

# **Southend on Sea Borough Council**

## **Social Housing Properties**



**Be an Enabler, Maintain  
Independence, Promote Life's  
Choices**



**Our approach to deliver life changing  
adaptations and accessible housing**

# Policy for Adaptations and Accessible Housing

	Page
• <u>1.0 Background and scope</u>	3
•	
• <u>2.0 Elements</u>	4
•	
• <u>3.0 Application and Legislation</u>	5
•	
• <u>4.0 Definition and Operational</u>	6
•	
• <u>5.0 Eligibility</u>	7
•	
• <u>6.0 Prioritisation</u>	10
•	
• <u>7.0 Adaptations Funding</u>	3
•	
• <u>8.0 Housing Nominations Panel</u>	13
•	
• <u>9.0 Mutual Exchange</u>	16
•	
• <u>10.0 The Management of complaints, comments and compliments</u>	16
• <u>11.0 Appendix: Disabled Adaptations Classification</u>	18

## 1.0 Background and Scope

This policy applies to residents living in social housing properties, both adults and children, those who require aids and adaptations in their homes or specialist re-housing. Procedures are in place to support the implementation of this policy for residents in adapted or general needs accommodation.

All references within the policy document are referring to residents/customers who are Southend-on-Sea Borough Council's (Council/s) housing residents; all references to landlords are referring to the Council in its landlord capacity.

Of the current social housing properties, 22% have minor or major adaptations, 18% have major adaptations (at least an adapted shower).

National statistics (2011) show residents aged 65+ amounts for 16.6% – 19.6% of the population. In the regions, excluding London, 18% of Southend residents are aged 65+.

Within the residential housing stock of Southend-on-Sea as a whole, 11% of the population are aged 51-60 with a further 38% over 61 years of age. These figures show slightly higher averages both nationally and regionally for these two age groups (source: South Essex Homes 2008/10).

With 49% of the social housing residents aged over 51 there is a significant demand for the aids and adaptations service in Southend-on-Sea.

The Council provides funding each year for the provision of adaptations to enable residents to remain in their home for as long as it is safe and reasonable to do so. For Council housing residents the funding for this service comes from the Housing Revenue Account.

However, private sector housing adaptations are provided through Disabled Facilities Grants. This service has been outsourced and is currently administered by Papworth Trust.

## 2.0 Elements of the Policy

All communities have disabled people. “Disabled” under the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & 2005 and Equality Act 2010 means people who have a physical or mental disability which has an adverse effect on their abilities to carry out normal day-to-day activities and where the adverse effect is substantial and long term (i.e. more than 12 months).

The key objectives of the Aids and Adaptations Policy are: \*\*

- Be an “enabler” in relation to maintaining their independence and in promoting life choices.
- Eliminate discrimination in relation to housing.
- Consult disabled people on all housing issues affecting them.
- Adopt a sensitive and accessible complaints procedure.
- Access the same support in relation to their housing situation that the able bodied enjoy.
- Provide all housing information in an appropriate format (i.e. audio tape, large print or Braille etc).
- Provide accommodation at the same cost as for the able bodied, which will be adapted to suit a need as assessed by an Occupational Therapist.
- Undertake recommended adaptations strictly in priority and date order.
- **Identify, assess and commence** adaptations within the following specified time frames and within financial constraints i.e.
  - a. Priority one (critical) “minor” adaptation within **10** working days and “major” adaptations within **50** working days.
  - b. Priority two (substantial) “minor” adaptations within **40** working days and “major” adaptations within **100** working days.
  - c. Ensure that where the need for an adaptation has been reassessed to a higher priority, that the specified time frame for commencement of the work reflects the new priority. Our aim is that from the point the need has been identified all adaptations will be completed within 12 months.
- Implement the provisions of this Statement for Housing Services through the Council’s Community Housing Service.

\*\* Disability Rights Statement – approved by South Essex Homes/SBC (2008)

## 3.0 Application and Legislation

Disabled clients requiring adapted properties can be identified by various means. These include the Occupational Therapy service, Social Workers, the Hospital Team, Probation, South Essex Homes and the Housing Needs Section and self referral via the Access Team.

