Aids and Adaptations Policy

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Aids and Adaptations Policy

Document Owner: Assistant Director of Asset Investment and Delivery

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1.0	Customer Experience Committee 27/04/2021	01/04/2021	01/04/2022	New document created	Steve Bromley
2.0	CEC by email 25/08/2022	22/08/2022	22/08/2023	Annual update	Steve Bromley
2.1	CEC 22/01/2024	13/11/2023	13/11/2026	Annual review/change of owner/change to 3 year review cycle/ updated template & minor updates to S2 & 4	Jill Jackson (Special Project Manager)/Edith Shah
2.2	CEC 28/10/2026	14/09/2026	28/10/2029	3 year review/policy refresh	Cara Parrock

Purpose: To serve as a declaration of Accent's intent and commitment to provide a high-quality aids and adaptations service, to ensure a good quality of life and an improved level of safety and independence within customers' homes.

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1. Introduction

Accent is a registered provider of social housing that works to improve people's lives by providing safe, secure and good quality homes and services. We recognise that timely, appropriate aids and adaptations can help customers live independently, safely and with dignity in their homes. This policy sets out how Accent will support customers who need adaptations, while ensuring services are fair, transparent, accessible, and represent value for money.

This policy sets out the guiding principles for providing adaptations to Accent homes, including our duties under the Equality Act 2010 and our responsibilities as a social housing landlord. Accent will make reasonable adjustments where a customer is placed at a substantial disadvantage because of disability, vulnerability or additional need. We will also support customers to access appropriate adaptations services and work with relevant partners so that assessed needs are considered in a timely and proportionate way.

Typical adaptations include, but are not limited to:

- Adapted kitchens
- Grab rails
- Ground floor bedrooms & bathrooms
- Level access showers
- Ramped access
- Stair lifts

Accent will take a caring and supportive approach throughout the process. We will work closely with customers to explain what is happening at all points through the process, what options may be considered and what support we can provide.

Our approach is guided by Accent's values of being Caring, Inclusive, Smart and Driven. We will treat customers with dignity, empathy and respect and aim to make the process as clear, fair and manageable.

2. Scope

This policy applies to customers and other lawful occupants living in homes owned or managed by Accent.

Homeowners i.e. shared owners and leaseholders are also covered within this policy, however specific adaptation requests will be reviewed in line with the terms of the individual leases as applicable

Aids and adaptations under this policy relate to works to the property or living environment that support a customer's assessed need. They do not apply to customers' personal possessions, such as furniture or other personal items. Where changes to personal possessions may help a customer live more independently,

Accent may signpost the customer to appropriate external advice or support, but such works are outside the scope of this policy

3. Definitions

“Aids and adaptations” Works to a property or living environment that support a customer’s assessed need, safety, independence or dignity.

“Minor adaptations” Lower-value adaptations, usually costing less than **£1,500**, delivered through responsive day-to-day repairs.

“Major adaptations” Larger or more complex works, usually costing between £1,500 and under £30,000, which may involve changes to the structure or layout of a property.

“Occupational Therapy Assessment Report” A professional assessment from a qualified Occupational Therapist confirming a customer’s need for an adaptation.

“Assessed need” A need identified through assessment, considering disability, vulnerability, safety, independence or wellbeing.

“Reasonable adjustments” Changes or support provided where a customer is disadvantaged because of disability, vulnerability or additional need.

“Disabled Facilities Grant” Local authority funding that customers may apply for to help meet the cost of eligible adaptations.

“Customer-funded adaptations” Adaptations arranged and paid for by the customer, subject to Accent’s approval.

“Adopted adaptations” Adaptations not originally installed or funded by Accent but accepted by Accent for future maintenance responsibility.

4. References

Accent is committed to providing a high-quality adaptations service that supports customer safety, independence, wellbeing and tenancy sustainment. In achieving this, we will comply with all relevant legislation, regulation and sector standards, including the Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards and expectations relating to safety, quality, transparency, fairness, reasonable adjustments and access to services.

The following list sets out the key legislation and requirements:

- The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- The Equality Act 2010

- Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People 2013
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- The Housing Act 2004
- Regulator of Social Housing Consumer Standards, including the Safety and Quality Standard, Transparency, Influence and Accountability Standard, and Tenancy Standard

Associated Documentation

The following documents can be found in the Corporate Library.

