

Equipment & Adaptations Policy



Directorate: Investment, Development & Sustainability

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1. Introduction

- 1.1. This policy is designed to support Salix Homes' commitment to providing decent, safe, secure and affordable housing that supports our customers to live independently in their home.
- 1.2. This Policy applies to all Salix Homes customers and will be followed in the assessment and delivery of all adaptation services by Salix Homes colleagues and contractors.
- 1.3. This policy ensures that Salix Homes provides a fair and transparent adaptations service to our customers to help promote independence, security and dignity of customers within their own home. All major adaptation requests will be reviewed by our Adaptations Panel.

2. Policy Statement

- 2.1. Salford City Council retains statutory duties under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and the Chronically Sick and Disabled Person Act 1970 to consider the provision of appropriate adaptations following assessment and recommendation by a qualified Occupational Therapist and identify the needs of disabled people and housing provision in our area.
- 2.2. Salix Homes provides a separate Equipment and Adaptation Service (as encouraged by the Regulator of Social Housing) based on its own assessment criteria and subject to the availability of its own internal funding and resource management. Customers will be considered for a major adaptation on receipt of a referral from the local authority's Occupational Therapist Team.
- 2.3. Salix Homes will comply with the legislation set down in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and the Equality Act 2010 to ensure our customers have access to fair and equitable services. Salix Homes will comply with all legislation and regulatory requirements as set out by the College of Occupational Therapists and the Housing Corporation in January 2006 publication 'Minor Adaptations without Delay – a practical guide for Housing Associations'.

- 2.4. Salix Homes will comply with the requirements of the Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023. The Act requires Salix Homes to assist tenants seeking housing adaptations to access appropriate services.
- 2.5. Salix Homes is committed to going beyond providing good quality homes, The provision of a flexible adaptations service supports this by helping promote independence, security and dignity of customers' and/or their household members within their own homes.
- 2.6. This policy aims to offer a service that is fair and responsive to the needs of our customers' whilst also taking into account the need to utilise our current adapted stock effectively and target resources to properties which can be adapted to provide an accessible home.
- 2.7. This Policy applies to all Salix Homes customers who request either major or minor adaptations at their home for themselves or a permanent member of the household. Adaptation work will not be undertaken to support any non-permanent residents.
- 2.8. Salix Homes will not consider requests for adaptations which have been previously refused or declined by Salix Homes, unless there are exceptional reasons such as a significant change of circumstances.

3. Definitions

- 3.1. Salix Homes defines adaptations as changes to a customers' home to help overcome practical problems when age or disability limits their daily activities or those of the household. Salix Homes categorise adaptations as either Major or Minor dependent upon the cost and scope of works that is requested.
- 3.2. Adaptations may include the installation of specialist equipment, extra fittings or alterations that enable customers' and their families to enjoy the use of their home by minimising mobility difficulties and make the property more suitable to their needs.

4. Equipment and Adaptations

4.1. Minor Aids and Adaptations

- 4.1.1. Minor adaptations are smaller non-technical items (or work) that are usually fixed to a property and designed to meet a specific need. For example items such as grab rails, lever taps, flashing light doorbells, kick plates, safety glass, and the repositioning of switches would be regarded as minor adaptations. Salix Homes considers a minor adaptation to be typically under £1,000.

4.2. Major Adaptations

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- 4.2.1. Major adaptations are larger specialist equipment or works which typically, these can include stair lifts, level access or easy access shower solutions, hoists, specialist baths and toilets, adapted kitchens and larger structural alterations. These adaptations will require a referral from an Occupational Therapist and a feasibility assessment.

