



# IPSWICH

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### ADAPTATIONS POLICY

<b>Purpose</b>	The policy aims to focus on supporting people who live in IBC properties and work to improve access to quality housing for older people and people with disabilities and consider how best their housing needs can be met and supported in the long term.
<b>Owner</b>	<b>Asset Management – Maintenance and Contracts</b>
<b>Related documents</b>	<b>Allocations Policy</b>
<b>Approved by</b>	
<b>Date approved</b>	<b>10 September 2024</b>
<b>Review frequency</b>	<b>3 Years</b>
<b>Last review</b>	
<b>Next review</b>	<b>September 2027</b>
<b>Version</b>	<b>Version: 01</b>
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## Contents

<b>Section</b>	<b>Page</b>
1.0 Policy Statement	
2.0 Policy Aims and Objectives	
3.0 Definition	
4.0 Related Documents and Legislation	
5.0 Requests for Major Adaptions	
6.0 Eligibility	
7.0 The role of the Occupational Therapist	
8.0 Requests for Minor and Major Adaptions	
9.0 Finances	
10.0 Programming the work	
11.0 New Build Programme	
12.0 Appeals Process	
13.0 Equality and Diversity	
14.0 Policy Monitoring and Review	

## **1.0 Policy Statement**

- 1.1 Ipswich Borough Councils Corporate Strategy, Proud of Ipswich, recognises the importance of meeting the housing needs of our community. We aim to be an excellent Landlord to the people who live in our properties and work to improve access to quality housing for older people and people with disabilities.
- 1.2 Ipswich Borough Council (IBC) recognises that a number of its tenants will require adaptations to their homes in order to maintain a decent quality of life and allow them to continue to live more comfortably, and independently in their homes for as long as possible.
- 1.3 Adapted properties help IBC to create stable, sustainable and inclusive communities. Adaptations make properties more accessible and usable for people to allow them to cope with advancing age, disability or caring responsibilities and thereby enable them to maximise their independence in their own home.
- 1.4 This policy statement outlines Ipswich Borough Council's (IBC) approach to the provision of major adaptations in its properties. Decisions will be made based on the works being necessary and appropriate and also reasonable and practicable. This policy seeks to reflect the aspirations of the private sector housing Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) criteria and provision with the aim, where possible, to achieve equality and fairness across tenures.

## **2.0 Aims and Objectives**

- 2.1 The primary aim of the Adaptations Service is to enable IBC, within the financial and legislative constraints applicable to social housing, to identify housing solutions which best meet the assessed needs of tenants with disabilities and needs due to advanced age.
- 2.2 To provide a service that focuses on the individual needs of customers, their families and carers, whilst effectively managing investment in the housing stock/assets
- 2.3 This policy supports the best use of financial resources and property assets. This may result in adaptations being declined where the assessed needs cannot be met within the tenant's current home either because of the financial cost involved, a potentially detrimental impact on the future use of the property, the practical difficulties of adapting the property and the availability of alternative solutions which may include the allocation of more suitable housing.
- 2.4 Adaptations will not be carried out where it is considered reasonable for a tenant to move to a more suitable Council property and where there is a reasonable expectation that this accommodation will become available within a period of 12 months.
- 2.5 The policy will also guide Occupational Therapists (OT) (who are independently employed by Suffolk County Council) and other professionals to understand what the Council will and will not be able to assist with in terms of adaptation to a tenant's home.
- 2.6 The policy will allow a degree of flexibility for completion of minor adaptations to assist the NHS to support the local acute hospital discharge patients home to increase patient care capacity. These adaptations may be prioritised.

- 2.7 To assess all referrals in date order of receipt unless otherwise specifically instructed by the Occupation Therapy team or unless there are exceptional circumstances identified by the Senior Housing Management Team or the Housing Portfolio Holder.
- 2.8 IBC through its Adaptations Policy will aim to achieve the following when undertaking adaptations:
- Enhance the independence, privacy, and dignity of the tenant.
  - Help reduce long stays in hospital.
  - Specify the work in line with professional advice from Occupational Therapist (OT)
  - As is practicable involve the tenants and their carers in the process and ensure their views are considered.
  - Complete the work efficiently and competently.
  - Ensure economy, efficiency, effectiveness, and equity in the delivery of the Adaptations service.
  - Maintain a record of the work that has been undertaken.
  - Maintain the adaptation.
  - Secure resources for maintenance of the adaptation.
  - Aim where possible, to relet the adapted property to another tenant that could benefit from the improvements. IBC will maintain a register of adapted properties detailing the type of adaptation in each property and the cost of the adaptation.
  - Maintain an adaptations 'waiting list'.

