their homes by providing safe access as well as essential facilities.

2.2 Where at all possible to follow the principles that govern the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants so that there is equality of treatment between ECC Housing tenants and everyone else.

- 2.3 To be fair, transparent, realistic and consistent in our decision making, agreeing only to carry out adaptations that are assessed as being necessary, reasonable and practical, and that fully meet the needs of the occupant(s).
- 2.4 To enhance the tenant's confidence, dignity and quality of life within their homes.
- 2.5 To provide advice and assistance regarding Home Adaptations which seek to make best use of our housing stock.
- 2.6 To ensure the available budget is used efficiently and effectively and delivers value for money.

3. Types of assistance available

3.1 ECC Housing will only carry out adaptations that are deemed reasonable and practicable for the property, having regard for the age and condition of the dwelling.¹

3.2 Eligible works for a disabled occupant include:²

- Facilitating access to and from the dwelling
- Making the dwelling safe for the disabled tenant and other occupants
- Enabling access to a:
 - Living room
 - Bedroom
 - Toilet
 - Wash hand basin
 - Bath and/or shower
- Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food
- Simplifying use of heating and lighting controls and ventilation

¹ In accordance with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

² See the 1996 Act (section 23)

- Easing access and movement around the home to enable the disabled person to care for another occupant who is normally resident there and in need of care
- Facilitating access to and from a garden or making access to the garden safe.

3.3 An application for funding will only be considered for one or more of these purposes, when we are satisfied that:³

- Social Services have been consulted and consider the relevant works to be necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant
- It is reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age, type and condition of the property.

4. Categories of Adaptations

There are two categories of Home Adaptations covered by this policy:

- Minor Adaptations (works usually under £1,000)
- Major Adaptations (works over £1,000 up to £30,000) -

4.1 Minor adaptations

Definition of a minor adaptation:

Minor adaptations are those that are easily installed and do not require structural changes to the home. They include items such as grab, stair and bath rails.

These will be approved and installed

1. Minor Adaptations can sustain the independence of individuals in their homes and do not need a referral from an Occupational Therapist (OT).
2. Tenants, or those involved with a disabled occupant (such as family members, carers, social workers, GP's and so on), can contact ECC Housing directly to request Minor Adaptations.

³ See Section 24(3) of the 1996 Act

3. Provided that the adaptation request does not change the fabric of the property (such as grab rails or half steps) all Minor Adaptations will be approved.
4. However, if a Minor Adaptation requires a change to the property (such as internal door widening, division of a room and so on) the referral will be sent to a Works Surveyor, who will need to undertake a feasibility assessment before agreeing to the works.

4.2 Major adaptations

Definition of a major adaptation:

This is more complex. These tend to be adaptations over £1,000, using the minor adaptations definition as a guideline, however, although there is a maximum grant of £30,000, there is no minimum financial cut off point for provision, so this is not rigid. It requires consultation with Social Services to assess and make recommendations for, according to the legislation for provision of Disabled Facilities Grants.

1. Requests for major adaptations must be made via referrals from Devon County Council's (DCC) Occupational Therapy (OT) Service.
2. Initially, individuals should contact Care Direct to request an Assessment of Need.
3. ECC Housing also has an in-house OT who covers kitchen and bathroom refurbishments and rehousing who can offer advice and assistance and can recommend adaptations directly to the Adaptations Team.
4. We always aim for the most appropriate adaptation to meet the needs of the disabled occupant whilst offering the best value for money.
5. Prior to authorising any works we will ensure that they are necessary, appropriate, and reasonable and meet the immediate and longer-term requirements of the disabled person, while considering the age, type and condition of the property.⁴

⁴ As outlined in the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 guidance.

5. Eligibility requirements

5.1 Applicants who have a recognised disability which has an effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities will be considered eligible for **Major Adaptations** provided that:

- they are an Exeter City Council tenant
- They are the child, spouse, partner or member of the immediate household of an Exeter City Council tenant. They should be permanently in residence at the relevant address for council tax or child benefit purposes, and if aged over eighteen years, should be registered on the electoral role.

