

POLICY TITLE	Aids and Adaptations
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OFFICER RESPONSIBLE FOR REVIEW	Julie McNaughton

1 POLICY STATEMENT

- 1.1 Erimus Housing (Erimus) and Tees Valley Housing (TVH) is committed to provide an inclusive service to clients who are experiencing difficulties in their current accommodation, due to a long-term medical or mobility condition that restricts the normal access and use of facilities within that accommodation. The focus of this approach is to provide solutions for people experiencing a disabling environment in order to restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for all individuals and their families.
- 1.2 Erimus and TVH aim to provide an efficient, timely and sensitive adaptations service through the targeting of investment works in housing that can be recycled and sustained for future households that require adaptations. This process will be achieved by offering a priority re-housing service to clients into accommodation that is already adapted and will meet their long-term needs.
- 1.3 Erimus and TVH adopts a customer focused approach to all aspects of our service delivery and we will consult, inform and involve residents through all stages of the adaptations process and aim to offer a range of solutions, or the option to re-house to an alternative suitable property.
- 1.4 While providing tenants with suitable housing for their individual health needs is the key priority, the suitability and future use of the housing stock must be considered. This policy sets out the ways in which stock use can be maximised and households provided with alternative suitable accommodation.
- 1.5 This policy outlines our principles and approach to dealing with aids and adaptations. Details of the process and practical implementation of the policy are contained within the Aids and Adaptations Procedure. A summary format of this policy is available to customers.
- 1.6 There is a limited annual budget for undertaking adaptations.

The detail of this budget is set out below:

Financial Year	Spend £
15 November 2004 – 31 March 2005	243,750
1 April 2005 – 31 March 2006	650,000
1 April 2006 – 31 March 2007	650,000
1 April 2007 – 31 March 2008	600,000
1 April 2008 – 31 March 2009	550,000
1 April 2009 – 31 March 2010	500,000
1 April 2010 – 31 March 2011	500,000
1 April 2011 – 31 March 2012	500,000
1 April 2012 – 31 March 2013	500,000
1 April 2013 – 31 March 2014	500,000

- 1.7 Erimus and TVH delivers their adaptations service in partnership with the relevant Local Authorities and Health Services. The partnership in Middlesbrough is supported by an agency agreement. The detail of this agreement is contained in the transfer agreement between Middlesbrough Council and Erimus.

2 REFERENCES

2.1 External

Legislation and Regulation:

- NHS & Community Care Act 1990;
- Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995 and Carers and Disabled Children's Act 2000;
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970;
- Children's Act 1989;
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995;
- Disability Discrimination Act 2005;
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996;
- Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002;
- The Community Care (Delayed Discharges etc) Act 2003 Guidance;
- National Service Framework for Older People (2001) DoH;

- Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People: A Good Practice Guide (2006) DCLG;
- KLOE3: Stock Investment and Asset Management;
- Disability Equality Scheme (2006) Housing Corporation.

2.2 Internal

Business Plan/Corporate Objectives:

Erimus and TVH have established a Disabled Persons Housing Service, which has received accreditation from the National Disabled Persons Housing Service for the work it undertakes. The objectives are to develop existing processes for adaptation applications and implement improvements that are customer focused and deliver value for money as well as providing sustainability within the Disabled Persons Housing Market.

Related documents:

- Repairs and Maintenance Policy and Procedure;
- Asset Management Strategy;
- CBL Scheme;
- Lettings Policy;
- Equality and Diversity Strategy;
- Supporting People;
- Disability Discrimination Act (DDA) Action Plan;
- Transfer Agreement;
- Strategic Plan.

3 DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 Aids and equipment are generally provided through Social Services and include walking aids, bathing chairs, bath lifting devices, specialist mechanical toilets, specialist mechanical baths, curved lifts and through floor lifts. However, some equipment may require additional assessment and funding options.

Adaptation – an alteration to the property, to aid the applicant with a disability which is fixed i.e. grab rails, ramps, access solutions and bathroom modification.

Minor Adaptation – an adaptation which needs little or no technical involvement up to the costs of £1500 i.e. grab rails, ramps and access solutions. The only exemption to this rule is over bath showers and stair lifts which require technical involvement to assess the feasibility of the installation within the property.

