

Thrive Homes Policy

Department name:	Property
Policy/Procedure name:	Aids and Adaptations
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1. Introduction

1.1 This policy outlines how Thrive Homes will:

- Provide tenants in all local authority areas with a minor adaptations service (up to £1,000).

Provide tenants only included in the stock transfer from Three Rivers District Council (TRDC) aids and adaptations up to a cap of £10,000 to allow our tenants to remain in their home and live independently. This cap will be per property over a five year period.

- Provide a service that closely follows the government guidelines for a fair application of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to ensure that all applicants receive an equal service.
- Tenants will be means tested for a contribution to all or part of the work based on the household's income.
- Prioritising and fast tracking cases where there is an urgent need.
- Offer Housing Options advice to those tenants who may require more suitable accommodation which can not be met through adaptations to their home. (tenants will be checked for under occupancy)
- Maintain and update a register on QL of tenants with aids and adaptations and requiring aids and adaptations through the Customer team
- Where a property becomes empty that is equipped with specialist adaptations, this will be considered for recycling to another property; or the property will be advertised as an adapted property.
- Work with key partners to ensure referrals, assessments and re-housing opportunities are maximised.

1.2 Policy Statement

An effective aids and adaptations service is essential in order to meet the needs of our tenants. The aim of this policy is to

“Allow Thrive Homes’ tenants to have access to minor aids and adaptation where it is cost effective and feasible to do so, to enable them to stay living in their home safely and independently. Where this is not possible, Thrive Homes will work in partnership with local authorities and other providers of social housing to obtain a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) or match suitable properties to meet the tenants’ needs. Thrive Homes will set an annual budget dedicated for the expenditure on provision of aids and adaptations, and maintenance of existing adaptations and fittings. Thrive Homes’ tenants residing in the ex. TRDC stock transfer properties will be offered a standard adaptations service for aids and adaptations up to £10,000, to enable Thrive Homes to meet the requirements of the “Transfer Promise”, until such time that the Transfer Promise for aids and adaptations ends (31 March 2038).

2 Purpose

2.1 Thrive Homes is committed to providing a high quality, effective and needs sensitive service by:

- Setting an annual aids and adaptations budget that Thrive Homes will spend up to the maximum authorised budget each financial year. Spend against budget will be monitored and the budget reviewed as necessary.
- Providing clear information and advice on how tenants can make use of the adaptations service including the options that are available to them such as Housing Options advice, and accepting tenants’ own referrals, fast track cases where there is an urgent need.
- Thrive Homes will operate a discretionary system of installing **minor** aids and adaptations up to a given value (£1,000), set annually, without the recommendation of an Occupational Therapist (OT) in line with the College of OT’s good practice guidance “*Minor Adaptations without Delay*”.
- Ensuring the OT assessment sets out the needs of the person and how this can be best met, up to the agreed value of £1,000 and £10,000 for tenants in ex TRDC stock transfer properties , using a team of professionals who know how the adaptations process operates.
- Ensuring the focus of the service is meeting the needs of the individual.
- Making best use of all available resources and providing value for money in the use of funding by using approved contractors with schedule of rates, and ensuring all work is carried out the required specification and high standard.

- Thrive Homes will work with the relevant local authority and the Customer Team to ensure the best use of housing stock by aiming to let adapted properties to those who have the greatest need.
- To have in place suitable arrangements to recycle adaptations where this is possible.
- Take account of any relevant legislation and regulatory guidance of directive.
- Keep accurate records of applicants for adaptations to allow effective monitoring of performance and service standards to regularly assess demand for the service.

3 Scope

- 3.1 This Policy relates to all tenants of Thrive Homes, and for applicants who are bidding for our homes through the Choice Based Lettings system. The part of the policy that relates to communal areas additionally applies to leaseholders. Free standing aids are dealt with by Social Services as described in paragraph 7.4.

