



Housing Services Aids and Adaptations Policy (2022)

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1. Introduction

1.1 - Purpose of this Policy

Havering Council (“the Council”) is committed to meeting the needs of its tenants and their households to live independently with privacy and dignity.

We aim to support people to continue to live independently and comfortably in their homes for as long as possible or, if this is not possible or practical, to assist them in finding suitable alternative accommodation.

The purpose of this policy is to explain how the Council assesses and approves adaptations for our secure tenants. This will define who is eligible, what will and will not be funded, the alternative routes available and the responsibility of our tenants to contribute towards costs when required.

It applies to households who are permanent Council tenant and household members who are normally resident. They will have a long-term health condition that is severely impacted by their housing situation, where a move to a suitable property or an adaptation at the current property is suitable and will minimise that impact.

1.2 - Aims of this Policy

It is the aim/s of this policy to ensure the following:

- The Council retains a stock of adapted homes for future letting;
- The Council increases the number of adapted properties available for letting to households who needed them;
- Pressure is reduced on acute services and the need to access residential care is delayed or avoided by adapting the homes of secure tenants where feasible;
- The Council operates a service that offers suitable, practical and cost effective solutions that best meets the needs of disabled people living in Council owned homes

1.3 - Scope of this Policy

This policy covers two key areas:

- a) Adapting existing homes;
- b) Allocation of and best use of existing stock currently part or fully adapted to meet a housing need, or better designed to be adapted.

The policy recognises the positive impact aids and adaptations in and around the home can have in helping someone with a disability to maximise their independence, with the timely provision of minor adaptation often sustaining this.

The policy also recognises that alternatives to the provision of new adaptations are often available and preferred. These will be explored with the tenant and their household who may then be required to move to more suitable accommodation.

It confirms the Council's commitment to meeting the needs of tenants, which may change over time, as well as prioritising the effective use of the Council's existing housing stock. This will ensure a fair distribution of aids and adaptations within finite resources.

Whilst the needs of tenants will be given proper consideration, it is inevitable that the use of the Council's housing stock and available resources must be considered in parallel. This is to ensure that all tenants are being treated fairly, in particular where the nature of the adaptation is substantial.

1.4 - Delegated authority to make minor changes to this policy

To ensure that this policy is operated fairly and legally throughout, the Assistant Director of Property Services, in consultation with the Director of Housing Services, will be able to approve minor amendments; i.e. amendments that do not significantly change this policy or associated procedures.

1.5 - Timescales for this policy

This policy will commence in April 2023 and will be subject to review after the first year then every 3 years.

However, it may be revised beforehand to accommodate legislative and/or regulatory changes that may occur during the interim.

1.6 - Legal context of this policy

This policy takes into account the following legal and regulatory requirements including:

- Housing Act 1996
- Regulatory Framework for Social Landlords
- Equality Act 2010
- Data Protection Act 2018
- Care Act 2014

2. Background

The Council recognises that our tenant's circumstances can change at any time. Aids and adaptations, as well as the consideration of the Council's wider housing stock therefore provide an avenue in which to ensure that tenants are adequately housed.

3. Adaptations

3.1 - Activities

The term Aids and Adaptations covers a number of related activities including:

- a) Initial assessment and referral to the occupations Therapy Service;
- b) Option appraisal and feasibility assessment of recommendations received from the Occupational Therapist;
- c) Commissioning and installation of aids and adaptations to Council properties;
- d) The removal and reuse of aids and adaptations in Council properties where this offers value for money;
- e) Developing and maintaining an adapted Council property list;
- f) Supporting tenants through the various stages of the aids and adaptations process;
- g) Receiving and assessment applications for re-housing from existing tenants requiring adapted or accessible housing;
- h) Appropriately allocating adapted Council properties in line with the Allocations policy;
- i) Assessment of new applications for housing.

This policy specifically refers to adaptations needed because of a disability to properties owned and managed by the Council.