### **3.0 Definition**

- 3.1 'Minor adaptation' – refers to those that require less extensive works and include the following and would normally not exceed £1,000:
- Grab rails (Internal/External)
  - Bannister Rails (Internal/External)
  - Window opening equipment.
  - Lever taps
  - WC lever flushing handles
  - Altering heights of electrical faceplates
  - Door and wall protectors
  - Lighting upgrades
  - Internal door reversal
  - Internal threshold removal
  - Half step
  - Window restrictors
  - Threshold chamfer
  - Internal door locks
- 3.2 'Major Adaptation' - refers to those that require more extensive and complex work are in excess of £1,000 and include the following:
- Access to the property alterations (Including access to gardens)
  - Installation of Level access Shower rooms
  - Over bath showers
  - Accessible kitchen adaptations
  - Reorganisation of a properties layout including access widening (Including internal doors)

- Access to first floor (but only a stair lift not through floor lift except if included in our new build programme)
- Ramped access/stepped Access (including handrails)
- Extensions to a property (but only in exceptional circumstances where all options have been exhausted)
- Care toilets
- Door enter intercom systems
- Vehicle hardstanding
- Electrical window opening system
- Stair Lifts

3.3 'Feasibility Group' – A panel of IBC officers from Maintenance & Contracts, Tenancy Services and Allocations team who meet monthly and will ultimately review each major adaption for eligibility and need in consultation with a representative from Suffolk County Council's Occupational Therapy team.

#### **4.0 Related documents and Legislation**

- IBC Asset Management Strategy 2024-2030
- Regulator of Social Housing Code of Practice
- IBC Fast Tracking DFG Policy
- Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People: Good Practice Guide 2013
- Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) delivery: guidance for local authorities in England
- Care Act 2014
- Human Rights (inhuman/degrading treatment, right to respect for private/family life)
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- Children's Act (s.17 general duty) 1989 and 2004
- Children and Families Act 2014 (education, health and care plans)
- Mobility Scooter Policy (Once agreed)

#### **5.0 Requests for Major Adaptations**

Requests for major adaptations are received by IBC primarily from Suffolk County Council, and other agencies such as Health. An Occupational Therapist (OT) will have assessed what adaptations are necessary and appropriate. IBC will then consider the eligibility, and whether it is reasonable and practicable to undertake the works requested and whether there are any alternative options.

#### **6.0 Eligibility**

6.1 The assessment and priority for a major adaptation will be based on a set of three criteria:

- The eligibility of the tenant, partner, or member of the immediate family.
- The feasibility of the project based on the following:
  - the type, age, and condition of the property.
  - the works IBC will **not** normally complete (see below).

- where the property will not meet the long-term needs of the disabled applicant.
  - the feasibility of the adaptation in relation to the layout and structure of the property.
  - the availability of suitable alternative accommodation.
  - the estimated cost of the adaptation.
  - the impact on the future letting of the property.
- The Immediate or long-term need of the tenant, partner or immediate family member as assessed by the Occupational Therapist.

6.2 An individual will normally be considered for adaptations to their home if:

- They are either an IBC tenant; or
- A partner or a member of the tenant's immediate family who has been a permanent resident of the household for at least 12 months up to the date of the OT referral and there is a supporting OT assessment.

6.3 In cases where a child is disabled and the parents are separated; adaptation works will only be carried out at the property that is the principal residence of the child.

6.4 Eligibility for a Major adaptation will be refused under the following circumstances:

- Where a tenant or their family are overcrowding and there is a likelihood that they would be rehoused in a more suitable alternative property.
- Tenants who are subject to possession proceedings.
- Where the tenant or family member are waiting for a transfer to another property.
- Where there is suitable alternative adapted, part adapted accommodation or where it is considered likely that a suitable property will become available within 12 months of the request being made
- Where the tenant or family member is waiting for a medical procedure that will improve mobility or their general health. Minor adaptations will be considered.
- Where a tenant has sought a mutual exchange following a previous major adaptation to their existing property.

