

Durham Dales Home Improvement Agency

Public Sector Adaptations Policy & Procedure

The Durham Dales Home Improvement Agency is committed to the removal of all barriers preventing access to our services arising from ethnicity, religion, geographic location, special needs, language differences, learning difficulties, sexual orientation, gender, age or disability.

We can produce this document in other formats such as Braille, in large print, on audio tape, on CD Rom, or in other languages. You can request a copy from the Marketing and Communications Manager at Durham County Council on (01388) 761 958.

Public Sector Disabled Adaptations

Durham County Council is fully committed to providing an excellent service to its customers. The delivery of Public Sector Adaptations is an integral part of the functions delivered by the Durham Dales Home Improvement Agency and is designed to assist those customers who would benefit from an adaptation to their home to enable them to live more comfortably. A customer's needs may change over a period of time and in some circumstances the customer will benefit from an adaptation to meet their own individual needs.

This policy and procedure covers all aspects of disabled adaptation work and is limited to properties managed by Dale & Valley Homes.

Financial Information

There is no upper grant aid limit for works to Dale and Valley properties. Any work that has a cost of £10,000 or less will be carried out as a routine adaptation and will be completed in line with this policy.

Any work that is expected to go over £10,000 will be discussed with the relevant parties which will include the Occupational Therapist, Dale and Valley Homes, Durham County Council and the customer to establish if a move to an alternative property may be more beneficial and where appropriate the needs of the applicant will be taken fully into account.

Adaptations to Dale & Valley properties can be categorised into Major or Minor Works. Major Works are those that will cost in excess of £1,000 whilst minor will be for those essential works that are under £1,000.

Minor adaptations will not remain on a waiting list, instead they will be released within 15 working days. Major repairs will follow the procedure outlined within this policy.

Eligibility Criteria

That the relevant works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the applicant, and is supported by a referral from an appointed Occupational Therapist employed by Durham County Council.

It must be reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age, value and condition of the dwelling or building. In reaching a decision on whether or not it is reasonable and practical to carry out the work.

- i) Any architectural and structural characteristics of the dwelling which may render certain types of adaptations inappropriate.
- ii) The practicalities of carrying out adaptations to properties with narrow doorways, halls and passages or narrow and / or steep flights of steps or stairs. These may make wheelchair use in and around the dwelling difficult, making continued occupation of the dwelling open to question.
- iii) Conservation and planning considerations and restraints.

- iv) The impact on other occupants of proposed works, which will reduce or limit the existing facilities or amenities of the dwelling. In this respect, a material consideration will be whether the property (post adapted) will become overcrowded. Wherever possible, adaptations should be accommodated via internal conversion works, rather than by property extensions. Other occupants will be expected to utilise living rooms and/or dining rooms for sleeping purposes, if applicable.

Eligible Works

Disabled Adaptation Work

- Ensure adequate provision for the customer of key areas of the home, including ease of access to living room, kitchen, bedroom and bathroom. This includes ensuring ease of access to enter and leave the property.
- Ensure that bathing, food preparation, living and sleeping areas meet the customer's needs.
- Ensure that the building is safe for the customer and for others within the property.
- Improving any heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the customer or, if there is no existing heating system in the dwelling or any such system is unsuitable for use by the customer, providing a heating system suitable to meet the occupant's needs.

In respect to the works mentioned above, the adaptation proposal shall take into account the medical prognosis of the person with a disability, particularly where the prognosis implies degeneration in the short term. In these cases, extensive works may be impractical and alternative measures may be considered which aid the comfort and well-being of the disabled person. Where this arises, the full co-operation of Social Care & Health Department and the disabled person must be sought.

In the event of a property becoming vacant that has previously been adapted, Durham County Council Social Care & Health Department will be contacted to try and seek a referral. If no referral is made within 5 working days the Council will remove the adaptations and revert the property back into its original condition ready to re-let. Every effort must be taken by both the Housing Services Department and Regeneration Department to ensure adapted properties are utilised correctly. In the event of an adaptation being removed from the property efforts will be made to re-use the equipment if practicable.