This policy does not extend to homeowners, leaseholders or tenants applying for aids and adaptations to private sector or other social rented properties; such assistance can be applied for through [Disabled Facilities Grants](#).

3.2 - Types of assistance

There are four options relating to Aids and Adaptations for existing tenants.

1. Equipment and Aids

A range of freestanding portable or medical aids suitable for functional requirements will normally be provided by an appropriate health care professional. The most cost effective options will always be used, including but not limited to:

- a) Portable Hoists
- b) Hospital Beds
- c) Toilet frames and Specialist seats
- d) Bed levers
- e) Wheelchairs
- f) Shower chairs
- g) Chair risers

- h) Walking frames
- i) Reaching devices
- j) Assistive technology

2. Minor Adaptations

Minor adaptations are considered on the recommendation of a Council Occupational Therapist that cost less than £1,000 per item, including but not limited to:

- a) Grab rails
- b) Hand rails
- c) Lever taps
- d) Stair rails
- e) Lowering/repositioning of light switches and sockets (wheelchair users only)
- f) Steps
- g) Small ramps or removable ramps
- h) Bath lifts
- i) Assisted Technology
- j) Door and wall protectors

3. Major Adaptations

Major adaptations are works that cost over £1,000 and usually involve structural alterations, improvements to, or additions to the fabric of the property. A written recommendation from a Council Occupational Therapist or third party appointed must be received.

Major adaptations are provided in line with the provisions of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 for disabled facilities grants (DFG) and in summary help to facilitate:

- a) Access to and from the home;
- b) Making the dwelling or building safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with him/her;
- c) Access to a room used or usable as the principal family room;
- d) Access to or providing for the disabled occupant, a room for sleeping;
- e) Access to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room(s) in which there is a lavatory, a shower and or bath, a wash hand basin, or facilitating the use of such facilities by the disabled occupant;
- f) The preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant;
- g) Improving/providing a heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the disabled occupant;
- h) The use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of one or more means of access to or control of that source or by providing additional means of control;
- i) Access and movement by the disabled occupant around the dwelling in order to enable him/her to care for a person who is normally resident in the dwelling and is in need of such care;
- j) Facilitating access to and from a garden by a disabled occupant.

Examples of major adaptations include:

- a) Level access showers
- b) Large permanent ramps
- c) Door widening
- d) Stair lifts
- e) Through floor lifts
- f) Tracked Hoists (works associated with strengthening the structure and additional electric points only – hoists are a medical aid)
- g) Swing doors or doors operated electrically

4. Move to suitable alternative property

The fourth option is to move a household to a suitable property in line with the Housing Allocations Scheme.

In addition to the above, Occupational Therapists will always consider how the use of assistive technology can prevent or reduce the need for adaptations in the home, as well as how they can support the tenant to remain in their home.

3.3- Eligibility

Aids and Adaptations will only be considered for Council tenants named in the tenancy agreement or a member of the immediate family who is permanently resident in the household.

These will include Partners, Children, Grandchildren, siblings, Parents and Grandparents providing they are normally resident. No adaptations will be carried out for lodgers and temporary visitors.

There will also need to be evidence of a long-term health condition that is significantly impacted by their housing situation. Evidence will usually include medical information from GPs and relevant specialist doctors and consultants. The information will need to be more than a supporting letter, with information confirming the tenant's diagnoses, medication and the impact of this.

Where the supporting information evidences a potential need for adaptations in the home, a Council Occupational Therapist will complete an in person assessment of the impacted tenant.

Where there is suitable accommodation within the Council's housing stock to meet a households housing need, or more appropriate accommodation for aids and adaptations, then it is expected that the households will apply to the housing register for a medical priority to move in line with the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme.

Adaptations for children of tenants will only be completed at the property that is the main and principal home. Where the child only is required to attend a placement and is only at home on weekends and holidays, then these will be assessed on their individual merits.

Major Adaptations will not be approved for individuals who are waiting for medical procedures that will improve mobility until their expected recovery is complete.