4. References/Links to Other Policies

- 4.1 Tenancy Agreement
- 4.2 Allocations, Lettings and Voids Policy (Previously Under occupation Policy)
- 4.3 Allocations, Lettings and Voids Policy (Previously Housing Options Policy)
- 4.4 Thrive Homes Transfer Promises
- 4.5 Equality Act 2010
- 4.6 Safeguarding and vulnerable persons Policy (Previously Vulnerability Policy)

5. Equality Impact Assessment

- 5.1 Thrive Homes will ensure this policy is applied fairly and consistently to all our tenants, when applying this Policy Thrive Homes will act sensitively towards the diverse needs of individuals and communities. The impact of the policy is assessed to be beneficial to those requiring adaptations but may in some circumstances require tenants to move to meet their needs.

6. Definitions

- 6.1 **Minor adaptations** are adaptations that are predicted to cost less than the minor adaptations cost threshold (£1,000 as at 01/08/2017) or that are listed in the table in paragraph 7.10. The minor adaptations cost threshold is updated as set out in this policy.

- 6.2 **Standard adaptations** are adaptations predicted to cost more than the minor adaptations cost threshold (£1,000) but less than the DFG cost threshold (£30,000 as at 01/01/2018).the DFG cost threshold is updated as set out in this policy:_.

For tenants not living in ex TRDC stock, standard adaptations may be obtained via the DFG which is obtained from the relevant local authority.

For tenants in ex TRDC stock, standard adaptations will be undertaken up to a threshold of £10,000, after this sum applicants will have to apply for a DFG grant.

- 6.3 **Disabled Facilities Grant** funded adaptations are adaptations predicted to cost an amount equal to or in excess of the DFG cost threshold (£30,000 as at 11/01/2018). The DFG cost threshold is updated as set out in this policy.

- 6.4 Occupational Therapist (OT) - someone with relevant training working with people facing physical, mental and social disabilities to help them do the things they want to do.

7. The Policy

Types of assistance

- 7.1 We will operate two types of assistance of adaptations to property based on the predicted costs of the work involved for all tenants within local authority areas which we operate in apart from the TRDC area where we will offer three types of assistance for adaptations to properties. In all cases the work must be designed to maintain the applicant's (or family members) independence safeguard their safety or facilitate their discharge from hospital.
- 7.2 The two types of assistance are **minor adaptations** where no OT's assessment or means test is required and secondly DFG funded applications where an application is made to the relevant local authority for assistance.
- 7.3 The third type of assistance offered directly to Thrive Homes' tenants in ex TRDC stock until such time that the Transfer Promise ends (31 March 2038) is **Standard adaptations** which require occupational therapist assessment and means tested. All tenants outside of the TRDC area can apply for standard adaptations via a DFG by contacting their local authority.

Referral Process

- 7.4 Tenants should apply to us in the first instance. We will direct them to other agencies such as their local authority if this is necessary to progress their application for assistance.
- 7.5 Residents requesting free-standing aids will be referred to Social Services for assistance. Freestanding aids can include, for example, hoists, toilet frames or bed leavers. Following an assessment, Health and Community Services (formerly Adult Care Services), may give a 'prescription' for a particular item redeemable at an accredited retailer.
- 7.6 If Thrive Homes anticipate that the work will be a standard adaptation (Only tenants in ex TRDC stock) or DFG funded adaptation we will ask them to apply for an OT's assessment from the relevant local authority or alternatively qualified OT.
- 7.7 Applicants requiring a disabled facilities grant funded adaptation will be referred to the relevant local authority.

Budget Setting

- 7.8 We will set a budget for adaptations each year in accordance with the "Transfer Promises" recognising that the agreement allows for a reduction in

the budget from April 2013 onwards. We will apply the appropriate inflation adjustments as set out in the transfer agreement.

- 7.9 We will adjust periodically the various cost threshold for minor adaptations, standard adaptations and DFG funded adaptations in order to keep them up to date.

Minor Adaptations

- 7.10 Thrive Homes will operate a discretionary system of installing minor aids and adaptations up to the minor adaptations cost threshold without the recommendation of an OT. This is in line with the College of OT's good practice guidance "Minor Adaptations without Delay". The limit at the 1st January 2018 is £1,000. We will ensure of staff are sufficiently trained to make the relevant assessments for this type of grant.
- 7.11 The following list taken from the good practice guidance illustrates the type of adaptation will normally be fitted under this part of the policy.