### **Legislation / Guidance**

To meet the specific requirements of Article 8 of the European Convention on Human Rights (to respect for private and family life, home and correspondence), Equality Act 2010 and the Disability Discrimination Act, in particular the 2005 amendments - Section 1: Part 3 (duties for private and social landlords).

- Review practices, policies & procedures
- Provide auxiliary aids and services
- Change a term of letting when requested by a disabled person (or by someone on their behalf).

To comply with good practice guidance including the Governments' – "Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People (2006): A Good Practice Guide" and, where appropriate, consult with relevant bodies such as the Equality and Community Rights Commission.

### **The Social Model of Disability**

The social model of disability will underpin the framework for the Council's Adaptation Policy.

The social model emphasises the disabling nature of society and the barriers created within the physical environment, by discriminating attitudes, and through policies and procedures, and see those barriers as being what disabled people want, not the functional limitation or impairment of the individual person.

A social model approach is crucial in implementing this policy. Assumptions must not be made based on medical diagnoses alone. A person's individual requirements and needs should always be assessed. The social model of disability enables disabled people to look at themselves in a more positive way which increases their self-esteem and independence.

## 4.0 Definition and Operational

Adaptations are split into two categories – **minor** and **major**.

These distinctions are based on the nature of the work required in order to implement the adaptation and do not correspond to the impact the adaptation will have on the individual requiring such work. It is understood that both minor and major adaptation work can impact significantly on an individual's quality of life.

Below are examples of the types of work categorised as either minor or major:

- **Minor adaptations** (typically under £1,000) include the provision of ramps, hand rails, and grab rails and lever taps.
- **Major adaptations** (Over £1,000) require more extensive and complex work and include the installation of stair lifts and showers, bathroom and kitchen conversions and access alterations.
- The **Disability Discrimination Act 1995** defines a **disabled person** as: "Someone with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his/her ability to carry out normal day to day activities. This effect is both substantial and long term."

### **Identifying need for adaptations – referral procedures**

Residents of any age can apply for an adaptation for themselves or members of their household but there must be a proven need.

All aids and adaptations work undertaken in the social housing stock will only be carried out as a result of an assessment by an Occupational Therapist to determine eligibility. If the resident does not have an Occupational Therapist, they will be advised to contact the Access Team, as an assessment of their disability and referral for adaptations is required.

This policy recognises the following referral routes: -

#### **Community Services Screening – Access Team, Civic Centre**

Referrals can be made by anyone, including the person themselves. Referrals may be in writing (Access Team, Floor 1, Civic Centre, Victoria Avenue, Southend-on-Sea, Essex, SS2 6ER) or by phone (01702 215008).

The Access Team takes all potential new referrals. The Access Officer may then take one of the following actions:

- If the applicant does not meet the criteria for an adaptation they will be given information/advice and signposted onto the appropriate agency and given details as to whom the referrer should contact – (e.g. physiotherapy

or wheelchair services) or send out an information pack on private services and/or private purchase of equipment.

- Order minor equipment (i.e. commode or raised toilet seat) where this is required urgently.
- Take a referral over the phone, the case will be prioritised and sent to the appropriate team.
- Take a referral for specialist re-housing. To be sent to the Housing Nominations Panel to be prioritised, a client assessment completed and suitable property found and matched.

## **Self referral**

For minor adaptations i.e. hand rails, banister rails, lever taps, a resident and/or their carer can make a request direct to the Access Team as previously stated.

## **Hospital referral**

Adaptation works to social housing properties will be recommended by a hospital Occupational Therapist connected with hospital discharge, are forwarded direct to the Housing Occupational Therapy Service / Locality Team for action. All requests should be accompanied by a full assessment and priority report.

## 5.0 Eligibility

### **Eligible Works**

Works are mandatory where the relevant works required meet the following criteria:

- The adult or child must be a resident of Southend-on-Sea.
- The adaptation /equipment must be at the adults or child's only or main residence.
- The general principle of minimum intervention applies to all provisions made by the Occupational Therapy service. While residents will be encouraged to participate in the assessment, all recommendations will comply with the principle of best value and minimum intervention.

