

Housing Services Aids and Adaptations for Council Tenants Policy

Department	Housing Services
Responsible Person	Director of Housing
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1. Introduction

- 1.1 The London Borough of Barking & Dagenham (the council) is committed to supporting tenants with disabilities, long-term health conditions, or age-related needs to live safely and independently in their homes.
- 1.2 This Policy outlines how the council assesses, installs, maintains, and manages adaptations within council properties. It applies to all council tenants living in council-owned homes, including general needs housing and sheltered accommodation.

2. Policy Purpose

- 2.1 The purpose of this policy is to ensure that tenants who require adaptations receive them in a fair, consistent, and timely manner. The council aims to promote independence, reduce risks within the home, and ensure that all adaptations are safe and comply with safety standards.
- 2.2 The council also seeks to ensure that public funds are used responsibly and that adaptations are sustainable for future housing needs.

3. Eligibility and Assessment

- 3.1 Adaptations are provided following an assessment by an Occupational Therapist who will assess the tenant's needs. The assessment may identify the need for minor adaptations, such as grab rails or lever taps, or major adaptations, such as level-access showers, ramps, or stairlifts.
- 3.2 It should be noted that Barking and Dagenham council tenants cannot apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant as these are applicable only for private tenants and homeowners.

4. Tenant Allocated Properties on Medical Grounds

- 4.1 Tenants who were allocated their property specifically on medical or disability grounds are not permitted to remove any existing adaptations during their tenancy or when they move out. This includes adaptations such as level-access showers, widened doorways, ramps, stairlifts, through-floor lifts, and other specialist installations. The council will determine whether these adaptations remain, are replaced, or are removed when the property is re-let.

5. Installation and Maintenance of Adaptations

- 5.1 All adaptations installed by the council are fitted by approved contractors and meet safety and compliance standards. Tenants must allow access for installation, inspection, servicing, and maintenance of any equipment provided by the council. This includes items such as stairlifts, hoists, and through-floor lifts, which require regular servicing to ensure safe operation.
- 5.2 The council will arrange and fund servicing for equipment it has installed, and tenants are expected to cooperate with access arrangements to ensure the equipment remains safe.

6. Removal or Alteration of Adaptations

- 6.1 Adaptations installed by the council must not be removed, altered, or disabled by the tenant without formal written permission from the Housing Services team. This requirement is particularly important for equipment that requires ongoing servicing or safety checks.
- 6.2 Tenants must not remove stairlifts, hoists, or similar equipment without permission, as doing so may create safety risks and may be treated as a breach of tenancy.
- 6.3 Where a tenant requests the removal of an adaptation that was installed for their own use, the council will consider the request based on the suitability of the property for future tenants, the cost implications, and the overall housing need within the borough. However, tenants who were allocated their home on medical grounds will not be allowed to remove adaptations under any circumstances.

7. Property Re-Letting

- 7.1 When a property becomes vacant, the council will assess the suitability of existing adaptations for future tenants. Adaptations may be retained, replaced, or removed depending on the needs of the incoming tenant and the wider housing demand. The council will make these decisions based on professional assessments and the long-term sustainability of the property as part of the council's housing stock.

8. Tenant Responsibilities

- 8.1 Tenants are responsible for using adaptations safely, for what they are designed for and for reporting any faults or concerns promptly. They must allow access for servicing, repairs, and inspections and must not interfere with or remove equipment without permission.
- 8.2 Tenants are responsible for the cleaning of stairlift rails and ceiling track hoists and ensuring that block gullies are cleared of hair and grime.
- 8.3 Any lifts in the tenant's property are to be remained plugged in at all times.

9. The Council's Responsibilities

- 9.1 The council is responsible for assessing needs, installing appropriate adaptations, maintaining and servicing equipment it has provided, and ensuring that adaptations meet safety and compliance standards.
- 9.2 The council is also responsible for determining the future use of adaptations when a property becomes void and ensuring that public funds are used effectively.

10. Tenant-Installed Aids and Adaptations

- 10.1 Tenants may request permission from the Housing Services team to install their own aids and adaptations within their property. Any such request must be made in writing and must include full details of the proposed works, the type of equipment to be installed, and the qualifications of the contractor who will carry out the installation.
- 10.2 The Housing Services team will only grant permission where the proposed adaptation is medically safe for the tenant to use, and that they can follow suitable instruction/guidance to use it safely, it is appropriate, and does not compromise the structure, layout, or long-term suitability of the property. Tenants must ensure that any contractor undertaking the work is suitably qualified and accredited, and they must provide the Housing Services team with all relevant certification, including installation certificates, electrical safety documentation, and any manufacturer warranties.
- 10.3 Where a tenant installs their own adaptations, the council accepts no responsibility for the maintenance, servicing, repair, or replacement of such

equipment. The tenant remains fully responsible for ensuring that the adaptation is kept in safe working order and that any servicing or repairs are carried out by competent professionals. If a tenant-installed adaptation becomes unsafe, is not maintained, or poses a risk to the property, the council may request its removal at the tenant's expense.

- 10.4 Tenants must also obtain written permission before removing any tenant-installed adaptation, particularly where removal may cause damage to the property or affect its suitability for future tenants. The council may require the tenant to reinstate the property to its original condition if the adaptation is removed.

11. The Right to Buy Adapted Properties

- 11.1 Under the Housing Act 1985 (Schedule 5 Exceptions to the Right to Buy) the council as the landlord can exempt certain adapted properties from the Right to Buy in order to preserve its limited stock of accessible housing.
- 11.2 All four of the criteria listed below must be met for the Right to Buy application to be denied;
- The property must have features that are substantially different from those of ordinary dwelling houses.
 - The property is designed for people who are physically disabled.
 - The property is one of a group of dwellings which it is the practice of the council as the landlord to let for occupation by people who are physically disabled.
 - The property is in close proximity to a social service or special facility provided wholly or partly for the purpose of assisting the occupants.
- 11.3 It is not possible for the council to advise tenants at the point when adaptation works are agreed whether or not the works will mean that should they apply to purchase the property through the Right to Buy, it will be approved or refused. All decisions can only be made at the point an application is made. All decisions to refuse the Right to Buy will be made on a case-by-case basis.

12. Equality Impact

- 12.1 Applying this policy consistently and sensitively will ensure that all tenants and their household members in Council owned homes who have protected characteristics and/or are deemed vulnerable for other reasons receive services that are based on a recognition of their vulnerability. The Council will

make all appropriate adjustments to the services they receive in order to mitigate any potential negative impacts on them and to ensure they receive fair and equal treatment from the Council as their landlord.