

1. We want to help tenants and members of their household live independently and safely at home. Aids and adaptations are reasonable adjustments to a person's home that make it safer and easier to live in. This policy sets out our approach to aids and adaptations. It applies to all residents living in homes managed by Guinness.

The Guinness Policy

2. Our policy is that:
 - We will support tenants through the aids and adaptations process and work with our local authority partners, and other relevant organisations, to deliver the service
 - We will not unreasonably refuse an aid or adaptation request and will explain the reason for any refusal
 - We will ensure that all aids and adaptations work represent good value for money
 - Where we are unable to adapt the property we will explain the reason and discuss options to meet the tenant's needs
 - We will approve aids and adaptations for, and work with, eligible social and affordable rent tenants and members of their household who are disabled, where it is practical and reasonable to do so, in order to help them remain independent in their homes
 - We will not carry out or fund aids and adaptations where the property is shared ownership or the tenure is leasehold or where a Right to Buy or Right to Acquire application has been made
 - Where a property is managed on behalf of others, we will not carry out or fund aids and adaptations, unless the property owner's approval has been obtained and it is paid through funding such as a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). If customers in these circumstances want to install and fund the aids and adaptations themselves, they can do so but must still obtain our permission before commencing any works.

Background

3. This policy supports the delivery of our strategic objective to provide great homes.
4. As a Registered Provider of social housing, we are required to co-operate with relevant organisations to provide an aids and adaptations service that meets tenants' needs. This means working with local authorities who have particular statutory duties to fulfil under the terms of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and the Care Act 2014, as well as healthcare professionals and other agencies.
5. We also have legal responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010. This Act requires Guinness to make reasonable adjustments, such as providing auxiliary aids, to assist a tenant with a disability to live in a property.
6. As stated in their tenancy agreement, tenants can make improvements to their home, such as adaptations, however our written consent is required. We will not unreasonably refuse an aid or adaptation request and explain the reasoning for any refusal.
7. An explanation of terms can be found at the end of the policy at Annex 1.

Further detail

8. We will encourage tenants to contact us if they need assistance or advice where they, or a member of their household, require an aid or adaptation in order to live independently and safely in their home.

9. We will carry out, where it is practical to do so, person centred fire risk assessments where we have become aware of customers at risk due to their physical disability, cognitive impairment or lifestyle. We will try to reduce risks as much as is reasonably practicable. This could include providing adaptations to tenants.

Minor aids and adaptations

10. We will pay for, and install, any reasonable requests for minor aids and adaptations subject to funding availability.
11. We will not require a report from an occupational therapist (OT) or other key professional for minor aids and adaptations.

Major aids and adaptations

12. When we receive a request for aids and adaptation we will consider:
- Whether the work is necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the person who requires it, taking into account any assessment made by a professional, such as an OT. We reserve the right to appoint a key professional to conduct this assessment.
 - Whether the work is reasonable and practical, taking into account the age of the property and its condition.
 - The affect the adaptation may have on the other residents of the building.
13. Whilst we will not unreasonably refuse a request for an aid or adaptation, we reserve the right to do so including in the following circumstances:
- It is not for the tenant or a member of their household
 - The need has not been identified through an OT or similar assessment
 - The property is in disrepair or scheduled to be demolished
 - It is not physically possible to alter the property in the requested way
 - It would have an adverse impact on other residents
 - It does not meet all planning and building regulation requirements, or there are legal or contractual reasons which prevents us from carrying out the adaptation; or
 - It would present a health and safety risk.
14. Tenants will need to apply for grant funding, e.g. DFG, to cover the cost where an aid or adaptation is required, unless they are able to self-fund the adaptation. We may offer assistance in making the application and work with the local authority, or funding authority, to help achieve the best solution for the tenant.
15. Where the tenant is unsuccessful in obtaining grant funding for the whole cost of the aid or adaptation and/or where other funding cannot be sourced by the tenant and this has been evidenced, we will, in exceptional circumstances, consider match funding or funding the whole cost of the adaptation. Each case will be considered on its own merits.
16. We will restrict the total amount of funding that we provide for individual major adaptations (either through match funding or as the sole funding provider) to £12,000 inclusive of V.A.T. In exceptional circumstances we may exceed this amount.
17. If we are unable to approve an aid or adaptation request, we will work with the tenant(s) and, where appropriate, their OT and support networks, or other agencies to consider their options. This may include the tenant moving to a suitable alternative property if this is available and appropriate.