- Residents should be given as much choice as possible about their preferred solution as long as this does not add to the overall cost. The most economic options should always be considered first, if this will meet the need.
- Adaptations funded by the Council will not be repeated for a period of 5 years where the person of their own volition moves to a less suitable property – exceptional circumstances may apply.
- Adaptations will not be recommended if re-housing is being pursued, or this is the more reasonable solution, or we have made a reasonable offer of suitably adapted alternative accommodation.
- The possibility of moving to a more suitable adapted or adaptable alternative property will always be considered.
- Generally, no major adaptations will be undertaken if the resident is under-occupying their home. A more suitable adapted or adaptable alternative property will always be offered.
- The assessment will take into account current needs and risks, as well as anticipated long-term needs. When a property is not suitable for a person's long term needs, major adaptations will not be recommended.
- The re-designation of rooms will be a major consideration prior to any significant adaptations. For example, converting a dining room into a bedroom.
- Where work cannot be completed within the confines of the property re-housing will be considered as a reasonable option.
- The provision of vehicle hardstandings, linking pathways and vehicles crossover to the highway, will be subject to the criteria in section 11.0 Appendix; Disabled Adaptations Classification.

## Categories for Eligible Work

**Facilitating** access by disabled occupant to/from/within:

- The dwelling or building in which the dwelling or flat is situated (including communal stairs).
- A room used or is usable as the principal family room.
- A room used for sleeping, or providing one for such use.
- A room in which there is a bath or shower, or facilitating the use of the provision of.
- A room in which there is a lavatory, or facilitating the use or provision of.

- A room which there is a wash basin or facilitating the use or provision of.
- In order to enable him/her to care for a dependent resident. (Dependent residents can include spouse, partner or family member, another disabled person or a child. The dependent being cared for need not be disabled).

**Facilitating** for the benefit of the disabled occupant:

- The preparation and cooking of food.
- The use of source of power, light or heat by altering the access to, or controls of that source, or by providing additional controls.

**Improving** any heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the disabled occupant or providing such a heating system, where lacking.

**Making the building or dwelling safe** for disabled occupants and other persons residing with him/her, including means of escape, i.e. not blocking fire exits with equipment or wheelchairs / mobility scooters/prams and altering switches/controls for cooking and personal care so they are safe to use or undertake.

## **Age and prognosis**

Age and/or the prognosis should not itself be a barrier to the provision of major adaptations. 2 years projected use will be regarded as a minimum standard and benchmark for adaptations with implications for maintaining independence or reduction of other services.

Careful consideration of the circumstances will be essential e.g. it would be unrealistic and bad practice to embark on major adaptation which the customer will not be able to use. Equipment assessed and supplied directly from the Occupational Therapy Team to support clients to remain at home will be a “first response” for clients with poor prognosis.

In some circumstances, alternative housing may be the only viable solution, and the residents may already be considering moving house. Future housing plans of the family should be checked and if it is the intention for the applicant to move house then grant assistance is very unlikely.

In general, only children aged over five years will be considered for an adaptation. This is because children under this age could normally and reasonably be expected to receive a high level of care from a parent or guardian. However, our local wheelchair service provides self-propelling wheelchairs from the age of 3. In those circumstances we would consider adapting the property for the long term; this benefits the child’s education and development.

Beyond the age of five development occurs at a fast pace and it would be more reasonable to address their needs when they are more established. Long-term prognosis will be taken into consideration in all cases.

A consensus over the provision should be sought with the customer/carer/other household members and appropriate agencies.

## 6.0 Prioritisation and Service Considerations

### **Prioritisation for Clinical Assessment**

The policy will use two levels of priority:-

*The 'priority ranking' timescale from **enquiry, assessment to completion** of the works is as follows:*

- **Critical**                      **60** working days
- **Substantial**                **110** working days

The “priority ranking” forms part of the “Delivering Housing Adaptations for disabled people – A good practice guide”, Department of Communities and Local Government.

