

SAXON WEALD

PROPERTY ADAPTATIONS POLICY

First Approved: August 2005

Author: Kath Hicks

Last Revision: April 2022

Next Review: April 2025

1.0 Introduction and aim

- 1.1 Many of our customers may require adaptations or alterations to their homes in order to assist them with day-to-day living or to support their wellbeing. These can have a significant positive impact on an individual's quality of life, helping them maintain their independence or enabling them to remain in their home for longer.
- 1.2 Wherever possible and practical, Saxon Weald will facilitate the provision of adaptations or alterations in customers' homes and will meet the cost of these as set out in this policy.
- 1.3 This policy is supported by the Property Adaptations Procedure and associated processes.

2.0 Definitions and scope

- 2.1 For the purposes of this policy, an 'adaptation' is a modification, alteration or addition to the physical fabric of a home to help restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence or dignity for individuals and their families.
- 2.2 This policy applies to customers who live in rented properties. Whilst we are not responsible for adaptations in leasehold properties, we will make reasonable adjustments in any communal areas under the provisions of the Equalities Act 2010.
- 2.3 Adaptations are commonly divided into two categories, minor and major (based loosely on cost and the extent of work required). 'Minor' being small adaptations such as lever taps, grab rails or window winders and 'major' being physical changes to the fabric of the home such as widening doorways, installing a wet room or building an extension.
- 2.4 Equipment that comes under the heading of 'telecare' (health monitors, activity sensors, etc.) is not included in our definition of adaptations. This is because such

equipment needs to be used in conjunction with a relevant monitoring system and the customer's care plan, for which we are not responsible.

3.0 Legal and regulatory requirements and good practice

Legal and regulatory requirements

- 3.1 There is no mandatory requirement for housing associations to fund property adaptations but there is an expectation from the Regulator of Social Housing that such a service should be provided. The Home Standard within the regulatory framework requires registered providers to have '*a prudent, planned approach to repairs and maintenance of homes and communal areas*', which should include adaptations and that '*Registered providers shall co-operate with relevant organisations to provide an adaptations service that meets tenants' needs.*'¹
- 3.2 The Equality Act 2010² states that any service provider, including private landlords and local authorities, must make reasonable adjustments if requested to do so.
- 3.3 The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 provides for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), administered by local authorities. These grants are generally used to fund major adaptations in our properties, although they are means tested (customers may be required to contribute to the cost of the works subject to a test of financial resources).

Good practice guidance

- 3.4 'Meeting the home adaptation needs of older people' issued by Local Government Association 2020.
- 3.5 'Your rights to accessible and adaptable housing in England' issued by Equality and Human Rights Commission 2018.

4.0 Policy

- 4.1 We will fund and arrange for the installation of minor adaptations directly following a request made by the customer/member of staff.
- 4.2 Where a major adaptation is required, we will support the customer to make a DFG application to the local authority who will then fund and arrange the works.
- 4.3 We will use the services of an independent Occupational Therapist to provide advice and guidance, or to speed up customer assessments where excessive waiting times are detrimental to customer wellbeing.
- 4.4 We promote the availability of our adaptations service and DFGs through a variety of media including newsletters and our website.

¹ Regulator of Social Housing Homes Standard 2012, Section 2.2 Repairs and Maintenance

² Equality Act 2010 Section 36(1), Paragraph 2, Schedule 4, and Section 190

- 4.5 We will maintain, repair and service adaptations that have been installed by us or a local authority. Where adaptations are funded privately by the customer, or other organisation, we will advise customers to take out relevant maintenance and breakdown cover.
- 4.6 Saxon Weald is committed to ensuring that disabled people are not disadvantaged in accessing its services. To this end, we will make reasonable adjustments for them in the implementing of this policy.

5.0 Permission for major adaptations

- 5.1 We aim to give permission for all requests for major adaptations. This is in recognition of the positive impact they can have on the life of someone who is disabled, frail or has a life-limiting illness.
- 5.2 However, we also recognise that some major adaptations are not always appropriate in some properties. Where a major adaptation would limit the future use of the property, cause a risk to others, or result in significant future cost, we may seek to work with the customer to see if we are able to find them more suitable accommodation to meet their needs.
- 5.3 The same applies where requests are made for major adaptations by customers who are significantly under-occupying their homes. The most common example being an elderly person living in a family-sized house who needs a ground floor bathroom adaptation or extension. We offer specialist support and advice around different housing options where a move to a bungalow or retirement scheme could provide a more suitable home. This would also free up a larger property to let to a family in housing need. Obviously, in such cases, we take careful account of the customer's needs and preferences.

6.0 Re-letting adapted properties

- 6.1 Where properties that have had major adaptations become void, Saxon Weald will always, in the first instance, seek an applicant whose needs can be met by that particular property. This includes working with local authority partners to identify suitable applicants.
- 6.2 Where there are no applicants who meet the needs for the property, we may need to remove the adaptations in order to bring the property to the lettable standard.

7.0 Value for money

- 7.1 Adaptations bring significant social value in helping to promote independence and sustaining of tenancies.

8.0 Monitoring and review

- 8.1 This policy will be reviewed at least every three years to ensure that it reflects the needs of our customers, good practice, and changes to legislation or regulation.

9.0 Equality and diversity

- 9.1 Equality and diversity affect all aspects of our business and, as such, its principles are integral to everything we do. As a landlord and an employer, Saxon Weald aims to recognise and respond positively to people's differences, while providing equality of opportunity in relation to the services and careers we provide and support.
- 9.2 This means that no person or group of people, either working for Saxon Weald or seeking housing, services, employment or contracts from us, will be treated less favourably because of their or their partner's, family's, friend's or associated person's protected characteristics, which are: age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race and ethnicity, nationality, immigration status, religion or belief, gender and sexual orientation. This includes individuals either already serving on or applying to join our Board.

Version	Amendment	By	Date
2	Update	Steven Dennis	Aug-16
3	Complete re-write of policy to include more emphasis on disabled facilities grant and permission for approving DFG works.	Les Marjoram	Jan-19
4	Three-year review with updates to reflect changes to legal and regulatory requirements and good practice.	Kath Hicks	Apr-22