Adaptations will be considered when a tenant is waiting to be discharged from hospital and require their current homes to be adapted, however it may not be possible for them to be completed prior to discharge.

Generally, adaptations will be carried out where a secure tenancy is held. This includes fixed term Council tenancies, unless the tenant is under notice that this will be coming to end once the fixed term period has passed. Whilst consideration will be given to introductory tenants circumstances, as new tenants, their property should have been suitable at the time of offer. Adaptations may not be carried out if the tenant failed to declare that they or a member of their household had a pre-existing disability where it would have been reasonable for them to do so.

Requests for major adaptations will not be approved where a Right-to-Buy application has been received, or progressed if one is received after the application. Tenants in these cases will be signposted to the assistance available through the Council's DFG programme once they have bought their home.

Tenants seeking to transfer or mutually exchange will be considered on their individual merit and whether they are leaving or going to a suitably adapted property will form part of this consideration.

The Council will not carry out a means test of the tenants or their household income as part of the assessment of eligibility for adaptations.

The Council will not progress with an adaptation where possession proceedings have commenced or a possession order is already in place. If the tenant has been served a notice, then this will be considered on a case-by-case basis e.g. under notice due to rent arrears and maintaining any additional repayment.

We will normally only consider carrying out minor and major adaptations that have been recommended by a Council Occupational Therapist as they are best placed to consider the households needs in line with the Council's housing stock. This assessment will be made in full consideration of the facts available at the time. Should these change, then a new assessment may be required.

3.4- Applications

Applications for minor adaptations can be made using the on-line self-service assessment form on the Council website:

[No RRC Ask Adult Social Care - Section 1 - Havering Online Forms \(achieveservice.com\)](https://www.achieveservice.com)

Via phone on 01708 432000 or at adultsocialcare@haverling.gov.uk

3.5- Qualification

An assessment of need, by a Council Occupational Therapist, must be undertaken for all adaptations. These must identify any necessary and appropriate adaptations that are reasonable and practicable in meeting the person's needs. Following the assessment the Occupational Therapist will provide a written recommendation to the Council.

In assessing the recommendations received from the Council Occupational Therapy Service, the Council will consider in more detail a number of factors and threshold indicators as seen below, including the value of the works, to establish if it is willing to proceed. As part of this consideration, rehousing must be considered as a possibility where a suitable property exists already, an alternative property is more suitable to adapt or the property does not meet the Council's aims in relation to the best use of its housing stock.

Where necessary, further information will be gathered through site visits, case conferences and evidence from key professionals. Should any threshold indicators have been reached, and if they have, an options appraisal can be undertaken

The Council must be satisfied that the recommended works are:

- a) Reasonable, feasible and practicable with regard to the type, age and condition of the dwelling
- b) Necessary and appropriate to meet the on-going needs and prognosis of the disabled occupant, having regard for end of life care protocols.

For example, the Council would not normally provide a level access shower to a first floor flat in a block where there is no lift, or to an upper floor of an individual property.

The Council will consider the wider impact of the requested adaptation in relation to issues such as others in the household, regular visitors to the property, under-occupancy levels. Some of the Council's properties are unsuitable by design for adaptation and each application will be considered on its individual merit.

3.6- Assessment

On deciding whether it is reasonable and practicable to undertake major adaptations, the Council will consider the following threshold indicators:

- The Building/Property
 - a) The age and structural condition of the property
 - b) Existing adaptations at the property
 - c) Cost of adaptations necessary to make the property suitable
 - d) Length of time the adaptation will take and incumbent void rent loss if the tenant has to be decanted
 - e) Property constraints in terms of its adaptability
 - f) Architectural and structural characteristics of the dwelling, some of which may render certain types of adaptation inappropriate, for example properties with narrow doors, stairways and passages.