5.2 For **Minor Adaptations** all Exeter City Council tenants are eligible.

In exceptional circumstances consideration may be given where referrals have been received for other persons such as lodgers, or where the property is not the primary residence. Each request will be decided on an individual basis and approval must be given by the Head of Service-Asset Management, who will give due consideration to all the circumstances of the case.

5.3 Any request for adaptations to properties where there is an active Right to Buy will not be considered.

5.4 Any request for an adaptation received where the tenant is registered with the Devon Home Choice scheme will be dealt with on an individual basis.

5.5 Any requests for adaptations that sit outside of this policy may be made at the discretion of, and must be agreed in writing by, the Head of Service-Asset Maintenance.

6. Assessment of applications

6.1 The Care Act 2014 Statutory Guidance states that:

‘An assessment must seek to establish the total extent of needs before the Local Authority (County Level) considers the person’s eligibility for care and support and what types of care and support can help to meet those needs’.

This must include looking at the impact of the adult’s needs on their wellbeing and whether meeting these needs will help the adult achieve their desired outcomes.

6.2 ECC Housing considers that all Minor Adaptation requests are deemed reasonable and practicable to install, free of charge, in any of its tenanted accommodation, and does not automatically require an assessment or referral, providing the adaptations can be carried out without having an adverse effect on the fabric of the property.

6.3 The Care Act legislation does not affect the provision of Major Adaptations, this is defined by the 1996 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act and provision of Disabled Facilities Grants.

‘For an Occupational Therapist to apply directly the Care Act eligibility criteria, in making the recommendation about necessity and appropriateness, would be legally misconceived’⁵

6.4 Applications for mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) can be made by residents in England, Wales and Northern Ireland for essential adaptations and the legislation governing this is the 1996 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act.

6.5 ECC Housing funds adaptations to its own housing stock from its Housing Revenue Account. This should result in the same level of service as that provided to other tenures receiving DFG funding.

6.6 ECC Housing does not seek to financially assess council tenants but will apply the same principles as the DFG model limits when considering a Major Adaptation request.

6.7 Major Adaptations requests will be assessed on a case-by-case basis taking the following factors into consideration:

- Property, age, type, condition and suitability for the required adaptation
- The request is supported by a Housing Statement of Need (HSON) referral from the Occupational Therapy Service or our in-house OT. This document is provided by Devon County Council containing recommendations for major adaptations
 - Funding must be available from within the existing budgets which are renewed each April. All applications received after the budget has been depleted will be entered onto a waiting list
 - Applicant circumstances, e.g. is the condition degenerative? Is there a prospect of improvement of a disability? Would the occupant(s) cope with the

⁵ Home Adaptations: The Care Act 2014 and related provision across the United Kingdom” Michael Mandelstam 2016 COT

works taking place? Are there other issues that may prevent or hinder the works? Is the property under/over occupied?

- Cost of works – are the costs of the works required reasonable?

7. Restrictions

7.1 There may be occasions when ECC Housing will have to restrict or refuse the adaptation of a property.

7.2 Restrictions or refusals may apply if it is not deemed reasonable or practicable for disabled adaptation works to be carried out due to any of the following circumstances where for example:

- There is suitable alternative accommodation available (or that will become available within a reasonable timeframe) that meets the person's needs and it is reasonable for the person to move to it; If this is the case all options will be discussed with the applicant(s). No one will be made to move if they do not wish and ultimately the decision will be the tenant's
- In exceptional circumstances, where a move would be detrimental to health the application may be considered outside of this policy at the discretion of the Head of Service- Housing Assets
- The value of the works exceeds the limits as set out in the DFG model limits (currently £30,000 per applicant). ECC Housing will assess such adaptation requests on an individual basis and may provide funding on a discretionary basis should alternative accommodation not be available or suitable. Shared costs will also be considered on schemes above this amount where appropriate
- Where a request for parking bays and access ramps will adversely affect the safety and amenity of the area
- Where the works would adversely affect the ability of ECC Housing to re-let the property with the requisite adaptations in the future
- Where a major adaptation is requested in a family-sized property which is under-occupied, or the property has access issues such as an above ground floor flat with no lift access
- Where the use of specialist washer/drier WCs is required, ECC Housing reserves the right to facilitate the use of re-conditioned systems wherever possible.
- Where Major Adaptations are required to a property already in need of major repairs

- Where ECC Housing is seeking possession of the property because the applicant or a member of the household is guilty of unacceptable behaviour which is so serious that it makes them unsuitable to be a tenant of ECC Housing
- Where it is deemed not reasonable or practicable to carry out a Major Adaptation to a particular property, any Minor Adaptation works identified as being required, to ensure the health and safety of the occupant, will be carried out.