These priorities recognise the Council's Department of People Services, Fair Access to Care Service - Eligibility and Priority Framework 2003.

The Policy will aim to meet both two priority levels.

For the purpose of allocating limited resources, all adaptation works recommended by an Occupational Therapist will be categorised as either critical or substantial.

**Critical** - immediate response needed. Cases will be considered as “Critical” if they meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Those residents and carers whose health could seriously be at risk without immediate action.
- Those who would otherwise need an emergency admission to residential, nursing home care or hospital.
- Assessment of manual handling risks and identification of needs for client and carer. Implement training and provide necessary equipment, e.g. hoists.
- Facilitate safe and speedy discharge from out of area hospitals and/or hospices in liaison with other disciplines.

- People who have a sudden deterioration in their condition, or who have a sudden onset of a condition, and neither they nor a carer are able to manage their essential activities of daily living or ensure a safe environment.
- Breakdown in a person's care network which leaves their essential daily living needs unmet.
- Breakdown of equipment that is essential to enabling a person's essential daily living needs to be met.
- When advice is needed on the suitability of alternative accommodation and they are currently living in accommodation which has been assessed as being inappropriate for their needs. An immediate response should only be made if the offer of alternative housing is likely to be withdrawn within the next five working days.
- Residents who need to gain access to essential services e.g. work/school.

**Substantial** cases will be considered "Substantial" if they meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Those residents who have difficulty managing their essential activities of daily living, or whose carers have difficulty maintaining care needs.
- Assessment related to sub-acute and degenerative conditions, to prevent deterioration and Critical status. Referrals which are at risk of becoming Critical in the near future will be taken to the monthly Senior Practitioner meeting for discussion and, if appropriate, be immediately allocated.
- Rehabilitation to decrease dependence on equipment and/or carer. This would include such things as meal preparation, transfers, personal care etc.
- Training a carer to promote rehabilitation in order to wean client away from dependence on carer.

## **Priority Process for COMPLETION of all adaptation works**

The Schedule of Rates Measured Term Contract for the Provision of Adaptations for the Disabled is our vehicle to provide quality adaptations and best value.

### **The Council aims to fund all minor and major adaptation works.**

In all cases due to finite resources, the Adaptations service will consider the following before approving the works: -

- "Are the adaptation works reasonable and practicable: having regard to the age and character of the property?"

If considered not reasonable and practicable, the resident will be considered for a transfer to a more appropriate property through the Housing Nominations Panel, which would hopefully better meet their needs.

Where feasible urgent minor adaptations to the existing home may be provided whilst awaiting a move.

Equal opportunities, ethnic and cultural aspects of the household must be considered.

When planning major adaptations, consideration should be given to the stress and disruption of the adaptation process and to the permanent reminder an adaptation poses to the carer where bereavement is likely in the near future. Each case must be investigated on its individual merits and exceptions may apply.

## **Resident Consultation**

Relating to resident liaison and consultation, the Adaptation Policy adopts the following standards:

- To advise residents of their statutory rights under the legislation :
  - Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970
  - National Health Service and Community Care Act 1990
  - Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
  - Disability Discrimination Act 1995
  - Disability Discrimination Act 2005
  - Equality Act 2010
  
- To consult and notify all residents at key stages throughout the adaptation process, including :
  - To acknowledge receipt of the Occupational Therapists recommendations and provide the resident with a copy of recommendations.
  - To inform the resident as to the extent of the work to be undertaken through use of sketches, diagrams and/or photographs of similar adaptations.
  - To inform residents of the timescale for the work and update them if this changes.
  - To notify the resident which contractors have been instructed to do the work.
  - To arrange suitable appointments for contractors to gain entry.
  - To offer residents some choice in colour and type of product used.
  - To inform residents that they may be considered for a transfer to a more suitable property that would meet their needs.
  - To advertise the service we provide for our residents through newsletters, presentations and local area offices. Provide suitable literature for residents planning to use our service.