- g) If the adaptation is for a level access shower in an above ground floor flat where there is no lift or upper floor of an individual dwelling
- h) Where works would require planning permission or building regulation approval which has not been, or would not be, granted
- i) Whether adaptations make the best use of the Council's housing stock and future let ability of a property
- j) Whether adaptations affect the amenity of the area for other tenants
- k) Whether there is a 2nd reception room which could be utilised as a bedroom /bathroom when a stair lift and wet room to the 1st floor is being recommended

- Demand

- a) Property type and demand
- b) Availability of more suitable alternative accommodation
- c) A suitable, alternative adapted property is offered and refused
- d) Whether the property is a ground floor home in a block of flats
- e) Whether the property is a bungalow

- The Person/tenancy

- a) Availability of the disabled person's existing support network and carers
- b) Affordability – in cases where the spare room subsidy applies or some of the cost needs to be met by the tenant.
- c) The tenants intentions regarding the long term use of the property, such as handed in a Notice to Quit, or applying to the Housing Register to move to an appropriate sized property
- d) Where the Council is taking possession proceedings against the tenant for example, for rent arrears and anti-social behaviour
- e) Any competing needs of different members of the family which cannot be met in that particular home
- f) Whether the property and proposed adaptations will meet the long-term needs of the disabled person, such as an improving or deteriorating health condition.
- g) Current occupancy of a property, for example is it under-occupied or will it be over occupied on completion
- h) The request is to address specialist medical needs of an individual other than basic needs (Example of specialist needs: self-washing facilities, hospital beds or hoists)

Options appraisal process will automatically apply to cases that hit one or more of the following triggers but may also be referred through the process if a larger number of other threshold indicators are in question:

- a) Where the property is currently under or over-occupied or will become under or over-occupied if the adaptations are undertaken
- b) Where a possession order has been obtained or is in the process of being obtained
- c) The property cannot be adapted because of design constraints
- d) If there are likely to be excessive costs

- e) More than one major adaptation being required e.g. stair lift and Level access shower

A summary of the recommendations will be provided. Wherever possible the Council will seek to carry out the most cost effective adaptation to the property that adequately meets the applicant and households needs, this usually means a move or an adaptation that is carried out within the existing footprint and structure.

3.7 - Approval Process

The relevant Occupational Therapist will put in place minor adaptations valued at £1,000 or less. Where there are major adaptations required, or these are more complex than usual, approval is required the Major Adaptations Panel.

The Major Adaptations Panel typically will include the Professional Practice Lead for Occupational Therapy and a Senior Occupational Therapist. The referring Occupational Therapist may also be required to attend.

Approvals are as follows:

Work Required	Options Appraisal Required	Approval Required by
Minor Adaptations	Not Required	Occupational Therapist
Only One Major Adaptation	Where thresholds apply	Senior Occupational Therapist
More than one major adaptation.	Yes	Major Adaptations Panel
Large complex adaptations	Yes	Major Adaptations Panel
Disputes with tenant over proposed adaptation e.g. stair lift proposed and tenant wants an extension to live on the ground floor	Yes	Major Adaptations Panel

If adaptations qualify and are considered the most appropriate solution, the Councils Occupational Therapy Service will:

- a) Instruct the production of any schemes, costs and drawings as necessary
- b) Ensure relevant permissions are obtained
- c) Approve the undertaking of such work with relevant contractors if required
- d) Monitor and ensure quality control of the works

- e) Agree and implement where applicable the need to reclassify the property in terms of adaptations undertaken and any reduction or increase in bedrooms due to the adaptations
- f) Work with relevant partners, such as our housing maintenance service provider, to facilitate the adaptations to properties
- g) Add the recommendation to the waiting list
- h) Inform the tenant of the outcome and estimate a timeframe within 6 months of receiving the recommendation
- i) If the decision is to seek suitable alternative accommodation for a 12 month period then at the end of the 12 month period the case will be reviewed and reconsidered if suitable accommodation has not been identified
- j) If the applicant has failed to engage during the 12-month period or suitable alternative accommodation has been refused, this will form part of consideration when case is reviewed. The Council will not normally approve a Complex adaptation if an applicant has failed to cooperate and consider all housing options available