Maintaining and utilising aids and adaptations

18. We will ensure that aids and adaptations are of good quality, meet the user's needs, provide immediate and potential future benefit for any user and minimise future maintenance costs.
19. We will service and maintain electrical and mechanical equipment such as stairlifts, through floor lifts, hoists, rise and fall baths, stair climbers, etc. where the local authority does not have a servicing and maintenance agreement in place with the tenant.
20. We will retain minor aids and adaptations and we will, wherever possible, retain major aids and adaptations, when an adapted property becomes empty.
21. We will seek to let adapted properties to potential tenants who require the aid or adaptation. We will work with our partners to identify people who require housing that might benefit from the adapted property.
22. We may refuse a request for a mutual exchange if the home is adapted for a support need that the incoming tenant, or member of their household, does not have.

Period of review

23. Our review programme is driven by service improvement initiatives, changes to legislation, regulation, evolving good practice or feedback from customers and other key stakeholders. Typically we review policies on a three yearly cycle.

Key legal and regulatory references

- Defective Premises Act 1972
- Landlord and Tenant Act 1985
- Housing Act 1985
- Children Act 1989
- NHS & Community Care Act 1990
- Carers Act 1995
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- Human Rights Act 1998
- Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002
- Housing Act 2004
- Equality Act 2010
- Care Act 2014
- Construction (Design and Management) Regulations 2015

Related policies

- Allocations policy
- Diversity and Inclusion policy
- Fire safety policy
- Health and Safety policy
- Maintenance of empty homes policy
- Mutual exchange policy
- Reasonable adjustments policy

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Policy author	Megan Smith, Housing Policy Officer	
Policy owner	Ian Joynson, Executive Director of Asset Management	
Version history		
Version number	Review trigger	Brief description of the main changes
2.0	Cyclical review	The changes include inserting the policy into the new corporate template and re-drafting the clauses.
3.0	Cyclical review	The changes include providing more background detail on legislation that impacts external partners, inclusion of auxiliary aids, providing more detail on both minor and major aids and adaptations as well as maintain and utilising them.

Annex 1: Definitions

Term	Description
Adaptations	<p>An adaptation is a reasonable adjustment, such as a physical or structural change, to the feature of a person’s home that make it make safer and easier to move around and do everyday tasks. This includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Making the property safe for their use • Facilitating access to and from the property • Facilitating access to a room: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Used as the principal family room ○ Used for sleeping ○ Where there is a lavatory ○ Where there is a bath or shower (or both) or, ○ Used for the preparation and cooking of food • Facilitating access to and from a garden by a disabled occupant or making access to a garden safe for a disabled occupant (if the property has a garden as defined in the Housing Act 1996).
Auxiliary aids	<p>An auxiliary aid is a piece of equipment or technology or change which would providing assistance to a person with a disability living in our homes. The following are considered auxiliary aids:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The replacement or provision of any signs or notices • The replacement of any taps or door handles • The replacement, provision, or adaptation of any doorbell, • Changes to the colour of any surface (such as, for example, a wall or door) where this has a direct impact on a person’s disability as assessed by an OT or other key professional.
Disability	<p>The Equality Act 2010 describes a disability as a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and ‘long-term’ negative effect on a person’s ability to do normal daily activities.</p>
Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	<p>Means-tested grant (for adults and not children) provided by the local authority to help meet the cost of adapting a property for the needs of a person with a disability. In order to qualify for the grant, the adaptation needs to be necessary and appropriate as determined by social services (typically by an occupational therapist).</p>
Major adaptations	<p>Works that significantly alter the structure or facilities at a property in order to assist a household with their living needs, which are typically assessed by an OT. This includes, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Over-bath showers • Wide doorways throughout the property • Wheelchair accessible kitchens • Height adjustable baths • Level access showers/wet rooms • Stair lifts • Ceiling track hoists

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Specialist wash/dry toilet • Ramped access into property (not wooden) • Automatic door openers • Through floor lifts.
Minor adaptations	<p>Works that do not significantly alter the structure of a property but assist a household to live more comfortably and are usually installed without the need of an OT report. Typically works that cost less than £1,500 inclusive of VAT. This may include, but is not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Lever taps • Grab rails • Handrails • Steps (external).
Occupational Therapist (OT)	<p>A health care professional who engages with tenants (independently of Guinness) to assess their requirements to live a full and active life. The Care Act 2014 statutory guidance specifically states that assessments can be conducted by key professionals, such as OTs, as these assessors would be appropriately trained in order to provide a comprehensive assessment.</p>
Occupational Therapist Report (OT Report)	<p>An assessment report detailing the person with a disability's requirements to help them achieve and sustain a level of independence corresponding to their needs and capabilities. In this instance, it relates to the adaptations required to a property.</p>