1. Visual Impairment needs	Staircase applications e.g. contrast nosings External lighting
2. Hearing Impairment needs	Flashing doorbells Smoke alarm alerts
3. Rails	Main entrance support rail Grab-rails Newel rails Hand-rails Stair hand-rails
4. Access	Internal door threshold ramps Improved access and widened pathway to main entrance Door entry intercom
5. Kitchens and bathrooms	Window opening equipment Kitchen lever taps Kitchen cupboard handles Bathroom lever taps W.C. lever flush handles Bathroom grab-rails
6. General needs	Door and wall protectors Alter heights of electric faceplates
7. Safety matters	Window winders

- 7.12 Where the total cost of the minor aids and adaptations for the same applicant exceeds £1,000 for the same property, or where there are several requests for minor aids and adaptations over a rolling period of 12 months we reserve the right to refer the applicant for an OT's assessment before commencing any works. This is so we can assess whether major adaptation or a transfer to a more suitable property would be a better solution to the applicants needs.

Standard Adaptations – Only available directly from Thrive Homes to tenants in ex. Three Rivers District Council stock, otherwise via a DFG for all tenants with other local authority areas.

- 7.13 Standard adaptations are works anticipated to cost more than £1,000 but less than £10,000. Typical adaptations include level access showers, stair lifts and the installation of low level or adjustable height work tops and cupboards in kitchens. All such works require an occupational therapists assessment.
- 7.14 Adaptations in relation to the use of ride on scooters are considered standard adaptations but will only be considered where no alternative arrangements are possible - for example; requests for hard standings or storage sheds.

Disabled Facility Grant Funded Applications – Applicable to all Thrive Homes tenants

- 7.15 Where the approved works are anticipated to cost £10,000 (ex TRDC tenants) or £1,000 (All other Thrive Homes' tenants) or more applicants will have to apply for and receive a DFG before works will go ahead. We will assist our tenants to make their application and contribute on the completion of the works.

Means Testing

- 7.16 For standard adaptations we will carry out a means test to determine whether we will require a contribution towards the work. The means test will be the same as that which is used for applicants for a DFG. We will not charge for the means test but if the outcome is that a contribution is required then works will not commence until the relevant contribution is received.
- 7.17 Applicants who seek funding via a DFG will be means tested by the appropriate local authority.
- 7.18 We will not means test minor adaptations or any adaptations for children under the age of 19.

Suitability and Exclusions

- 7.19 The following factors to be considered before work can be agreed:
- The suitability of the property for adaptation, i.e. type of construction and design of the property.
 - The size of the accommodation relative to the size of the household, i.e. issues of under or over occupation.
 - The availability of suitable alternative accommodation for the disabled person and their household.
- 7.20 Adaptations will not generally be carried out
- 1) In bathrooms of properties in flats at the 1st floor or above, where there is no lift. Alternative accommodation will be sought at ground level if necessary.
 - 2) In a property which is subject to a preserved Right to Buy or Right to Acquire application.
 - 3) Where the tenant is awaiting transfer.
- 7.21 Adaptations will not usually be carried out to a property where it is under-occupied by one bedroom or more. This is so that Thrive Homes can free up accommodation for occupation by those in need of larger homes. In such cases, Thrive Homes will consider offering a move as a direct let to more suitable accommodation where the necessary adaptation is either present, unnecessary or can be made. Any such proposal will be decided on a case by case basis taking into account the needs of the individual tenant and their household and other factors such as whether the adaptation is structural, the costs of reinstatement and the availability and suitability of alternative accommodation.'
- 7.22 If such accommodation is anticipated to be available within a reasonable time from the date of application for the adaptation (normally within 6 months) the tenant would be expected to accept the alternative property. Where no suitable property becomes available the adaptation application will be reviewed. Each case will be considered on its own merits.
- 7.23 If a tenant refuses a reasonable offer of alternative accommodation, we may refuse to undertake the requested adaptation(s). Under such circumstances, we will discuss with the tenant the options of self funding, funding via a Disabled Facilities Grant or via charitable funding.

