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|  Title of policy: | Aids and Adaptions Policy and Procedure |
| Version: |  |
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**1.0 Policy**

North Star facilitates the provision of a range of adaptations and equipment to assist tenants with disabilities remain independently in their own homes, within their existing communities.

This policy provides a guide to customers and staff on how North Star manage adaptations requests from initial enquires through to completion of works.

**2.0 Objectives**

The aim of our Aids and Adaptations Policy is to meet the needs of individuals living in North Star properties and who are struggling with mobility or sensory limitations that affect their ability to fully utilise their home.

We can provide adaptations or signpost tenants to access a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) via the Local Authority. If an adaptation is not a viable solution in their present home, we would, in conjunction with the tenant, look at whether suitable alternative accommodation is available, to promote and maintain long term independence.

The policy has the following strategic objectives:

* To provide a service that supports our tenants and other permanent members of the household to live independently in their home.
* To ensure that we make best use of our existing housing stock.
* Ensure tenants and other permanent members of the household are aware of all the options open to them when accessing the aids and adaptions service.
* Provide a cost effective and accessible aids and adaptations service.

**3.0 Funding & Finance**

North Star does not have any statutory obligation to fund adaptations works but does hold an annual budget to provide both major and minor adaptations for our tenants. We will also work with relevant local authorities to assist tenants in accessing Disabled Facility Grants (DFG).

The adaptations service is led by the Development Team within North Star.

All major adaptation requests will be initially passed to the individual local authority to process through the DFG process. North Star will monitor DFG waiting times for each individual application and, if necessary, intervene to fund adaptations through our own budget where appropriate and possible.

**4.0 Qualifying Adaptations**

For someone to request assistance to help them continue to enjoy their own home can be a difficult decision for them to make and all requests will be treated sensitively. Sometimes different options will need to be considered in conjunction with the individual.

North Star will only provide or give permission for adaptations to properties where the long-term needs of tenant can be met. Sometimes the current property is not suitable for adaptation. Where appropriate North Star works with Occupational Therapy (OT) teams to agree the design and specification for each individual.

Tenants can request an adaptation by contacting North Star Customer Services Team (CST):

**Phone:** 03000 11 00 111

**Email:** customer.services@northstarhg.co.uk

The following details the nature of the different adaptations (minor & major) and outlines when adaptations can usually be provided.

**4.1 Minor Adaptations**

Minor adaptations such as a grab rail or banister rail etc can be logged as routine day to day works. If additional information is required, CST will contact the Property Services/ Development Team for further clarity. A surveyor from the team may visit and inspect and/or an Occupational Therapist assessment may be involved.

A minor adaptation is one that has a value of less than £500, (Durham County Council less than £1000). Many items can be requested without an Occupational Therapist (OT) assessment. Anything above these limits would be referred to the local authority for consideration as a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) request

**Minor adaptation works might include:**

* Banister rails
* Drop down rails
* Fitting of shower chairs (chair is supplied by OT)
* Grab rails
* Half steps
* Internal door thresholds
* Lever Taps

**4.2 Sensory Adaptations and Equipment (Provided by Cleveland Fire Brigade Fire on behalf of North Star)**

Items listed below require an OT assessment or an assessment carried out by

Cleveland Fire Brigade at North Star request.

* Flashing doorbells /smoke detectors/CO detectors
* Vibrating pillows / bed mats
* Hearing loops

**4.3 Major adaptations**

Requests for major adaptations require careful co-ordinated involvement of several parties including Housing Officers, Property Services Surveyors and the input of an Occupational Therapist who will work with the individual to discuss what adaptations are most suitable.

North Star can only facilitate major adaptations when the request is accompanied by a referral from an Occupational Therapist, as North Star is a landlord and does not employ healthcare professionals.

Also, the property needs to be suitable to be adapted. Many modern homes tend to be designed for easier access and future adaptability but many older properties are not.

Where a DFG is required the tenant will be asked to contact the local authority to make the application as the application needs to be made by the individual and not the property owner.

The local authority (OT) will assess the person’s individual needs and how the property might be altered.

The OT will communicate with North Star staff aswell as the customer as the proposed works need to be approved by the landlord. A visit to the property may be required.

Once permission has been given by The Development Team, they will add a note to Capita to say that approval has been granted and who to contact for queries to ensure clear communication is available to all before, during and after the works are carried out.

Note: It may be necessary to consider re-housing options in some circumstances where the property is not suitable for adaptation or where the person’s needs cannot be adequately met, even with available adaptations.