3.8- Exclusions

The following are examples of aids and adaptations that will not be funded except in the most exceptional circumstances:

- a) Adaptations for the use of or storage of mobility scooters will be in line with the Mobile Scooter policy.
- b) Vehicular access, hard standings and driveways
- c) Certain pieces of non-specialist fixtures or equipment and appliances will not be classed as aids and adaptations. In general, this applies where the fixture, equipment, or appliance has the same use for another occupant who is not disabled. For example ovens and hobs and other appliances forming part of an adapted kitchen
- d) Complete Kitchen Refurbishments
- e) Safe play areas inside or outside
- f) Loft conversions would only be considered if a suitably sized property did not exist in the Council's housing stock
- g) If the proposed adaptation results in the disabled person still being unable to access a significant proportion of the home

Exceptional circumstances may include the following:

- a) There are no other suitable properties to move to that meet the tenants needs
- b) There are no other suitable properties available to adapt to meet the tenants needs

3.9- Funding and Prioritisation of Adaptations

The annual funding of aids and adaptations is a fixed amount, with demand often exceeding the financial resources available. Therefore, the Council will prioritise the demand in a way that best meets the greatest needs. All major adaptations are subject to budget availability.

For Council Housing tenants adaptations will be funded by the Housing Revenue Account. Anything not being funded by the Council, e.g. over the maximum limit, or having a client contribution, will need to be funded by other means. In such circumstances, the Council will discuss with the tenant the options of self-funding, alternative funding available or re-housing.

Prioritisation of adaptations will be by means of a waiting list and the Occupational Therapists assessment of how critical and urgent the adaptation is. In general terms, this means dealing with the highest priority cases first and will take into account the length of time a person has been waiting.

Consideration is also given to the likely wait on the Housing Register, the respective band and adapted void property that will become available. Should funds be depleted the Council will inform tenants who are awaiting an adaptation to explain the position and give an indication as to how long they are likely to have to wait.

3.10 - Inspections

Whilst work is being undertaken, Officers will, wherever possible, visit the property to ensure that the work is being undertaken as per the specification. When the work is completed, the officer will carry out a final inspection to ensure it has been completed satisfactorily.

3.11 - Additional Rent, Service Charges and Recharges

A service charge may be applied to cover the costs of annual servicing, testing and maintenance of any specialist equipment provided as part of the works.

Service charges will cover the cost of a sinking fund, which will be established to pay for replacement equipment at the end of its useful life. These charges will be payable weekly with the rent in accordance with the Tenancy Agreement.

If the tenant is in receipt of support for their housing costs, the charge may be covered in part or in full in accordance with the benefits regulations. The cost of charges will be discussed and agreed with the tenant before any equipment is installed.

Rent increases will not normally be applied during the current tenant's tenure, however when this is renewed if on a fixed term tenancy, or a new tenant moves into the property, the weekly rent will be reassessed and increase if appropriate.

Tenants are responsible for the cost of repairs to any aids and adaptations. Any damage caused by the tenant, family members or visitors and repaired by the Havering Council will be recharged in line with the tenancy agreement

Examples of adaptations subject to weekly service charge include:

- a) Stair lift
- b) Through floor lift
- c) Tracked hoists

- d) Specialist bathing equipment

Examples of adaptations subject to weekly rent increase include:

- a) Bedroom/living room extension
- b) Loft or garage conversion

3.12 - Adaptations to Common Parts/Communal Access

Common parts relate to those areas outside of an individual dwelling but within the structure of the building, for example, entrance hallways or communal staircases to blocks of flats.

Communal access relates to shared access to a group of properties, for example, shared paths and steps. Aids and adaptations to common parts and communal areas including handrails or ramps to a shared path will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis via an options appraisal.