4.3. Feasibility Assessments

- 4.3.1. Salix Homes aims to make reasonable adjustments that are tailored to meet a customer's needs, where it is possible, practical and financially cost effective to do so. To be eligible for major adaptation the customer and/or permanent members of the household must meet certain criteria. This will be ascertained through an Occupational Therapy (OT) assessment.
- 4.3.2. All OT recommendations and proposed major adaptation works will require a feasibility assessment which will be undertaken by a Salix Homes project surveyor. This will assess if the proposed works are technically feasible and identify if the property is under occupied. Where a property is under occupied, the customer will be supported to move to a suitable property as set out below.
- 4.3.3. During the feasibility assessment all options available to both the customer and Salix Homes will be discussed and explored. The main concern for Salix Homes is that the customer's individual needs are met in an appropriate manner after considering all mitigating circumstances and that it is feasible for the works to be delivered.
- 4.3.4. Salix Homes are unlikely to invest in the provision of an adaptation where the benefit achieved for the customer is short term or not practicable to do so. Such circumstances may include:
- When the customer is actively seeking re-housing
 - When the adaptation is not structurally practicable
 - When the tenancy is less than 2 years old, unless there has been a significant change in circumstances e.g. following a stroke or accident
 - When the property is under-occupied and extensive adaptations are requested
 - When a request is made to provide a level access shower above ground floor level. Future letting ability can become an issue as many people with mobility problems who may benefit from a level access shower may have problems negotiating stairs

4.4. Adaptations Panel

- 4.4.1. Where the works are assessed as being feasible the request will be reviewed by our Adaptations Panel who will take into account the property type, access,

location, future adaptability and demand. The panel is an internal Salix group with representatives from the Assets and Housing Services Teams.

4.4.2. Salix has no legal obligation to carry out works which would involve the removal or alteration of a physical feature (unless specifically mandated under schedule 4 paragraph 2(9) of the Equality Act 2010) and so may refuse a request for major adaptations.

4.4.3. The following provides some examples of considerations which Salix Homes are likely to find particularly relevant in this context. Salix Homes may waive these conditions where no other suitable housing is available:

- The adaptation is requested in a property that is due for demolition or major refurbishment.
- The property is under occupied by one or more bedrooms.
- The property is unsuitable for the customer i.e. statutory over-crowded
- A customer has recently (e.g. within two years) transferred from one Salix property to another unless the customers' circumstances have changed significantly since the move.
- When a request is made to provide a level access shower above ground floor level.
- The property is unsuitable for adaptation.
- The request is for storage facilities or charge points for scooters or other electric mobility aids.
- The customer and/or the relevant eligible household member(s) with identified need(s) is not intending to stay in the property for at least five years
- The overall cost of the proposed adaptation(s) are such that it is not financially viable for Salix Homes to fund the works (including where budgetary constraints may be exceeded).

4.4.4. Salix will not unreasonably withhold permission when customers ask to arrange and fund their own adaptations. Where customers are funding the adaptation works, the cost of reinstating the property to its original condition and decorating will also need to be met by the customer when they leave the property. Where possible, Salix Homes will seek to let the property with the adaptations in place to a suitable new customer to minimise the need for customers to complete this reinstatement.

4.4.5. Where a customer is seeking to self fund an adaptation, prior approval for the works will be required from Salix Homes and compliance with all relevant planning or building regulations will be required.

4.5. Support to Move

4.5.1. Where an adaptation request is refused, Salix will support the customer to consider rehousing to more suitable accommodation that meets their needs.

- 4.5.2. In these cases, customers will be a priority for appropriate re-housing in accordance with our lettings policy. Assistance may be offered to households whose current home is unsuitable for major adaptations when the investment in major adaptation cannot be recycled or maintained for future use.
- 4.5.3. Transferring to suitable alternative housing, or housing suitable for adaptation, is generally the preferred option for meeting the customer's needs in such cases.
- 4.5.4. Customers considered for re-housing may be eligible for financial assistance to cover relocation expenses. Salix Homes may subsidise or provide incentives with support such as contributing to moving costs.

