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AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS POLICY

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Summary

This Policy sets out how Longhurst Group (The Group) will deliver a responsive aids and adaptations service to its customers.

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PART TWO

Policy

Intent

The Group are committed to providing a responsive aids and adaptations service to our customers.

We recognise that we have many older, vulnerable and disabled customers and we must meet social care needs in a way that complements our wider housing purpose, ensuring we deliver the housing and care, and support services people need.

By providing accessibility through the design and adaption of our properties, we will help people sustain healthy, secure and independent lives within the communities they wish to live.

Principles

The Group will achieve a responsive adaptations service and meet customers' needs by:

- Providing minor and simple adaptations without delay
- Supporting customers to apply for major adaptations through Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding and consider installing where customers are not eligible for DFG funding
- Ensuring adaptations are considered as part of the void and planned works processes and work to mainstream the adaptations service, offering invisible adaptations where possible to ensure effectiveness without compromising on design or appearance
- Working collaboratively with Housing, Care and Support and Asset and Property Services to deliver the Group's Improving Lives Strategy

Scope

We will provide an adaptations service to all the Group's rental properties where we are responsible for repairs.

The Group do not consider requests for alterations to accommodate privately purchased mobility scooters as adaptations and any requests for these items should go through the online permissions form and be funded by the customer.

Shared owners and leaseholders are able to apply for permission to install their own adaptation using the online permission form dependent on the terms of the lease and permission will not be unreasonably upheld. Each request will be considered on a case-by-case basis in consultation with the Leasehold Team.

For properties the Group manage on behalf of others the responsibility for adaptations should be defined within the management agreement. If the management agreement is not clear then responsibility will fall to the organisation undertaking the repairs and maintenance.

Policy Details

Minor Adaptations

Minor adaptations are completed by the Group and fall into two categories.

Minor Adaptations (simple) – up to £1,000 in value (excluding VAT)	To be completed within 28 calendar days of order being issued. From July 2022 within the new repairs and voids Policy this will decrease to be completed within 7 calendar days of order being issued.
Minor Adaptations (complex) – between £1,000 - £2,500 (excluding VAT)	To be completed within 28 calendar days of order being issued

If a customer requires a simple and a complex adaptation and the works are in the same room or the requests are related e.g. an overbath shower is required and grab rails in bathroom, then these will all be issued together to the contractor and monitored as a complex adaptation request. If the request is for unrelated items e.g. an overbath shower and a half step to the property these will be issued and monitored separately as a complex and simple adaptation.

If a customer requires several minor adaptations, then the Group will consider completing the work if each single element is under the £2,500 threshold e.g. if the resident requires a simple ramp, several grab rails and an overbath shower the total cost of all of these items will be over £2,500. However, if each individual element is under this threshold these works may be delivered by the Group without the need for a Disabled Facilities Grant application. This request will be considered by a panel within 10 working days with representatives from Care and Support, Housing and Asset and Property Services. The outcome of the decision panel will be dependent on budget availability, suitability of the property to be adapted and impact on the Customer's health and wellbeing. All decisions will be logged against the adaptations case on Dynamics.

Requests for Minor Adaptations

A request for a minor adaptation can be made in a number of ways including:

- Directly from a customer
- Following a referral from a colleague of the Group
- Through a referral from an external agency or advocate
- During the lettings process
- During the planned works process

Assessing Requests for Minor Adaptations

An assessment will be completed for all minor adaptation requests. This will be completed by an Independent Living Advisor (where possible), the Independent Living Service Manager or by an Occupational Therapist within the Local Authority Social Services department.

The Customer may also provide a private Occupational Therapists assessment providing they are registered with the Health and Care Professions Council and members of the British Association of Occupational Therapists.

This is to ensure the adaptation requested is suitable and the customers current and future needs have been considered.

An order will be issued to the regional Contractor to complete the recommended adaptation works within the timescales outlined above.

Repairing Minor Adaptations

Any minor adaptations installed by the Group will be repaired (or replaced if the item cannot be repaired) by the repairs and maintenance contractor within the timescales outlined above.

If a replacement is required this will be funded through the adaptations budget.

Adaptations and the Lettings Process

When an adapted property becomes vacant we will endeavour to match the property to an applicant that requires the adaptations installed. (Please refer to the Lettings/ Housing Register Policy).

Where choice-based lettings schemes are in operation, the advert will clearly indicate properties which have been adapted to ensure suitable bids are received.

We will work closely with our Local Authority partners and Community Care Teams to ensure that we maximise the letting of our accessible and adapted homes.

If it becomes clear during the lettings process that the incoming resident requires adaptations or there is uncertainty about if the property is suitable for the resident's current and future health and wellbeing requirements a referral can be made to the Independent Living Service to undertake an assessment or provide advice. Any required adaptations should be installed during the void process or shortly after the new resident occupies the property.

Major Adaptations

Major adaptations are defined as structural alterations or additions to a home which cost more than £2,500 excluding VAT.

All requests for major adaptations must be supported by a formal assessment by an Occupational Therapist or by the Independent Living Service Manager.

Unless a Customer is able to fund the adaptation themselves the customer will be expected to apply for funding through a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) from the relevant Local Authority. (DFG is a 'means' tested grant).

We will provide Customers with support and assistance in their application to the Local Authority where this is required. The Group are able to undertake a financial screening questionnaire by request with the resident to establish if they would be eligible for DFG funding.