The Council will take into account of the health, safety and needs of all affected occupants as well as the local area needs and the most appropriate funding agreed where necessary.

3.13 - Installing Own Aids and Adaptations – Permissions

In some circumstances, tenants may wish to install their own aids and adaptations such as showers over baths or stair lifts.

Tenants will need permission from the Resident Services team and be able to evidence the need for these. Introductory tenants may also be able to undertake these works if supporting evidence is provided from an Occupational Therapist or other relevant health professional that establishes why this was not required at the time of offer.

When tenants wish to install their own aids and adaptations these will not normally be maintained by the Council, therefore the tenant will be responsible for any servicing or repairs costs that are required as a result of the adaptation. Any Planning or Building Regulation fees and costs will be met by the tenant if applicable.

Under certain circumstances, the Council may agree to take responsibility for tenant alterations and the tenant will need to agree to sign over ownership free of charge, Rent and Service Charges may be levied for the ongoing maintenance and adaptations.

In the case of tenant installed aids and adaptations, at the end of the tenancy the tenant may be required to remove them and make good any damage to the property.

3.14 - Re-Lets, Matching Need and Re-housing

Allocation of properties:

- a) Identifies the appropriate matching of tenants' needs on the housing register to adapted and void properties
- b) Requires acceptance of the adapted property 'as is', unless a new tenant's disability at a later stage require it to be altered
- c) Ensures the adapted property list will be kept up to date
- d) Considers if current adapted properties make best use of available stock
- e) Provides financial help to existing tenants where a move to more suitable accommodation is the most appropriate option
- f) Allows for direct offers of adapted properties to meet current tenants needs when a decision has been reached not to adapt the current home

A list of adapted properties detailing the type of adaptation present in a property will be kept up to date. Adverts for properties will clearly describe adaptations to interested bidders.

Allocation of properties will be based on the criteria set out in the Council's current Housing Allocation Scheme except when a direct offer is required to meet the needs of a current tenant.

It is expected that there will be appropriate matching of applicants needs on the housing register to an adapted void property to ensure best use of the Council's facilities and resources. This could mean a part adapted property could be offered that does not meet exact needs but could with additional adaptations.

The Housing Choice and Applications team will keep an Accessible Housing List, which lists applicants requiring an adapted property detailing what is required.

3.15 - Direct Offers

If a property becomes vacant and has extensive or specific adaptations, the decision may be made not to advertise the property and offer a direct let.

The decision will be made by the Housing Choice and Applications Manager to meet the needs of those on the Accessible Housing List. Properties may be offered:

- a) directly to a current tenant waiting for adaptations to their current home where the need has become urgent and an options appraisal identifies reasons not to proceed adapting the current home, or
- b) to a waiting list applicant who can make full use of the adaptations and to date no properties have become available which would suit their needs.

The Council will hold a list of all the applicants who require extensive or specific adaptations. When a property is identified as not being suitable for a routine let an attempt can will be made to match it to the applicant most in need, based on priority banding and waiting time.

The Council reserves the right to withdraw adapted properties from the lettings list as appropriate to meet urgent unmet demand.

3.16 - Letting adapted properties

When a household applies to join the Housing Register, after being assessed by an Occupational Therapist as having a specific housing need, they will be granted priority banding for any suitable adapted properties in line with the Council's Housing Allocation Scheme.

If a tenant no longer requires the adaptations and would prefer to move from an adapted property to an un-adapted home, the Council will consider awarding priority if it has someone else who needs that type of adapted home.

Future tenants must accept the adapted property 'as is', unless, after taking up the tenancy, a new recommendation identifies additional adaptations are required.

Where the adaptation is preventing the property from being Re-Let, after two advertising cycles and direct offers being made the Council may consider offering it to applicants without a need for the adaptations. Applications to remove the adaptation will not usually be approved unless it will detrimentally harm the future tenant's ability to access or use their home.