4.6. Refusal and Right to Appeal

- 4.6.1. Where an adaptation is refused, Salix will advise the customer within five working days following the decision by the Adaptation Panel.
- 4.6.2. Customers have the right to appeal and request an internal review of the decision except where the request has been refused due to the adaptation not being technically feasible. An appeal letter must be received within 28 working days of the date of the adaptations refusal letter.
- 4.6.3. All appeals will have an independent review by the Director of Investment, Development & sustainability and the Director for Communities. A response will be provided to the customer within 28 days of receipt of their appeal.

5. Monitoring / Performance / Targets

- 5.1. Salix Homes will aim to acknowledge receipt of all adaptation requests received within 5 working days.
- 5.2. For major adaptations we will inform applicants of the outcome of the Adaptation Panel's decision within 5 working days.
- 5.3. We aim to complete all minor adaptations within 30 days of application, subject to organisational resource and availability of required materials however requests will be prioritised where there is an identified health and safety risk.
- 5.4. We aim to complete all major adaptations in no more than 6 months following receipt of an Occupational Therapist assessment. These waiting times are subject to design approval from the Occupational Therapist and budgetary constraints.

- 5.5. The delivery of the adaptations programme will be reported through existing performance reports within our Investment and Responsive Repair services.

6. Roles / Responsibility

- 6.1. Salix Homes' Project Surveyors will be responsible for undertaking initial feasibility assessments, which will help inform formal Occupational Therapy assessments to identify the needs of our customers.
- 6.2. Colleagues within the Assets and Housing Teams will have responsibility to convene internal Adaptations Panels to review adaptation requests.
- 6.3. The Director of Investment, Development and Sustainability and the Director of Communities will have responsibility to undertake independent reviews when a customer submits an appeal against a decision to refuse an adaptation request.
- 6.4. Salford City Council retains statutory duties to consider the provision of appropriate adaptations following assessment and recommendation by a qualified Occupational Therapist and identify the needs of disabled people and housing provision in our area.

7. Legal / Regulatory Links

- The Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023
- The Decent Homes Standard
- Equality Act 2010
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Housing Act 2004 (Housing Health and Safety Rating System)
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015
- LOLER (Lifting Operation Lifting Equipment Regulations)
- Regulatory Consumer Standards

8. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

- 8.1. Salix Homes is committed to promoting and embedding a culture of equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI) within our workplaces and the communities we serve.
- Equality is about ensuring that every individual has an opportunity to make the most of their lives and talents;
 - Diversity is recognising difference and responding positively to those differences;
 - Inclusion is about creating an environment where our services and employment opportunities are accessible to all.

8.2. We are committed to meeting our obligations and duties under the Equality Act 2010 and to promoting equal opportunities both in the provision of services and in our employment practices. We will consider all the protected characteristics of the Act which are:

- Age
- Disability
- Gender reassignment
- Marriage and civil partnership
- Race
- Religion or belief
- Sex
- Sexual orientation
- Pregnancy and maternity

8.3. We also recognise that Socio-economic background is an area where inequalities exist and commit to addressing this disadvantage and inequality in our communities where able to do so.

8.4. We are also mindful of our duties under the Public Sector Equality Duty, which is to:

- Eliminate discrimination, harassment, victimisation and any other conduct that is prohibited by or under the Equality Act 2010;
- Advance equality of opportunity between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it; and
- Foster good relations between persons who share a relevant protected characteristic and persons who do not share it.

8.5. Where reasonable to do so, Salix Homes will make any reasonable adjustment to ensure compliance with the Act.

9. Related Documents

- Salix Corporate Plan
- Asset Management Strategy
- Salix Homes Tenancy Agreement
- Management Move Procedure
- Data Protection Policy
- Tenant Feedback & Complaints Policy
- Salix Homes Information Security Policy
- Salix Homes Tenant Warning Database
- Responsive Repairs Policy
- Voids Policy and Procedure
- Equipment and Adaptations Procedure

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- Allocations Policy
- Property Investment Policy