6.5 Each adaptation will be reviewed on an individual basis based on the needs of the tenant Whilst taking due regard of any protected characteristics within the Equality Act 2010.

However, as some adaptation work, often proves to not be the best solution for either the Council or the tenant, the following works would only be allowed in exceptional circumstances as the Council would not normally support adaptations that include:

Adaptations that are only supported in exceptional circumstances, but not exhaustively:

- external step lifts.
- through floor lifts
- hoists, slings, and motors for overhead tracking
- guards to fires and radiators.
- soft padding for 'safe rooms
- sheds, hardstands, and electric supplies for storing motorised scooters
- manual bath hoists and portable hoists equipment
- body dryers

- portable shower seats or portable shower screens.
- portable heating appliances
- fencing
- dropped kerbs
- an extension of the property
- installing a level access shower to a flat or house above ground floor which cannot be accessed by an existing lift
- Where there are significant Health and safety concerns

6.6 The decision and priority (based on need) for any major adaptation will rest with the Feasibility Group. The Council has the final decision on whether to accept an OT's recommendations and, ultimately adapt its properties.

## **7.0 The role of the Occupational Therapist**

7.1 The Council will only consider Major adaptations if an Occupational Therapist (OT) (or medical professional) has assessed the tenant(s) disability need and/or situation and recommended that the works are both necessary and appropriate, given the nature of the disability.

7.2 In all cases, the Council and the OT will work together to ensure that:

- Cases are assessed fairly and equally
- Exceptional needs are considered.
- Income generated through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) is used responsibly
- Budgetary issues which may affect service delivery are communicated promptly
- There is close liaison on individual cases and alternative options to meet the applicant's needs are considered
- With the more complex cases, arrange joint visits between the Council's Surveyor and the OT to discuss all available options for the applicant
- Attend regular meetings including the Feasibility Group are held between the Council and the OT to discuss the progress of individual cases and current working practices

7.3 The Council will record all major disabled adaptations on a stock condition database. Whenever practical, this information will be utilised to ensure that full use is made of existing facilities by targeting suitable adapted properties or applicants with matching mobility or other needs.

## **8.0 Requests for Minor and Major Adaptations**

8.1 Requests for adaptations may be requested by IBC Housing officers or Scheme Managers:

## **9.0 Finance**

9.1 IBC allocates an annual budget for council house disabled adaptations from the Housing Revenue Account. The work is demand led and regular reports are presented to the Senior Housing Management Team (SHMT) to monitor expenditure. IBC ensures that expenditure represents value for money through its Procurement Strategy.

The following adaptations can only be authorised by the Senior Housing Management Team (SHMT), with the approval of the Housing Portfolio Holder:

- any adaptation that is estimated to cost over £30,000;
- any exceptional proposed adaptation that would normally have been refused; and
- any proposal to significantly adapt a property for an applicant from the housing register.

## **10.0 Programming the work**

- 10.1 Minor adaptations work will be carried out on a first come, first served basis as assessed by the Occupational Therapist team for both adults and children at the Feasibility Group meeting. Only in exceptional circumstances will the Council deviate from a first come, first served basis. Major adaptations will be completed on the same basis but may take far longer to complete due to the design and statutory controls (i.e. building control) and the procurement of work that exist.
- 10.2 A schedule of works will identify the nature of the works, who will carry them out and when. During the works and on completion, inspections will be carried out to ensure compliance with the programme and that the tenant is satisfied with the quality of the work.
- 10.3 Subject to all the relevant criteria being met above, IBC will:
- Arrange for all Minor Adaptations i.e., those up to a value of £1,000 to be carried out within 3 months from the receipt of the assessment.
  - Major Adaptations will be completed within 18 months subject to Planning and Building Control approval and the procurement of work. In these circumstances discussions will take place over some Minor Adaptations will be considered to ensure the health and safety of the applicant.
- 10.4 IBC fully funds adaptations to its own housing stock from its Housing Revenue Account. The undertaking of adaptations under this Policy is fully dependent on funding constraints, current legislation, or other exceptional circumstances.
- 10.4 Where slippage occurs, due to funds not being available, or demand outstrips capacity the work will be completed in strict date order, unless identified by the OT.
- 10.5 Due to high demand for the Disabled Adaptions service any new referrals will be added to an existing queue. At times this may have an impact on delivering referrals within the agreed time frames. Tenants will be contacted by the Adaptations Manager who will discuss and provide updates concerning their referral.