3.17 - Re-housing current tenants

For all requests for major adaptations, the Council will discuss with the tenant the option of a transfer to alternative accommodation that better meets the needs of the disabled person.

This will be done on receipt of an Occupational Therapist recommendation and could include arranging a suitable alternative home within the Council's stock, for which a direct offer or medical priority may be given.

Examples of why this may be considered:

- a) A vacant property which is already suitably adapted to meet the essential needs of the tenant can be identified
- b) A vacant property which is more suitable to be adapted to meet the essential needs of the tenant can be identified
- c) An extension can be avoided by a move to a larger property
- d) The current property is not suitable for a particular adaptation.
- e) Adaptations to a property may reduce its potential to be let in the future.
- f) There is under occupation by at least one bedroom or more

Where it is considered that a move to more suitable accommodation would be possible and/or is the best solution, a priority banding will be given to the tenant to enable them to move more quickly.

If suitable accommodation is available or likely to become available, then the tenant would be expected to accept the alternative property.

Once an offer has been accepted on an alternative property, the tenant will be expected to take up the tenancy and move in to this property as soon as is practical.

If a tenant refuses two reasonable offers of alternative accommodation, the Council will inform the tenant that they may be excluded from any further considerations under such circumstances, the Council may also discuss with the tenant the options of self-funding or alternative funding.

In cases where re-housing is being looked at as the approved/preferred option, then this must be possible within a reasonable timescale (based on an assessment of risk and availability of accommodation). If it is not possible to find suitable alternative accommodation within a reasonable time, adaptations to the existing property or another property will be considered. A reasonable timescale is deemed to be no longer than 12 months from the date the decision not to adapt has been made.

If any additional aids and adaptations are required to the new property these will not be undertaken until confirmation of the tenants intention to move has been received.

3.18 - Financial assistance towards moving

Any move will be made in line with the Housing Allocation Scheme. Havering Housing Services will not normally provide any financial assistance to move home, unless a specific criteria is met as a result of the move, such as with downsizing.

More information on this can be found via the following link; [Money for Council tenants moving into a smaller property | Housing exchanges and downsizing for Council tenants | The London Borough Of Havering.](#)

The discretionary housing payment can assist with moving costs in certain circumstances - [Payments | Money advice and benefits help | The London Borough Of Havering](#))

3.19 - Adapting Vacant Properties

There may be occasions where a property would be suitable if additional adaptations were installed.

However, under the Council's current allocation scheme unless a property meets the needs of the household they would not be nominated to it. This does limit the choices disabled applicants and current tenants have to move. If adaptations were undertaken in a vacant property, they may not be suitable for all. Adaptations are recommended according to the individual's needs and are not a generic assumption.

If the Council is considering offering applicants or a current tenant a vacant un-adapted or partially adapted property that may require further adaptations to address needs, the Occupational Therapist will firstly assess the suitability of the property to meet essential needs.

The priorities of the Occupational Therapy Service do not always result in an immediate response to such requests. However, where possible this will be pursued only when it would not hold up a letting or result in void loss.

Once the Occupational Therapist has made their assessment of a vacant property, the Council reserves the right to withdraw any offer of accommodation if the property is not deemed suitable. The tenant will be advised regarding the outcome and of their alternative housing options.

If major adaptations are required and the property is deemed suitable, some or all of the adaptation work will be carried out as a priority where possible and practical, to minimise void times.

The tenant will be expected to take up the tenancy as soon as is practical. If the tenant is able to live in the property whilst awaiting some or all of the adaptation work they will be expected to do so. If minor adaptations are required, the tenant will be expected to take up the tenancy prior to the adaptations being carried out. For information on [claiming benefits for two homes - Shelter England](#)

Prior to undertaking major works, applicants who are existing Council tenants will be required to sign a tenancy agreement for the newly allocated property. The property they currently reside in will then be treated as a decant property. Upon completion of works the tenant will be required to vacate the decant property and move into their new property. They will have no rights to remain in the decant property.