Below is a list of the most frequently requested major adaptations and a guide to when we will provide these or permit the local authority to.

1. **Level Access Shower (LAS) or Wet Rooms**

A Level Access Shower or wet room conversion will be considered when the property is a:

* Ground floor flat/apartment or bungalow with level access entry point or easily ramped access
* House and no other accommodation will be adequate to meet the long-term needs of the individual or size of the household
* Upstairs flat/apartment only when other avenues have been explored such as rehousing

Note; because of future maintenance uncertainties an upstairs wet room will be have to be carefully considered and may not be approved in some circumstances, in which case further discussion and consideration of options will take place.

1. **Over Bath Shower**

An over bath shower can be installed:

* unless the design of the bathroom is unsuitable in which case further discussion and consideration of options will take place.
1. **Ramps**

External ramps to the property will be considered when needed and:

* When surroundings allow a suitable gradient to be achieved
* When the installation of a ramp will not impede access to neighbouring properties nor remove in curtilage parking where it exists.
1. **Stairlifts and Through Floor Lifts**

A stairlift/through floor lift will be considered when the property is a:

* House, where a family environment exists, and no other accommodation will be adequate to meet the long term needs of the tenants.
* Flat/apartment in some circumstances
1. **Door Entry System/Intercom**
* Will be considered unless the design of the property will not allow installation in which case further discussion and consideration will be taken.
1. **Extension**
* Extensions will be considered where the needs of the individual require and the design of the property allows for this. Other options will however be explored prior to approval due to the likely cost and the availability of funding. See Section 6.

**5.0 Timescale for delivery of adaptations**

North Star and its contractors will aim to meet the following performance targets in all adaptation requests.

**5.1 Minor Adaptations**

The target for completion of the work is no more than 20 days from the date of notification to the day of the completion of the works (unless deemed more urgent).

**5.2 Major Adaptations**

The target for completion of the works that are funded by North Star is 45 days from the date of receipt OT referral to the day of the completion of the works (as long as this is suitable for the tenant).

The time scale for completion of the works that are funded and carried out by a local authority is variable but will be monitored by North Star.

**6.0 Reason to Refuse Major Adaptations**

To maximise resources North Star may not support a request for an adaptation where appropriate alternative accommodation has been identified, which may better suit the identified needs of the customer. These discussions will always be made sensitively with the needs of the customer at the forefront, however as a landlord, North Star has a duty to manage budgets and stock most effectively.

North Star reserves the right to refuse significant adaptations where:

* A reasonable alternative property is available or is likely to become available, in the near future
* When we feel the proposed works are inappropriate for the property concerned, and may devalue the asset
* The proposed adaptation may affect the ability to let this property in the future
* Where a tenant has been offered suitable alternative accommodation and has refused to move. Housing staff will inform adaptations team who will then speak to the OT who will decide what the next stages are (if any).

If there are any concerns about Health & Safety of the tenant remaining in situ, a joint visit with Housing team & the OT may be required.

**7.0 Recycling and Effective Stock Management**

**7.1** Void Properties

Housing Officers (HO) will make every effort to re-let any void properties with existing adaptations to tenants with a requirement for the use of the existing adaptation.

 Where the removal of equipment-based adaptations including vertical lifts, stair lifts, hoists and steel deck ramps is necessary, the Housing Officer and Property Surveyors (PS) are required to check ownership of the lift by contacting Property Compliance team, if the lift is owned by Local Authority then the Property Compliance administrator will arrange for removal. Early notification from HO & PS will minimise void delays.

**Lifts must not be removed / disposed of without notification.**

**7.2** **Occupied Properties**

A request by the tenant can be made to remove an adaptation. If the request is made by the tenant who the adaptation was installed for, then the relevant [Social Services](#SocialServicesContacts) department should be involved. North Star will liaise with Occupational Therapist Team on behalf of the tenant.

**8.0 Monitoring and Review**

North Star will monitor the effectiveness of the policy & procedure and recommend changes to improve service delivery. This will be achieved via satisfaction surveys and site visits.

**9.0 Appeals and Complaints**

All appeals and complaints will follow the format of North Star Complaints

Procedure.

**Appendices**

**Appendix A -** Minor adaptations process chart

**Appendix B -** Major adaptations process chart

**Appendix C -** Letter to tenant informing them of contractor appointment

**Appendix D -** Works Overview Form

**Appendix E -** Work completion certificate

**Appendix F -** Tenant satisfaction survey

**Appendix G -** Permission letter for Local Authority to progress DFG

**Appendix H -** Local Authority Details