- Aids and Adaptations Procedure
- Aids and Adaptations Guidance
- Allocations & Lettings Policy and Procedure
- Complaints and Compensation Policy
- Responsive Repairs and Voids Repairs Policy
- Responsive Repairs Guidance
- Customer Inclusion and Support Policy
- Data Protection Policy
- Privacy Statement
- EDI Policy
- Customer Support and Inclusion Policy

The following documents can be found on the Accent website

- Adaptation Request form
- Home Improvement form

5. Policy Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or sooner if required by legislative, regulatory, or organisational changes. Any amendments will be communicated to relevant stakeholders.

6. Requirements

To enable Accent to provide a transparent, fair, accessible and customer-focused adaptations service, we will:

- Assess all requests individually, taking account of the customer's assessed need, vulnerability, risk, property suitability and available funding routes.

- Provide timely, accessible information and advice following a request, including the steps in the process, likely timescales, decision points and any information needed from the customer or partner organisations.
- Consider alternative housing options where a home cannot be reasonably or practically adapted, or where moving to an existing adapted or more suitable home would better meet the customer's needs.
- Build and maintain effective working relationships with local authorities, Occupational Therapists, health and social care professionals, contractors and other relevant organisations involved in assessing, funding or delivering adaptations.
- Ensure legal, regulatory and consumer standard requirements are met in the provision of the adaptations service, including clear communication, reasonable adjustments, fair access and appropriate record keeping.
- Prioritise requests where there is evidence of significant risk to health, safety, wellbeing, hospital discharge, safeguarding, or a customer's ability to remain independent in their home.

7. Minor Adaptations

Minor adaptations are those usually costing less than £1500 in value and are covered by Accent through its responsive day to day repairs service. These can cover:

- Alteration to sockets or switch heights
- Handrails to WC and Bath
- Internal Grab Rails / bannister rails
- Lever Taps
- Half steps
- Contrasting edges for external steps
- Flashing or amplified door bells

All requests for adaptations must be accompanied by an Occupational Therapy Assessment Report, unless the requirement is clearly identified through another agreed assessment route. Requests will be reviewed by the Estate Services and Adaptations team and prioritised based on assessed need, risk, available funding and the suitability of the home.

Requests for adaptations will be reviewed and the outcome communicated to customers, generally within one month of receipt. Timescales may vary depending on demand, the complexity of the request, or the need for information from partner organisations. Customers will be kept informed throughout the process and updated if there are any delays or changes to expected timescales.

8. Major Adaptations

Major adaptations are larger and more complex works, usually costing between £1,500 and under £30,000, and require an Occupational Therapy Assessment Report or other agreed professional assessment. These often require changes to the structure or layout of a property and works are undertaken at Accent's discretion, subject to assessed need, property suitability, funding availability and required approvals. These can cover:

- Level access showers
- Ramp Access
- Stairlifts
- Adapted bathrooms or kitchens

Accent will work with the local authorities in which our properties are situated to allow, facilitate and support major adaptations where these are appropriate and authorised by Accent. Procedures, funding routes and timescales may vary according to the Local Authority involved, including where adaptations are funded through Disabled Facilities Grants.

Customers may apply for Disabled Facilities Grants to fund eligible adaptations. Accent will provide appropriate support and information to help customers understand the application route, permissions required, and any decisions regarding Accent's funding or contribution. Any Accent funding or contribution will require appropriate approval by the Assistant Director of Asset Investment and Delivery.

Customers are able to fund their own adaptations and will be required to submit an application for Accent's approval as per our home improvement procedure.

Where customers fund and arrange their own adaptations, responsibility for repairs, servicing and maintenance will be confirmed as part of the approval process. Accent will not normally repair or maintain customer-funded installations unless this has been agreed in writing or the installation has been adopted by Accent.

Accent will not unreasonably withhold approval for any adaptations, however, retains the right to refuse if:

- Legal action has started to take possession of the property, or there are other tenancy-related circumstances which mean the request requires further review before approval.
- Geographical or technical issues render the adaptation impractical.
- The adaptation is more than is reasonably required.
- The property is under occupied.