## 7.0 Adaptation Funding

The Council's major adaptation budget is set every year and forms part of the Council's larger Capital programme.

The amount is based on the following information:

- Demand in the previous year(s).
- Trends in expressed need e.g. through resident surveys.
- Changes in Council policy and working arrangements.
- And external influences, such as changes in government policy i.e. Disability Discrimination Act 1995 & Disability Discrimination Act 2005 and the Equality Act 2010.

Financial monitoring will be undertaken by the designated budget holder.

## 8.0 Housing Nominations Panel

Southend-on-Sea Borough Council and South Essex Homes operate a Housing Nominations Panel, which aims to maximise the use of properties managed by South Essex Homes for disabled residents. The Housing Nominations Panel uses its expert knowledge of applicant's needs, the specification of properties which are adapted or suitable for adaptation, and the waiting list for those particular properties, in order to match disabled residents to properties which have already been adapted or have the potential to be adapted, to meet the resident's specific needs.

Those who are not South Essex Homes residents must make a housing application and referral to the Access Team before being considered for the Housing Nomination Panel. The housing banding and effective date, together with best match of an adapted or adaptable property, will then be considered when prioritising applications.

The aims are to cultivate co-operation and understanding between all services involved with residents and their housing needs (e.g. Housing services, Housing Authorities and Housing associations, acute and community health services etc).

Furthermore, the Housing Nominations Panel seeks to highlight the housing needs of the disabled residents in Southend-on-Sea.

## **Feasibility Assessment**

In exceptional cases, for example, when the resident's circumstances are of a complex nature and / or the possibility of the proposed adaptations having a largely significant impact on the property itself:

**The Housing Nominations Panel** will, upon receipt of the Occupational Therapy referral, carry out a feasibility assessment in consultation with the Occupational Therapist. The feasibility assessment will seek to establish:

- If there is a possibility for the resident to be moved to more suitable accommodation.
- The implications of the adaptation work when the property becomes available to re-let, in particular, the impact on future allocations.
- If the adaptation works are suitable for the resident.
- The feasibility of the adaptation in relation to the layout and structure of the property.
- The estimated cost of the adaptation work.

## **Transfer to suitable alternative accommodation**

Due to the high costs involved the Council will restrict building extensions and seek to transfer residents to a more suitable property.

Where the decision is made that the resident's needs are best met through a move, a priority transfer within the Council's stock will be approved and/or a priority move to another Registered Social Landlord property sought. The Occupational Therapist will be consulted on the suitability of a proposed property.

Assistance with the expenses incurred in moving home may be provided.

In general, the Council does not purchase adapted properties or those suitable for adaptations on the open market. Only in very exceptional circumstances and subject to funding will this option be considered.

Where it has been identified that a move to a more suitable adapted / adaptable property is both reasonable and practicable, the Council may carry the out adaptations required.

All applications for major adaptations where the resident is under occupying their home will be subject to approval by the Adaptations Panel and Housing Nominations Panel. The Panels will investigate all options, including the

possibility of transferring the resident to another more suitable property, before agreeing that a major adaptation should be undertaken.

If a resident is offered a more suitable and appropriate property and refuses this offer with no reasonable justification, as interpreted by the Panels, the Council and South Essex Homes will have discharged their duty, therefore the major adaptation will not be undertaken. References for this undertaking: The Chronically Sick and Disabled Act 1970 (chapter 44, 3(1) – Duties of Housing Authorities, Housing Act 1985, Section 8 - to have regard for special needs of the chronically sick and disabled person and Good Practice Guide 2006, page 41, 6.15.

If a disabled resident moves on from a property that has been \*considerably adapted for them, the remaining residents will be asked to move to a non adapted property. The residents housing banding will reflect the make up of the household and also reflect the fact that they are seeking more suitable accommodation.

In all cases, both Panels will consider if an external funding resource, such as the Independent Living Fund, can be used to fund the works. In line with the ceiling for Disability Facilities Grant, the maximum the Council spends on a major adaptation will be £30,000.