Servicing Maintenance and Replacement of Equipment

- 7.24 Thrive Homes will take responsibility for servicing and maintaining adaptations.

Removal of Adaptations at Change of Tenancy

- 7.25 Where adaptations have been carried out to a property designated for elderly people or disabled people, these will not normally be reversed e.g. where a bath has been replaced with a level access shower.
- 7.26 However where family accommodation has been adapted, Thrive Homes in partnership with the relevant local authority and our choice based lettings partners will attempt to find an applicant with similar needs for the adaptations for the property and if unable to find one the adaptations will remain in the property unless it is impractical to leave them in situ. Thrive Homes decision on each case is final.

Adaptations No Longer Required By Existing Tenant or a Member of Their Family

- 7.27 Where adaptations are no longer required, we will consider removing the adaptation if it may be used in another home e.g. a stair lift, otherwise, it will be left in place.
- 7.28 Thrive Homes will use Ground 9 of the 1988 Housing Act when seeking possession of a property that is adapted and the current residents have no need for the adaptations. We will only do this when we offer suitable alternative accommodation to the displaced residents and we can demonstrate that there is a prospective tenant who requires the adaptations incorporated into the property in question. When seeking possession under ground 9 the outgoing tenant will be eligible for assistance with moving as set out in the under occupation policy irrespective of whether they are under occupying the property or not.

Recycling of Equipment

- 7.29 Wherever possible, Thrive Homes will recycle unwanted equipment either for use in another property, or to local recycling projects.

Tenants Wishing To Transfer after Adaptations Have Been Carried Out

- 7.30 Following a standard or DFG funded adaptation we would normally expect the customer to remain in the property for a minimum of five years. However there may be exceptions where the individual's needs have changed and the occupational therapist and Thrive Homes agree a move is necessary e.g. the family size changes or the applicant needs to move into supported housing.
- 7.31 If the new home requires any adaptations to meet the applicant's specific needs, we will assess and adapt the property in accordance with the terms of this Aids and Adaptations policy.
- 7.32 Tenants who choose to undertake a mutual exchange with another tenant and in doing so move from an adapted property to one that needs adaptation would be expected to fund any adaptations themselves.

Priority between New Applicants & Transfers

- 7.33 Adapted properties which become available will be offered through the Choice Based Lettings scheme, to applicants who have a need for the adaptation. Priority between new applicants and transferring applicants will be determined by housing need.
- 7.34 Applicants will be expected to bid on properties that are already adapted in the first instance, or on properties that will meet their needs at least in the short term.

Self Funded Aids and Adaptations

- 7.35 Under the terms of the tenancy, permission in writing is required for any adaptation a tenant wishes to make to their home before they have the work carried out. A condition of the permission is that adaptations normally have to be removed or made good when the tenant terminates their tenancy. Aids and adaptations approved in this way will not normally be maintained by Thrive Homes.

Adaptations to shared or communal areas

- 7.36 We will consider applications from residents for adaptations to shared areas within our properties or to improve access and egress to or from our properties containing shared parts. Each case will be treated on its own merits. We reserve the right to charge/recharge residents including long lessees for the cost of such works. We will consult with the residents affected by such works prior to commencing the works.
- 7.37 When Thrive Homes is planning shared space improvements with residents we will ensure that the needs of disabled residents and visitors are met where possible.

Appointing Consultant Staff

- 7.38 Where necessary we will appoint any specialist staff required to design and supervise aids and adaptations in accordance with our procurement policy.

Training of Staff

- 7.39 We will ensure that all in house staff assessing or installing adaptations are appropriately trained or qualified.

Information for Applicants

- 7.40 We will publish information for applicants to help them access this policy

8. Monitoring Delivery

- 8.1 Monitoring of the policy is the responsibility of the Assistant Director – Property.
- 8.2 All adaptations which have been carried out in properties will be recorded on the Asset Management System, Keystone, and be flagged on the Housing Management System; QL.

9. Review

- 9.1 This policy will be reviewed every five years or sooner if a change to the relevant legislation requires it. The next scheduled review will be January 2023.