If a customer is not eligible for Disabled Facilities Grant funding and is unable to self-fund the adaptations The Group will consider providing the adaptation and installing the adaptation where this is supported by a formal assessment from an Occupational Therapist or the Independent Living Service. The maximum amount Longhurst Group will consider is £6,000 and this request will be considered by a panel with representatives from Care and Support, Housing and Asset and Property Services. The outcome of the decision will be dependent on budget availability, viability, suitability of the property to be adapted and impact on the Customer's health and wellbeing. Any outcome of a decision will be logged on the case on Dynamics. Should the customer not agree with the decision made by the panel then this can be appealed by contacting Longhurst Group within 28 calendar days. This will then be escalated to be considered by members of the senior management team within Longhurst Group.

Where a customer is not eligible for full DFG funding and is required to pay a top-up but is unable to pay this contribution the Group will consider making this payment up to a maximum of £6,000 and this will be

considered by a panel with representatives from Care and Support, Housing and Asset and Property Services. The outcome of the decision will be dependent on budget availability, viability, suitability of the property to be adapted and impact on the Customer's health and wellbeing. Any outcome of a decision will be logged on the case on Dynamics.

We will work proactively with Occupational Therapists, Local Authorities and their contractors and Home Improvement Agencies to help them complete major adaptations as quickly as possible.

Where a customer is eligible for full DFG funding, Longhurst Group will not make a financial contribution to the Local Authority for any major adaptation required. This is to ensure Longhurst Group are able to continue to deliver a robust and proactive minor adaptations service.

Where it is not reasonable or practical to adapt a Customer's existing home we will work with and support the Customer to explore other housing options available to them.

Repairing and Replacement of Major Adaptations

We will repair major adaptations which have been installed through DFG funding through the responsive repairs process.

If a non-fixed component needs to be replaced (such as a stairlift) then the Customer should re-apply for grant funding for the replacement. Fixed assets such as level access showers will be replaced as part of the major capital works programmes.

We will consider replacing the component if the Customer is not eligible for grant funding or if the component has failed and needs to be replaced urgently. These requests will be considered by a panel with representatives from Care and Support, Housing and Asset and Property Services. The outcome of the decision will be dependent on budget availability, suitability of the property to be adapted and impact on the Customer's health and wellbeing.

Refusing Requests for Adaptations

We aim to meet the needs of our customers, but we will not normally carry out an adaptation where:

- The installation or use of the adaptation would put the customer or carer at risk
- The adaptation is deemed unsafe
- There is no disability or medical need that requires an adaptation
- The adaptation request is not supported by an assessment or recommendation
- The customer has moved from a property already suitably adapted and located to meet their physical health and wellbeing requirements. Each case will be considered by the panel within 10 working days
- The structure / build or design of the home cannot accommodate the adaptations required
- The property has conservation or planning constraints which would prevent the adaptation being carried out
- The property is under-occupied and there are suitable properties available in the local authority area (this will not apply to requests for minor adaptations)
- The property is on a planned works programme within the year from receipt of application and it would be more practical and cost effective to provide the adaptation as part of these works.

Adaptations and Planned Works Programmes

We want to make sure that customer's' needs are considered and so before we start any programme of planned works we will ensure that homes which have already been adapted, or Customers that require adaptations, are identified and referred to our Independent Living Team for assessment. All registered care, extra care and sheltered properties will be fitted with a level access shower as standard as part of the major capital works programme.

We will protect or replace existing adaptations where they are affected by planned works.

Where adaptations are required we will consider providing these as part of the programme, where this is practical and economic, for both the Customer and for the organisation. This will be assessed and supported by the Independent Living Team or an Occupational Therapist and discussed by a panel within 10 working days with representatives from Housing, Care and Support and Asset and Property Services to ensure the adaptation and property is suitable for the Customers long term health and wellbeing needs.

Servicing Adaptations

We will arrange the servicing of adaptations (such as lifts and hoists). The cost of the servicing may be charged to the Customer.

Adaptations to Communal Areas

Requests for adaptations to communal areas will be considered if the following criteria are met:

- The adaptation is classified as minor, e.g. they are not structural and cost less than £2,500 excluding VAT
- The adaptation would not negatively impact on other occupants of the building
- It is agreed by all Customers that any servicing requirements are included in the service charge
- The adaptation will not contravene any fire, or other health and safety regulations.

Requests for major adaptations will be considered in line with our requirements to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act.

Monitoring, Evaluation and Review

- Number of LG simple minor aids and adaptations completed (per month and YTD)
- Number of LG complex minor aids and adaptations completed (per month and YTD)
- Number of LG completed major aids and adaptations (per month and YTD)
- Number of major adaptations completed by Local Authorities (per month and YTD)
- Percentage of simple minor adaptations completed within target (per month)
- Percentage of complex minor adaptations completed within target (per month)
- Spend against budget (monthly and YTD)
- Customer satisfaction with adaptations service
- ILA Service Impact

Equality and Diversity

The Group is committed to E,D&I and such will make reasonable adjustments to the policy to recognise, accommodate and support individual needs, where needed.

This Policy adheres to the Group's approach to Equality and Diversity.

Group members will take a proactive approach to ensure that no individual or group is discriminated against or treated differently as a direct or indirect result of this Policy.

Summary of local variations

Stock transfer agreement with Rutland County Council for the Group to complete all adaptation works up to £6,000 in value for the Group's residents living in the Rutland Local Authority area until 2039.

PART THREE

Appendices

- A. Policy Approval Control
- B. Policy Development Plan
- C. Process Map – Aids and Adaptations – PM-440-H