The responsive repairs service will undertake any maintenance work required to the adaptation, following the 6 months defects period for the building works and the 12 month warranty period for the shower heater and other mechanical / electrical components.

\*Considerably – stair lift / through- the-floor lift with adapted bathing and access alterations.

**The Housing Nominations Panel is a multi – disciplinary team.  
The membership is as follows:**

Invited to the Housing Nomination Panel consists are: Social workers, Occupational Therapists, Housing Officers, Housing Providers ( South Essex Homes) and Hospital representatives.

## 9.0 Mutual Exchange

(Housing Act 1985/2004, section 92, schedule 3)

The Council may refuse permission for a resident to assign their tenancy to a mutual exchange partner if the property has features which make it particularly suitable for people with disabilities, or the property is one of a group let to people with special needs with specific facilities nearby and the mutual exchange would result in no one with the relevant needs being in occupation.

Residents with disabilities whose property has been adapted may wish to exchange to a property without adaptations.

Provided that the Council is satisfied that the existing adapted property will be occupied by a person in need of such accommodation, and the accommodation to be occupied by the disabled person is reasonably suitable to the needs of the proposed assignee and family, then the exchange may be approved subject to all other housing matters being satisfactorily concluded.

However, the outgoing disabled resident will be advised that the property they intend to move to will probably not be suitable to meet their needs. The resident will also face a long wait for adaptations to be repeated that will meet their needs. See section 5, Eligible Works.

The Housing Officer should discuss such requests with the Adaptations Team. To ensure that the exchange meets the clinical needs of all parties and that adapted properties are let appropriately and to the benefit of our disabled residents.

## 10.0 The management of complaints, comments and compliments

The Adaptations Policy will help bring consistency to the management of referral/approval/installation/funding and maintenance of adaptations within Council properties. However, it is recognised that sometimes things go wrong. Hopefully we get it right most of the time. If you wish to complain or compliment us, there are various ways for you to make contact with us: -

- The Adaptations service manages the delivery of adaptations through one principal point of contact i.e. the Adaptations Officer.
- How to contact the Adaptations Officer is detailed on all correspondence. Residents are encouraged to talk to the Adaptations Officer directly should they wish to register a complaint, say thank you or make a suggestion for improvement.
- The Adaptations Officer will input all data received from satisfaction surveys undertaken by the Adaptations Officer or the Occupational

- Therapists and from surveys received directly from residents using the service. The survey will represent 100% of the residents.
- All comments and compliments are logged and, where necessary, acknowledged.
  - All complaints, whether received by telephone, visit, writing or through the customer satisfaction forms are processed through the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure. These are dealt with under the statutory complaints procedure and the system is administered by a local Business Support Officer or the corporate Information Governance Officer.

The procedures detailed refer to comments, compliments and complaints, regarding general service issues e.g. quality of work, lack of progress etc.

However, if a resident is refused an adaptation and is advised of this decision by the Housing Nominations Panel, the following procedures apply: -

- Residents will have the right to appeal against the Panels decision(s). An independent Occupational Therapist / Housing Officer will review the appeal.
- All residents will be advised in writing regarding the appeal procedures, and can be represented during the process itself either in person, by letter, or by an advocate.

Both the Housing Management Team and Housing Nominations Panel will review all compliments, comments and complaints.

In addition, the following service standards are monitored: -

- Checking visits and satisfaction questionnaires carried out/posted and returned within 2 weeks of completion of works.
- 97% of residents to express their satisfaction with the works done.
- If an adaptation is rejected, to investigate and resolve all issues as soon as is possible and to the satisfaction of the resident and the Council.

## **Summary**

The Council's Occupational Therapists, the Adaptations Team, Supporting People Team and South Essex Homes will be central to delivering this policy. Ongoing training will be required by all Officers, including the Council's approved contractors, to make this a truly effective working policy.

Effective monitoring of the policy should ensure that year on year, the Council continues to provide adequate resources to meet the adaptation needs of its residents.