Major Adaptation – a complex adaptation which needs technical involvement in assessing the feasibility and sustainability of an adaptation within the property, over the value of £1500, i.e. structural changes to the fabric of the property and the fitting of showering facilities.

4 POLICY CONTENT

4.1 Information and Access to Aids and Adaptations

4.1.1 Erimus and TVH tenants are able to access the service directly through a variety of mediums e.g. letter, telephone, or office visit; alternatively access can be sought via support and advocacy agencies. The service is promoted by a suite of leaflets which are available within Erimus and TVH access points. Access to Disabled Facilities Grant funding for Erimus tenants in Middlesbrough are governed by an agency agreement between Erimus and Middlesbrough Council. The detail of the agreement is contained within the transfer agreement between Erimus and Middlesbrough Council.

4.2 Dealing with Minor Adaptations

4.2.1 Minor adaptation requirements are assessed by the OT/OTA, and any adaptations which can be progressed without the need for a visit from a technical officer, i.e. grab rail, rails at entrance door, second banister rail, lever tap, may be ordered direct by the technical administration officer, OT or OTA to reduce waiting periods. Minor adaptations are up to the cost of £1500 that may not need a technical officer to assess suitability.

4.3 Assessment by an Occupational Therapist

4.3.1 As part of the partnership between Erimus and Middlesbrough Council, Erimus has a resident Occupational Therapist Assistant, who will prioritise and assess client's needs within their current Erimus home, or offer advice on consideration of alternative housing. The Occupational Therapist may also assist in out of area assessments with other RSL's or agencies that have clients who need assistance, or maybe considering a move from or to an Erimus or TVH property.

4.4 Priority Systems

4.4.1 Tenants with a disability or illness that require a more major adaptation to the property will be assessed using a pre-determine priority system and placed in one of three levels of priority. This level of priority will be determined by an Occupational Therapist.

- Priority 1 – people suffering terminal illness with 6 months life expectancy or less, will be provided the appropriate adaptations and/or aids to minimise risk and facilitate access to amenities within their home. This generally means temporary removable adaptations. The timescale for this priority is 4 weeks from assessment to completion of work.
- Priority 2 – people with a rapidly deteriorating condition, who are at risk of injury, who have no access to a w.c./wash hand basin, no access to the dwelling, who have unsatisfactory sleeping arrangements or urgent bathing needs due to their condition, are placed in this category. The timescale for this priority is 8 weeks from assessment to completion of work.

- Priority 3 – this category is used for people with a condition which is slow or has no deterioration, has difficulty bathing or having heating/lighting/power requirements, require a car hard standing, or access to food preparation. The timescale for this priority is 12 weeks from assessment to completion of work.

4.5 Re-housing as an Alternative

4.5.1 Assistance will be offered to households whose current home is unsuitable for major adaptation, when the investment in major adaptation cannot be re-cycled or maintained for future disabled tenants. Transfer to suitable alternative housing or housing suitable for adaptation is generally the preferred option for meeting need in such cases.

4.5.2 Tenants considering the re-housing option may be eligible for assistance with relocation expenses. When it is identified that re-housing would be a viable option, then a priority banding will be issued to assist in the need for accessible accommodation. This banding will only be eligible for advertised properties that will meet the client's long-term needs or be more suited for the purpose of adaptation.

4.5.3 The condition of the alternative property is also a significant influencing factor for tenants considering transfer. In order to aid the transfer process, the property should be brought up to a reasonable letting standard which may also include basic decorating. The costs associated with relocation can be off-set against the savings made to the adaptations budget and by the targeting of resources into properties that can be sustained for future households.

4.5.4 Clients will be provided with an element of choice through the bidding scheme when placing bids for suitable properties, however, the disabled persons housing team may place bids on suitable properties within areas of choice or the adjacent estates. This will allow clients a more favourable change of an offer of accommodation, should a suitable property become available which would meet their long-term needs, with little or not additional adaptations being required; i.e. moving from a house to a bungalow when mobility issues determine that access to facilities in the house cannot be easily achieved. However, if the client is not actively bidding on the system or has refused the offer of 5 or more properties which would meet their long-term housing needs in their area of choice or surrounding areas, then a review of their banding will be considered.

