

Adaptations Policy

1.0 Policy statement

Stonewater is committed to providing an excellent level of service to all its customers. We understand that customers health may mean that adaptations to the property are required. Stonewater will consider all requests for assistance, in order that customers can remain as independent and comfortable as reasonably possible in their home.

2.0 Policy scope and objectives

- 2.1 This policy applies to any customer of a home owned or managed by us. While the Equality Act doesn't specify a legal requirement to make this type of change, a necessary reasonable adjustment could require us to make the alteration. For leaseholders and homeowners, Stonewater will support and signpost customers to access adaptations.
- 2.2 Where possible Stonewater will make every effort to ensure requests for adaptations are supported to ensure customers can remain in their home and live safely. Stonewater will signpost customers to services and agencies who can support them with financial support if appropriate and where possible.
- 2.3 Stonewater has a Vulnerable Persons Policy which sets out our approach to supporting customers experiencing vulnerabilities. Where a customer is experiencing vulnerability, this policy should therefore be read in conjunction with the Vulnerable Persons Policy. An adaptation may be one of a number reasonable adjustments made to ensure customers are able to thrive in their homes.
- 2.4 This policy aims to:
 - ensure the needs of customers are prioritised and met accordingly, subject to the provision of available funding
 - set out the criteria by which Stonewater will assess all requests
 - balance the expectations of customers requiring adaptations with Stonewater's duty to manage its property portfolio effectively as well as taking into consideration the availability of suitable accommodation within an area to meet a customer's needs
 - to maximise all local authority grants, Stonewater's own funding and other available resources for adaptations; having regard to value for money at all times
 - to ensure there are clear channels of communication and established joint working practices with our partners from the local authorities in the areas in which we operate
 - ensure compliance with legal and regulatory requirements and adopt best practice guidance.

3.0 Regulatory and legal considerations

- 3.1 The statutory responsibility for the funding of adaptations is the duty of the local authority. Stonewater residents are entitled to apply for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) through the local authority under the terms of the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.
- 3.2 As a landlord and a social housing provider there is a responsibility under the Human Right Act 1998 and Equality Act 2010 to address difficulties that arise for particular residents which prevent them from enjoying their homes.
- 3.3 The Equality Act 2010 defines who should be considered as disabled and requires Stonewater to take account of a persons' disabilities even if this means treating disabled people more favourably. The Equality Act provides for landlords and managers of rented premises to satisfy a 'Duty to make Reasonable Adjustments'. The duty is not anticipatory – it only arises if Stonewater is requested to make an adjustment by a person to whom the premises are let, or someone on their behalf.
- 3.4 While there is no legal requirement under the Equality Act for Stonewater to make any changes which would consist of or include the removal or alteration of a physical feature of the property, Stonewater will always aim to work with the customer to identify viable solutions which could include identifying alternative accommodation.
- 3.5 The Safety and Quality Regulatory standard requires providers to co-operate with customers, local authority partners and other relevant organisations to provide a housing adaptations service is provided to customers.

4.0 Policy details

- 4.1 Requests for adaptations:
- 4.2 Requests for adaptations can be made via email, online (MyHome, Stonewater website, social media, Live Chat), letter, by phone through our contact centre or in person to a colleague.
- 4.3 Requests will be split into two areas: minor adaptations and major adaptations.
- 4.4 Minor adaptations will generally not exceed likely to cost less £1500 and could be, but not limited to;
 - Installation of handrails or grab rails
 - Installation of ramps which do not require significant building works
 - Installation of window openers
 - Installation of Key safes or key pads
 - Installation of push button or lever taps
- 4.5 Minor adaptations will be funded by Stonewater. Where costs exceed £1500, Stonewater will review this value on a case-by-case basis. The value of works should include the cost of buying and fitting the adaptation.
- 4.6 Major adaptations will generally cost in excess of £1500 and require more significant building works. They may include, but are not limited to:

- Installation of a Stairlift;
 - Installation of a through floor lift,
 - Wet room conversion,
 - Accessible WC/ Shower room
- 4.7 Stonewater will signpost customers to make an application for Major” adaptations by way of a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) through the local authority. Where a customer is unable to do this themselves, Stonewater will support them to do so.
- 4.8 If DFG is granted and does not cover the full cost of a major adaptation, Stonewater will review the case on a case by case basis and will consider alternative options, internal funding and other sources of grant.
- 4.9 All major adaptation requests must be made by an Occupational Therapist. If a customer contacts Stonewater directly, we will ask them if they have an Occupational Therapist currently working with them, and if not, provide advice on how they can access this service either through their GP or adult social care. Where the customer is unable to do this we will support them to do so. Where the need is immediate, and the waiting list with the local authority is substantial, Stonewater may look to provide an occupational therapist. This would be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.
- 4.10 Stonewater will support the customer in ensuring the ongoing servicing and maintenance of the adaptation either through facilitating directly, paid for through service charge or via the DFG application.

5.0 Considerations

- 5.1 When considering a request for an adaptation, Stonewater will consider the following:
- Is the property suitable for the adaptation?
 - Will the proposed adaptation impact on the safety of the building?
 - Is the adaptation affecting the floorplan of the building, or increasing the size of the property?
 - Is the property suitable for the customer long term?
 - Will this request have an impact on other customers?
 - Will these adaptations affect the ability to re-let the property?
 - Is there a more viable and/or sustainable solution for the customer (for example rehousing)?
- 5.2 The length of time a customer has been in a property, any rent arrears or defect liability periods will not impact the decision to give consent for adaptations to a property.
- 5.3 Stonewater’s Homes colleagues will review the request from a technical perspective and advise the OT/customer if the adaptation is viable. If it is not, they will work with the OT/customer to amend the plans where possible or agree a suitable alternative
- 5.4 If the adaptation will impact on the current level of safety in the home, the Building Safety and Compliance team must be consulted. Changes which will impact on safety include:

- changes to the internal layout of the home
- removal of internal doors
- installation of a new lifting aid
- changes to the electrical installation or appliances
- changes to ventilation
- changes or the relocation of smoke, heat or CO detection
- changes to or additions to the flat entrance door, where that door is a fire door set.

5.5 Any adaptations that may increase the footprint or changes the elevation will likely require planning consent of some form but may also need additional consent and legal review depending on the covenants sitting with the land title.

5.6 Stonewater recognises that we have a responsibility to make best use of our rented properties, including those already adapted. We will ensure that Stonewater has sight of the adaptations made to individual properties and will work with local authority partners and specialist agencies to ensure these properties are let to those with the highest need for this type of accommodation. All properties with adaptations will be advertised for two cycles with the local authority prior to Stonewater's consideration of the removal of the adaptation.

5.7 Where an applicant requires adaptations, and makes us aware of this at application stage, Stonewater will confirm with the local authority that this is the most suitable property, and once confirmed, will proceed with the application. (This applies for re-lets and new build properties)

5.8 For a new build property, if an applicant makes us aware of their requirement for major adaptations ahead of sign up, we will try to get these installed prior to handover therefore minimising any issues with defects etc.

5.9 If an adaptation increases the size of a property, a property valuation may be required and the customer will be liable for the new rent charge following completion of the works.

6.0 Service standards

6.1 Requests for adaptations will be carried out in accordance with relevant legislation and regulatory requirements

6.2 In the event of a pandemic or other emergencies our procedures will be reviewed to reflect government guidance

7.0 Equality, diversity and inclusion

7.1 The policy applies to all customers within the scope of the policy and sets out Stonewater's position as a reasonable landlord under the Equality Act 2010.

7.2 An equalities impact assessment has been carried out on this policy.

8.0 Appeals

8.1 If a resident is not satisfied with Stonewater's decision not to agree or proceed with an adaptation, they have the right to appeal. The appeal will be considered through a case review by a manager that has not been involved

with the original decision. The manager, having gathered such information they deem necessary, may decide to uphold the original decision or, decide that the works should proceed.

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