Limitations to Works

- i) Work will not be carried out to adapt a customer's property if they have been offered an alternative property that will meet the needs of the customer. When making an offer of an alternative property this will be done in partnership with the Customer and the Occupational Therapist.
- ii) Any proposal for an extension to a property will be considered and will be discussed with all relevant parties including the customer and Dale and Valley Homes.

- iii) If the property is not suitable for the required adaptation work an alternative property will be considered to meet the needs of the customer.

Prioritisation of Applicants

The prioritisation of applicants for Dale and Valley Properties will be determined by the relevant Occupational Therapist within Durham County Council.

The prioritisation will be in date order, based on the date of receiving a full and valid application. Any cases that are deemed to be urgent will be classified as being an urgent case and will be placed to the top of the waiting list and will be assessed by the HIA with within 5 working days with an aim of work commencing within 15 Working days.

Every effort will be made to ensure that these time scales are achieved to benefit our customers.

Decent Homes Programme Integration

We recognise the importance of limiting the amount of disturbance to a customer when adaptation works is scheduled. Through effective partnership working with Dale & Valley Homes we will ensure that any adaptation work that is required is completed in parallel with Dale & Valley Homes Decent Homes Programme.

Dale & Valley Homes have access to the database of applicants addresses that have applied for adaptation work, when a property is to undergo improvements under the Decent Homes Programme, then the adaptation will be completed at the same time to ensure a seamless service is delivered.

In this instance, Dale & Valley Homes will inform the Durham Dales Home Improvement Agency that Decent Homes Work will commence, this enables all relevant applications to be completed and for specialist equipment to be ordered.

Dale & Valley Customers Taking on a New Tenancy

In many instances a customer may be offered a property that will require some adaptations to enable them to move into the property and to live there comfortably. In this instance Dale & Valley Homes will as a matter of course contact the Occupational Therapist to receive their input and to advice the customer.

Where the customer accepts the property on the proviso that the adaptations are completed, a request will be made by the Occupational Therapist to the Durham Dales Home Improvement Agency. Additionally Dale & Valley Homes will notify the Durham Dales Home Improvement Agency of the case.

Upon receipt of the referral the adaptation will be conducted in line with that of an Urgent Priority as the adaptation will be essential in allowing that customer to move into the property and avoid any risks such as the health and safety of the applicant.

Provision of Professional, technical and Administrative Services for Applicants.

Provision

Durham Dales Home Improvement Agency is a part of Durham County Council and is established to be a focussed and dedicated service to assist customers.

The remit of the Durham Dales Home Improvement Agency is to carry out:

- Initial general and impartial advice
- Funding options for non grant eligible work
- Obtaining specialist reports if necessary
- Submitting applications for planning consents and building regulations where necessary
- Assistance in completing complex application forms and carrying out test of resources to determine a clients likely contribution towards the cost of the works
- Obtaining estimates from reputable and vetted contractors
- Submitting full valid applications to the Local Authority for approval
- Organising commencement of works and supervising the work as it Proceeds
- Ensuring satisfactory completion of works
- Preparing contractors payments
- Liaising with the Local Authority grant officers throughout the process.

Fees

The Home Improvement Agency charges a fee for the services it offers, which is based on a percentage of the cost of works carried out. This fee forms part of the grant application therefore is not payable by the client.

The current fee levied is 10% (£50.00 minimum) of the total cost of the eligible works.

**Private Sector Grant Applications Which Require Determination by the Councils
Relevant Committee.**

Applications that fall outside the scope of the Council's adopted Private Sector Grant Policies

Applications from owners or qualifying tenants who are:-
Elected members of the Council; or
Full or part-time employees of the Council

Cases where the applicant submits a written representation in response to a grant determination, stating his/her exact reasons for being aggrieved at the determination.