7.3 The decision after proper consultation (with the tenant and any medical or social care advisor for example) on whether works are 'reasonable or practicable' is a matter for ECC Housing.

7.4 Major Adaptations will not normally be considered where the applicant is waiting for medical procedures which may improve their disability. Applications will be considered once the procedure has been carried out and recovery is complete. Temporary or Minor Adaptations may be considered during any interim period. Each case will be considered on case-by-case basis, taking into consideration any advice/recommendations from professional colleagues and stakeholders.

7.5 Where referrals for major adaptations are declined and rehousing to more suitable accommodation recommended, the tenant will be offered support and advice from the Housing Officer and in-house Occupational Therapist. Should the tenant wish to seek rehousing and apply to Devon Home Choice, the OT can arrange to visit and complete a housing needs assessment to support their application.

7.6 ECC Housing will give assistance with the reasonable costs of moving to a more suitable property (see Appendix E).

7.7 In exceptional circumstances, subject to the discretion of the Head of Service-Asset Maintenance, a Direct Match to an alternative ECC property may be considered.

8. Terms and conditions

- 8.1 When major adaptations have been undertaken, we would expect the tenant to live at the property for a minimum of five years from the date of completion of the works, or such shorter period as the person's health or other relevant circumstances permit.
- 8.2 Should the tenant vacate the property before the five years has passed, they may be requested to contribute toward the cost of the adaptation.
- 8.3 The amount charged will depend on the time the adaptations have been in place and the tenant(s)' ability to pay. Any charges will need to be authorised by the Head of Service-Asset Maintenance.

9. Maintenance of equipment

- 9.1 Any adaptation installed by ECC Housing or left in-situ when a property is vacated or there is a change in family circumstances, will be maintained and serviced (where appropriate) by ECC Housing. If the adaptation has deteriorated beyond economic repair, it will be considered for renewal or removal if no longer needed.
- 9.2 Tracked hoist systems will generally be provided by and serviced and maintained by the DCC OT service. ECC Housing will undertake the necessary adaptations to a property to accommodate the hoist system, but the provision and ongoing maintenance/servicing of the hoist system will remain the responsibility of the DCC OT service.

10. Void properties

- 10.1 ECC Housing needs to make the best use of its assets. It is therefore appropriate that when a property becomes empty and is identified as suitable for adaptations (for example ground floor accommodation, bungalows and older persons' accommodation) adaptations are undertaken whilst the property is vacant to make it suitable for prospective disabled tenants. Each suitable void will be evaluated by the in-house OT and where possible matched to those with needs for adaptations on the property shortlist provided by Devon Home Choice or ECC Housing's internal Direct Match list.
- 10.2 Where adaptations have been undertaken in properties such as ground floor units, bungalows or older persons' accommodation they will not be removed. If

they have been fitted in family-style accommodation every attempt will be made to find an applicant who requires such an adaptation. If this is not possible, consideration will be given to removing the adaptation if it is deemed more practical.

11. Access to gardens

11.1 Access to gardens is a tenant's legitimate entitlement.⁶ Access requests may include:

- Facilitating access to and from a garden by a disabled occupant, or
- Making access to a garden safe for a disabled person.