This policy review and subsequent annual reviews, will strengthen the procedures for the expenditure of the adaptation resources, and with the information being recorded and monitored, will help progress the implementation

of the Council's adaptation (people/property) database, which will match properties to the resident(s) need.

All of these improvements will ensure all our residents have consistent, appropriate and equitable access to adaptations and therefore greater independence in their homes.

## 11.0 Appendix

### Disabled Adaptations Classification

Please note, we reserve the right to use our discretion regarding the adaptations carried out.

#### Rails and Step Adaptations

Including: grab rails, handrails, graduated steps, half steps, widened steps, path widening.

#### **Criteria:**

- These adaptations should be considered if a person is at risk due to their limited mobility.
- Adaptations will not be provided solely for fire exit purposes.
- Only one access will be considered for adaptation.
- Path widening will only be considered for walking frame users and wheelchair access.

#### Ramping

Ramping is only generally considered for permanent wheelchair users, prescribed by NHS wheelchair services.

Ramps can be permanent or temporary and can be internal or external to the building.

Installation must be compliant with current building regulations, details of which are available from Building Control and are subject to change. Some installations also require planning permission.

## **Types**

- Concrete
- Modular
- Portable

## **Criteria:**

- A ramp is provided subject to a technical feasibility survey and must conform to national guidelines (BS8300: 2009).
- One entrance only will be made wheelchair accessible.
- Additional stepped access will not be provided, unless under exceptional circumstances.
- Funding will generally not be provided for ramped access for non prescribed wheelchairs or scooters, in these cases information relating to ramping will be provided.

## **Vehicle Hard Standings & Permanent Vehicle Crossings (PVX)**

### **Description:**

Level concrete base within the boundaries of a property and PVX (commonly known as a 'dropped kerb' or 'crossover') to the highway. (Common areas will be considered, subject to ownership and planning permission).

### **Criteria:**

- The resident must be the driver and registered owner of the car
- The Adaptations Team will arrange with Highways the provision of a PVX prior to a hard standing being provided. In some circumstances a PVX will not be approved by Highways.
- The process for the construction of the PVX will be in accordance with the Highway departments' procedures and may require the residents to provide information or apply directly for the PVX as the resident.
- Driver must be unable to walk, wheel himself/herself, or be wheeled to and from the nearest parking place.
- In the first instance drivers should apply to Highways for a disabled parking bay.
- Drivers should be in receipt of higher rate Disability Living Allowance (DLA).
- Driver should have Blue Badge.

## **Door Entry Systems**

### **Description:**

A door-release system which enables visitors to gain access to the property. Access may be obtained through the person using a handset to release the door, or the visitor using a code to release the door.

### **Criteria:**

- Provided for individual access where the person is unable or unsafe to answer the door.
- Only for those who live alone or are regularly left alone for long periods during the day.
- Only for situations where there are frequent, regular callers and where key holding is not possible.

### **Factors to consider:**

A standard Yale type lock is usually required for a door entry system. Not suitable for use with a Chubb lock and some styles of UPVC doors. Special modifications may be needed to retain the door's extra security. The department does not fund the latter.

## **Stair Rails and Internal Handrails**

### **Criteria:**

- Stair rails should only be considered for service users who have significant difficulty managing the stairs and/or who are at risk of falling.
- A referral may be made to the Physiotherapy team for a mobility assessment prior to recommendations being made.
- The Department will not replace a banister rail unless the existing rail is an unsuitable design e.g. for people with severe rheumatoid arthritis in the hands. Banisters may be recommended where there is currently no banister.
- Grab rails and handrails may be considered beside internal steps, or by a toilet or bath.
- Rails may be appropriate along a level floor where there is visual or cognitive impairment.

- Rails can be considered inside restricted areas, such as the toilet where there is no room for the usual walking aid, e.g. Zimmer frame.
- Handrails will not be provided for “exercise” or “treatment” purposes.

**Factors to consider:**

Stair rails should extend a minimum of 10cm beyond the flight top and bottom stairs.

