

THREE BOROUGHES HOUSING CO-OPERATIVE

Independent Living Adaptations Policy

1. Introduction

Three Boroughs Housing Co-operative wants its Members to live safely, comfortably and independently in their homes. This policy sets out how the Co-operative will help existing Members maintain their independence by carrying out minor alterations or assisting Members to access support from other agencies for more specialist adaptations.

2. Aim of the Policy

The aims of the policy are to ensure that Members:

- can continue to live independently in their homes
- are aware of the help available in relation to adaptations
- know which organisations to access for support

3. Definition of an Adaptation

An adaptation is an addition or alteration to a property designed to make it easier or safer for someone, such as an older person, or a person with a health condition, or a disability, to live in their home.

4. Who can apply for an adaptation?

Any Member can request an adaptation if they have a long-term illness, disability or impairment which limits their daily activities. The Disability Discrimination Act 1995 defines disability as ‘*a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on a person’s ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities*’.

Each case will be assessed on an individual basis, but there may be situations where adaptations would not be undertaken. For example:

- If the circumstances giving rise to the need are temporary and not long term in nature.
- If on inspection, it is found to be unreasonable and impractical to proceed with the proposed adaptations, based on the age, structure or size of the building or room.
- The property is under or over-occupied and the request is for a major adaptation.
- Legal action is being taken for a breach of tenancy.

5. Minor Adaptations

The Co-operative will consider funding any reasonable request for minor adaptations, such as those outlined in the table below:

Examples of Minor Adaptations
Grab rails, handrails, stair rails
Provision of suitable taps, door handles and window opening equipment

Alterations to thresholds, paths and gateways to provide easier access
Flashing doorbells
Fire safety equipment such as flashing/vibrating alert systems for hearing or visually impaired members
Door entry systems

Minor adaptations, such as handrails, will normally be agreed without further assessment. However, advice from an Occupational Therapist may sometimes be required to make sure the adaptations meet a Member's current and long-term needs or in cases where multiple requests for minor adaptations have been made.

6. Major Adaptations

Major adaptations are those that cost in excess of £500.00. All major adaptations require an Occupational Therapist's recommendations and specification or details of the works required. The possibility of obtaining funds from other sources will be explored in relation to all requests for major adaptations.

Examples of Major Adaptations
Fixed ramps and other external facilities
Specially equipped kitchens or bathrooms, such as providing a level access shower
Through floor lifts and ceiling track hoists
Widening of doors
Stair lifts
Wash and dry toilets

6.1 Disabled Facilities Grants

Local housing authorities have a statutory duty to provide grant aid to people with disabilities for a range of adaptations to their homes. Therefore, if major adaptations are required, an assessment will be made to check if any proposed works could be funded through a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). To apply for grant funding, Members will need:

- A recommendation from an Occupational Therapist.
- Written permission from the registered housing association.

The Co-operative can assist Members with an application for grant funding. There is a limit of £25,000 on the amount of mandatory DFG funding which may be given and local authorities must make a decision on each grant application within six months. If the local authority refuses, or only part funds the adaptation, the Co-operative will investigate alternative solutions with the Member including:

- Exploring other options with the Occupational Therapist, such as a reduced level of adaptations.

- Working with other agencies and partners to find suitable alternative accommodation.

6.2 Making the best use of Major Adaptations

- If an adapted property becomes void, every effort will be made to offer the property to a person whose needs match the adaptations installed.
- The Co-operative may refuse a request for a Member to 'swap' homes via a mutual exchange if the home has been adapted for a support or physical need the incoming Member does not have.

7. Requesting an Adaptation

Members can request an adaptation themselves or via a third party, such as a carer or an Occupational Therapist. All requests for adaptations should be made in the first instance to the Co-operative Housing Manager.

The Co-operative recognises that a person with a disability is the expert on their own needs and therefore every effort will be made to listen carefully to their views before agreeing a course of action. The views of relatives and carers will also be taken into consideration, as well as the experience and expertise of housing and health professionals.

8. Members Undertaking Adaptations themselves

If a Member wishes to undertake their own adaptations, they must contact the Co-operative, who will need to seek permission from the registered housing association before any work takes place. Requests will be considered on a case to case basis and will not be unreasonably refused.

Members are responsible for servicing and maintaining any adaptations they have made to their homes.

9. Planning and Installing Adaptations

Minor adaptations will be approached in a similar way to a repair carried out at a property. An appointment will be arranged in advance and the Member provided with clear information about the extent and likely timescale of the works.

Major adaptations will require close liaison with the professionals and agencies involved such as Occupational Therapists and the relevant local authority. If the works are funded by a Disabled Facilities Grant, this may also include outside organisations appointed to project manage the work. The Occupational Therapist will undertake an initial site visit to advise on the installation or arrangements of the key elements of the adaptations before any works are undertaken. Follow up visits will be made to enable the Member to comment on the progress of the work and to raise any concerns or queries they may have.

10. Maintaining Adaptations

The Co-operative is responsible for the repair and maintenance of adaptations it has installed, except during any warranty period.

The Co-operative will consider meeting the cost of the repair of any adaptations funded by the local authority, where the Member is on a low income.

Any repairs, for which the Co-operative is responsible, will be prioritised in line with the Repairs and Maintenance Policy. Lack of access to a toilet, bathing or cooking facilities will be treated as an emergency repair.

11. Policy Review

This policy will be regularly reviewed to ensure it reflects best practice and to address legislative, regulatory or operational changes.

Approved by the Management Committee on	8th June 2022
Signature	
Position of Signatory	
For review on	8th June 2027