11.2 The Government has not defined what 'access to gardens' means; interpretation has been left to local councils. Given the diverse nature of gardens and their varied hard and soft landscaping features it is difficult to provide an exhaustive list of potential adaptations. However the following may give some indication of the type of works that we consider reasonable and practicable:

- Measures to make access to the garden safe - this might include the provision of handrails or replacing paths/paving where the existing path/paving is considered unsafe
- Access from a flat to an existing balcony – this may involve alterations to the doorway
- Clear Level Access. This may be by a ramp or a step-lift, whichever is the more appropriate and may include changing the threshold of a doorway
- Access to a patio area immediately adjacent to the property
- Access to a garden or yard area shared with others.⁷

⁶ See Disabled Facilities Grants (Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes) (England) Order 2008 No 1189 which came into force on the 22nd May 2008.

⁷ Note: where the works are considered reasonable and practicable, they will be subject to the applicant having obtained the appropriate agreement/approval from the relevant people who have an interest in the garden e.g. neighbours (freeholders or leaseholders).

⁸ Note: Disabled Facilities Grant Delivery: Guidance for Local Authorities in England published 28 March 2022

11.3 The following will not be considered as reasonable and practicable and will not therefore be funded:

- Provision of wheelchair accessible paths around the entire garden
- Provision of a new patio area which is not immediately adjacent to the property
- Provision of ramps or step-lifts to front and back doors where access to the garden can be achieved from one of the doors based on provision of one ramp and meets the needs of the recipient
- Access to washing lines (current or relocated) where lack of mobility now inhibits safe use
- Access to feed birds and/or fish
- Building raised beds.

12. Awareness of the Home Adaptations Service

ECC Housing will ensure that the Home Adaptation Service is publicised to as many tenants as possible so that those tenants that have a need can have works undertaken. This will be achieved in the following ways:

- Regular articles in 'InSight', the tenants' magazine
- Production of a leaflet that will be included in the lettings pack
- A page of the Exeter City Council website will be dedicated to the Home Adaptation Service
- Tenant data will be used to ensure the service is targeted towards those with relevant needs
- Training will be provided to front line staff to ensure they are aware of the service and the types of works that can be done.

13. Performance monitoring

13.1 The ECC Housing will monitor the quality and performance of Major Adaptations using Tenant Satisfaction Surveys and Post Inspections, alongside monitoring Contractor Key Performance Indicators.

14. References

Legal duties and statutory requirements:

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act (1970, Section 2):

Disabled Person (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986:

National Health Services and Community Care Act 1990:

The Housing Act 1996 (as amended):

Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996:

Human Rights Act 1998:

The Equality Act 2010:

The Care Act 2014:

The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023

Related documents:

ECC Housing Strategy

ECC Tenancy Policy

ECC Safeguarding Policy

ECC Equality, Diversity & Inclusivity Policy

ECC Housing Residents' Vulnerabilities Policy

Appendix A

List of minor adaptations

- Handrails
- Additional stair rails
- Outside handrails by steps
- Half steps to front and back doors
- Window winders
- Lever taps
- Level internal thresholds
- Moving door intercoms
- Door frame and wall protectors for wheelchair users
- Relocating electric sockets and lights switches
- Wider paths.

This list is not exhaustive.

Appendix B

List of major adaptations

- Stairlifts
- Through floor lifts
- Step lifts
- Ramps
- Wet rooms/Walk in showers
- Facilitate installation of hoists and tracks
- Heating
- Vehicular hardstandings
- Widening doorways
- Hoists and tracks
- Mobility standard Kitchens
- Altering entry and accessways to the property.

This list is not exhaustive.

Appendix C

Moving allowances

Once a referral for a Major Adaptation has been received and in discussion with the applicant a decision is made to move to more suitable accommodation, the following allowances will be paid:

- Up to £1,500 disturbance allowance (for carpets, curtains etc.)
- Up to £1,000 towards removal costs

Appendix D

For the purposes of a DFG application a person is disabled if:

- Their sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired
- They have a mental disorder or impairment of any kind
- They are physically substantially disabled by illness, injury or impairment

And a person over 18 is taken to be disabled if:

- They are an adult who is or could be registered under section 77 of the Care Act 2014
- They are an adult who is or could be registered under section 18(5) of the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014
- They are a child or young person registered under paragraph 2 of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989
- They are a disabled child as defined by s.17 of the Children Act 1989.