4.5.5 Applicants who are awarded a priority on the sub-regional Choice Based Lettings scheme will have their application reviewed every 6 months to check whether their circumstances have changed and they are still entitled to be in this band. This review will also identify which applicants are not bidding on available properties and the reasons why, in the event they need more support in accessing the scheme.

4.5.6 Properties that have adaptations or specialist features aimed at clients with mobility or disability needs will be advertised on the Choice Based Lettings scheme to give preference to clients who require these features to aid their quality of life and will be labelled accordingly.

4.5.7 Financial support and assistance, for example, removal costs may be offered to tenants agreeing a transfer to suitable housing in the following circumstances:

- The cost of the major adaptation is in excess of £4,000 (an approximate guide);
- The recommended adaptations are non-sustainable when no longer required by the disabled tenant.

4.6 Planned Maintenance and Improvement Programmes

4.6.1 Delivering adaptation as part of mainstream improvement programmes is preferable where possible, and will help Erimus Housing provide value for money and cost savings.

4.7 Lifetime Homes

4.7.1 Where improvements are scheduled, we will aim to enhance the property to a lifetime homes standard, where possible.

4.7.2 New properties built on behalf of Erimus and TVH for rent will be built to the Housing Corporations "Scheme Development Standard" to ensure homes provide basic levels of accessibility to amenities. Where appropriate, Erimus and TVH will look to provide purpose built fully adapted accommodation for specialist needs.

4.8 Links to Choice Based Lettings

4.8.1 All properties available for allocation regardless of adaptations will be placed on the Choice Based Lettings bidding cycle, in-line with guidelines from the Audit Commission. This ensures the process is open and transparent and still offers choice to those who require an adapted property.

5 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

5.1 Erimus and TVH recognises that it operates in a community within which there is wide social diversity, and are committed to providing equal opportunities and valuing diversity.

5.2 In the delivery of our aids and adaptations scheme, we aim to treat all customers fairly, and with respect and professionalism regardless of their gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status.

5.3 To enable all residents to have clear information and equal access to our aids and adaptations service, Erimus and TVH publishes clear information in a range of appropriate languages and formats and through a range of media. Feedback is also accepted through a variety of different routes to reflect individual customer's preferences or needs.

- 5.4 To help demonstrate that our approach to managing aids and adaptations is fully in-keeping with our equality and diversity, we will collect equalities information on tenants who have accessed different elements of this service, including routes of access via different funding streams. This will assist in establishing whether there are higher (or significantly lower) aids and adaptations being delivered to particular groups. This will feed into our monitoring and review processes.
- 5.5 Full details of our approach are set out in our Equality and Diversity Strategy.

6 CUSTOMER INVOLVEMENT AND CONSULTATION

- 6.1 Erimus and TVH recognise the importance of working in partnership with our customers to develop and continuously improve our services and raise standards.
- 6.2 Erimus and TVH actively involve all customers in at the beginning of decision making processes and ensure tenants are empowered to play a part in wider consultation and involvement structures, as detailed in full in our Resident Involvement Strategy.
- 6.3 To demonstrate this commitment, this policy:
- Will be reviewed in consultation with service users and customers;
 - Involves customers with disabilities in the monitoring and testing of service delivery standards laid out in this policy and relevant procedures;
 - Publishes information in relation to performance against the aims and standards set down by this policy;
 - Will be developed and reviewed in light of customer feedback, comments and complaints.

7 MONITORING AND REVIEW

- 7.1 The monitoring of outcomes is essential for Erimus Housing to inform future policy review in this area. All reviews will consider whether:
- The current policy adheres to legislative and regulatory requirements, and reflects current good practice;
 - The aims and objectives of the policy being met;
 - The current policy outcomes meet the needs and aspirations of our diverse customer base;
 - Service users are aware of and understand the policy and believe it to be consistent and fair;
 - The policy provides sufficient choice for customers;
 - The service offers value for money;
 - Partnership arrangements are working effectively.

8 RESPONSIBILITY

- 8.1 The Managing Director's of Erimus and TVH retains the overall responsibility for the implementation of this policy.
- 8.2 The Group Director of Operations is responsible for the operational delivery of this policy and the associated procedures. This includes responsibility for monitoring and review, staff awareness and training, policy development and communication to customers.