Approval of major adaptations

As part of the approval process, Accent will consider the suitability of the proposed adaptation, the customer's assessed need, the condition and long-term suitability of the property, and whether the need can be met in another way. This may include

supporting a transfer to a more suitable or already adapted home. For larger scale adaptations, Accent will consider all reasonable and available options before approval, ensuring decisions are evidence-based, fair, proportionate and clearly explained to the customer.

9. Maintenance and Repairs

Accent will carry out repairs to adaptations that it has installed, funded or formally adopted, following the expiry of any warranties. Responsibility for customer-funded or third-party funded adaptations will be confirmed at approval stage. Accent will also carry out regular servicing for certain items where it is responsible for the installation, such as:

- Stair lifts
- Through floor lifts
- Wash/dry WCs

10.Removal of adaptations

Accent recognises that changes in a customer's household or health circumstances may mean they wish to have a previously installed adaptation removed. Completed adaptations form part of the property and requests for their removal must be approved by Accent before any works are undertaken.

Where a customer requests the removal of an adaptation, we will consider the customer's current needs, the suitability of the property, the potential needs of future occupants, property management considerations and value for money before reaching a decision.

Before approving the removal of a major adaptation, Accent may require an updated Occupational Therapy or other appropriate professional assessment to determine whether the adaptation remains necessary or whether the property continues to be suitable to meet the customer's current and future needs.

Where an adaptation has been removed, any future request for the same or a similar adaptation will be treated as a new application and must be supported by an Occupational Therapy assessment. Approval will not be automatic and will be subject to assessed need, property suitability, funding availability and the requirements of this policy.

Accent reserves the right to decline requests to remove major adaptations where retention of the adaptation is considered to support future allocations, represent best value for money or protect the long-term suitability of the property.

11. Lettings and transfers

Accent will keep accurate records of adaptations to our properties so that this information can inform asset management, future investment decisions and the appropriate allocation of adapted homes. When an adapted property becomes

available to let, Accent will seek to allocate it to an applicant or existing customer with matching assessed needs, where appropriate and in line with the Allocations and Lettings Policy.

Where an adaptation request could be better met by a transfer to an available adapted or more suitable property, this option will be discussed with the customer sensitively and transparently. We will explain the transfer process, help the customer understand their housing options and allocations requirements and keep them informed of progress. Depending on the customer's individual circumstances, particularly where vulnerability or health, safety or wellbeing risks are identified, we may also coordinate with relevant teams or partner organisations, consider reasonable adjustments and signpost the customer to practical or financial support that may be available.

12. Complaints and concerns

We will use customer feedback, complaints, compensation claims, customer insight and learning from the Housing Ombudsman to help us improve how we manage adaptations and support customers through the process.

If customers are unhappy or have concerns about any adaptations, potential need for adaptations or any element of the process, we will listen, try to understand their concerns and work with them to resolve or reduce those concerns wherever possible. Customers are encouraged to raise any worries as early as they can, so we have the best opportunity to help.

If a customer remains unhappy, they can raise this through our Complaints Policy. We will explain how to do this and support customers to access the process where needed.

13. Equity, Diversion and Inclusion

Accent is committed to ensuring that decisions about aids and adaptations are fair, inclusive, accessible and based on each customer's individual circumstances and assessed needs.

We recognise that customers may experience the adaptations process differently depending on their disability, health condition, vulnerability, protected characteristics, support needs, communication needs and lived experiences.

We will:

- make reasonable adjustments where possible.
- provide information in accessible formats where needed.
- consider language, communication and cultural needs.
- consider the needs of disabled customers and those with health conditions.
- consider caring responsibilities, education, employment and household circumstances where relevant.

- consider safeguarding concerns, vulnerability and support requirements.
- work with customers, local authorities, Occupational Therapists and other partners to understand assessed need and suitable options.
- ensure decisions are made fairly, transparently and without discrimination.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been completed for this policy and will be reviewed alongside future policy reviews and any significant changes to the adaptations service.

As part of our commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion and meaningful customer engagement, this policy was reviewed by the Customer Scrutiny Group as part of the policy review process.

14. Exceptions

We recognise that every customer's circumstances are different, and there may be situations where we need to consider flexibility in how this policy is applied.

Where there are vulnerabilities, support needs or exceptional circumstances, we will consider these carefully and on a case by case basis. Any decisions will be made with empathy, fairness and respect, so that customers are treated compassionately and their individual needs are properly considered.