**Toilets**

**Types:**

- Additional standard toilet
- Repositioning/altering height of toilet

**Criteria:**

- Should not be recommended if the need is short-term, e.g. if the person’s condition is likely to improve or deteriorate to the point where the toilet facility is no longer appropriate.
- Where a person’s condition is terminal, the assessor should discuss with the client and family the time the adaptation will take and the stress and disruption it will cause.

**Additional standard toilet**

**Criteria:**

- The supply of a portable commode will always be considered in the first instance.
- Where a person is unable or has extreme difficulty accessing existing toilet facilities.
- A stair lift or vertical lift is not an appropriate option to access first floor facilities and the person is going to sleep downstairs.
- Person has permanent chronic bowel /bladder condition which severely affects frequency and urgency.
- Where assisting a service user to reach the existing toilet causes severe stress or risk to carers.

- A chemical toilet has been considered and judged to be inappropriate, due to problems emptying or lack of privacy
- Automatic wash/dry toilets will be considered where independence/dignity can be maintained / reduce a care package

### **Washing and bathing**

#### **Criteria:**

- Residents who request an assessment of their bathing difficulties will be provided with advice and guidance on the safest solution to the problem.
- If needs are being met adequately by a carer, provision of equipment may not be provided.
- In compliance with the principle of minimum intervention the basic bathing equipment will be tried in the first instance. If this provision of basic equipment facilitates safe access to the bath then no alternative and more costly provision will be made.
- The Council will not replace showers with baths.
- Where the bathroom space is limited or not accessible the redesign or re designation of existing space can be considered.
- Depending on the outcome of the occupational therapy assessment, provision of a level access shower may be recommended if this is the case:-
  - Bathing equipment must have been trialed and found to be unsuitable.
  - Provision will enable user to be independent or reduce risk to carers.
  - Client's preference alone cannot be the only factor for this provision.

### **Doors and door widening.**

#### **Description:**

Door alterations may include sliding, widening, re-hanging to open the opposite way or from the opposite side, removal, or being made into half or concertina doors.

#### **Criteria:**

- Where a service user is unable, or has severe difficulty, gaining access to a room, or where doing so causes risk.
- Where a carer is assisting a service user to gain access to a room but is having difficulty, or is at risk doing this.

- Where it may be difficult to gain access to a service user who has frequent falls (e.g. where a person may become trapped behind a door).
- When considering these sorts of adaptations, it is essential to give careful consideration to the person's Human Rights.

### **Kitchen alterations**

A wide range of adaptations can be considered to give the client access to and the use of kitchen facilities where it is deemed to be essential. The extent of the adaptation should reflect the client's abilities and needs and the needs of other members of the household.

#### **Guidelines:**

- Kitchen adaptations will only be provided for the household member responsible for the majority of meal preparation AND
- The present kitchen is unsuitable for the client to prepare and cook food due to the height and position of work surfaces and facilities, or lack of turning space for a wheelchair AND
- Equipment has been tried and is not suitable AND
- Residents have the physical ability and motivation to prepare and cook independently on a suitably adapted kitchen AND
- The kitchen is, or will be, accessible from the main living area by the client.

### **Cupboards and door locks/tap turners**

Safety locks fitted to cupboards, doors or windows to prevent access to risk areas.

It is reasonable to expect that parents retain the responsibility of the creation of a safe environment for all children. Childproof locks and other devices which are readily available from commercial outlets will not be provided or fitted by this service. The Occupational Therapy Service can provide advice and information on strategies and solutions to these problems.

Tap turners are provided but in the first instance it is advisable to seek advice from South Essex Homes' plumber to check the taps are operating properly.

## **Glossary**

Level access shower (*a shower which enables the resident to walk in with no step*)

Through-floor-lift (*a lift car which enables a wheelchair user to be lifted into an upper floor*)

Hard standing (*a specific area to safely park and transfer from a vehicle near to the home*)

Permanent Vehicle Crossing (PVX) (*Commonly known as a 'dropped kerb' or 'crossover'. A PVX is a dropped kerb adjacent to the highway to enable a vehicle to cross onto a hard standing and/or the highway.*)

DH/COMMUNITY 060314