3.20 - Future occupation and successive applications

Once major or extensive adaptations have been completed at a property it is expected that the tenant requiring the adaptation will continue to live at the address, unless circumstances do not allow this (for example, no longer able to use the property due to a worsening medical condition and further adaptations are not possible).

If a tenant applies to be re-housed, unless their circumstances have changed, they would normally be considered to be adequately housed and would have no priority on the housing register.

Tenants requesting consideration to undertake a mutual exchange to a property without adaptations when it is clear they have been provided for them in their current property will be refused consent if they chose to move to an un-adapted/unsuitable property.

Where significant work has taken place at a property and the person(s) requiring the adaptation(s) dies or is unable to remain at the property and permanently resides elsewhere, the remaining family members may be asked to move to alternative accommodation to allow the adapted property to be let to a disabled tenant or applicant.

Similarly, where the disabled person remains after death of a partner in a joint tenancy, the person may be required to move to alternative adapted accommodation if, for example, the property is classed as under-occupied.

3.21 - Prioritising adaptations

Wherever possible minor adaptations will be completed in date order, based upon the application date. Circumstances beyond the control of the Council, such as a need to order specialist equipment and contractor availability could impact upon this.

Once approved, the Council will also seek to complete complex adaptations and major adaptations in chronological order, based upon the date the referral was received from the Occupational Therapist. However, delays in identifying a suitable property, in ordering specialist equipment and in finding a suitable contractor could impact on this.

Cases identified by the Occupational Therapist (or other officers/ agencies) as an urgent priority will be escalated appropriately.

4. Dispute resolution

If a tenant is dissatisfied with an offer made, they can request a review of this and will need to do so within 21 days of the offer. A Senior Officer not involved in the original decision will normally conduct the review.

If the tenant remains dissatisfied with the outcome or they wish to complain about the quality of service or the process involved they have received they can submit a formal complaint. More information on this can be found here:

<https://www.havering.gov.uk/complaints>.

It is the Council's aim to set up a panel made of a mix of tenants and senior officers to assess any decisions made in relation to adaptations that the affected tenant does not agree with.

5. Data

Data on adaptations completed will be shared between Adult Social Care and Housing Services. Any adaptations to a property will be recorded on Keystone for officers to view.

6. Equal Opportunities statement

All applicants will be invited to provide details of ethnic origin, sexuality, disability and other equalities information.

Provision of this information will not be obligatory or a requirement. Such information however will help the Council monitor the number and types of households with protected characteristics reporting a housing need and their position under the

policy. Therefore, applicants will be encouraged to supply the relevant information to be used for this purpose.

Equalities data will be kept and monitored on a regular basis to ensure adaptations are being assessed fairly. This policy itself will be monitored to ensure it does not operate in ways that discriminate against, or unfairly disadvantage, any particular group.

The Council will seek to ensure that this policy is operated in a manner that is fair to all sections of the community. The information provided will be kept confidential and treated with respect at all times.

7. Data Protection Statement

The Council takes personal privacy matters very seriously and will never share the individual's personal data without their prior knowledge, unless required to do so by law.

For full details about how the Council protects personal data, please visit Havering Council Data Protection policy.

8. Dissemination and communication of this policy

Housing Services will consult with all affected stakeholders, directly or indirectly, to ensure this policy fulfils its purpose to be clear and transparent.

This policy will be made available internally and externally in hard copy and electronic versions, as well as various formats – such as easy read, multi-lingual, braille and audio - upon request.

9. Implementation of this policy

This policy will take effect from May 2023.

Responsibility for the successful implementation of this policy will be with Havering Council's Assistant Director of Property Services.

10. Monitoring and review of this policy

In the interests of continuous improvement, this policy will be reviewed after the first year, then every three years, to ensure it remains relevant, up-to-date and fit-for-purpose for the Council and the residents of Havering.

For any advice or assistance concerning this policy, please email the occupational Therapy Service at adultsocialcare@haverling.gov.uk.