## **11.0 New Build Programme**

- 11.1 The Council has an ambitious new build programme.
- 11.2 As part of the Council's strategy to meet demand for adapted homes, the Council includes a number of adapted properties within its new build programme. This is deemed to be a cost-effective solution of providing these homes compared to significant alterations to existing stock, that may not suit substantial adaptations.

11.3 The Councils Senior Housing Management Team (SHMT), will consider how best to allocate these new build homes by matching the timing of new build completions on site, with tenants that may have a requirement or need based on applications on Gateway to Homechoice, existing tenants that require adaptations to their home but may not have applied to move or by other means to ensure the Council makes best use of its stock for the benefit of its tenants.

## **12.0 Appeals process**

12.1 When an OT referral has been refused by the Feasibility Group, a letter will be sent to the tenant, OT and Housing Office requesting a visit is scheduled with the tenant to discuss the decision and any available further options.

12.2 The letter will clearly outline the reason for refusing works and will encourage tenants to consider transferring to a property, which is more suitable to their needs, if required, by registering their details on the Gateway to Home Choice website [Home - HomeChoice \(gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk\)](http://Home - HomeChoice (gatewaytohomechoice.org.uk))

12.3 Where a tenant feels their refusal has not considered all available evidence, they should contact their Occupational Therapist and provide any additional supplementary information to support the referral for resubmitted to IBC for further consideration.

12.4 If the Feasibility Group uphold their original OT referral refusal decision then the tenant can request an appeal through a panel of senior officers to consider the referral decision which they can either uphold the Feasibility Groups decision or agree to the OT request. Decision will be considered within 14-days from receipt of the request.

12.5 As part of IBC's new builds program, properties are being built to fully comply with M4 (3) standards to provide reasonable provisions for a wheelchair user to live in the dwelling and have the ability to use any outdoor space, parking and communal facilities which tenants may consider as part of registering on the Home Choice gateway system.

12.6 The tenant can raise a complaint with the Housing Ombudsman at any stage during the appeal's process.

12.7 Ipswich Borough Council strives to provide high quality services. In order to maintain these services, we have a formal complaints process which allows complaints to be raised and dealt with.

- Stages of the complaints procedure

If you are not satisfied with a service then a Stage 1 complaint can be raised either using the online reporting form: <https://www.ipswich.gov.uk/complaints> or in writing at:

Complaints Service

Ipswich Borough Council

Grafton House

15-17 Russell Road

Ipswich

IP1 2DE

12.8 On receipt of a Stage 1 complaint we will respond:

- Acknowledgement – 5 working days from the date complaint is received
- Full response within - 10 working days from the date complaint is received

If it is not possible to respond within this timeframe then you will receive an explanation with a new date of response which will not exceed an additional 10 working days.

If you are not satisfied with the Stage 1 response then a Stage 2 complaint to be investigated further.

12.9 On receipt of a Stage 2 complaint we will respond:

- Acknowledgement – 5 working days from the date complaint is received
- Full response within - 20 working days from the date complaint is received

If it is not possible to respond within this timeframe then you will receive an explanation with a new date of response which will not exceed an additional 20 working days

If you remain unsatisfied with the Stage 2 response then you can contact the relevant Ombudsman or at any time during your complaint process.

Housing Ombudsman Service, PO Box 152, Liverpool, L33 7WQ

Tel: 0300 111 3000

Email: [info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk](mailto:info@housing-ombudsman.org.uk)  
[www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk](http://www.housing-ombudsman.org.uk)

### **13.0 Equality & Diversity**

13.1 The council recognises that it provides housing for communities which include wide social diversity and is committed to providing equal access to services. This policy aims to treat all residents fairly, with respect and professionalism. In line with the duty placed on the local authority under the Equality Act 2010 specific consideration of the impact of this policy has been given to people with protected characteristics, including gender, race, age, disability, religion, sexual orientation and marital status.

13.2 The approach adopted within this policy focuses on understanding individual circumstances in order to provide appropriate advice and support; this includes understanding the needs of tenants who have protected characteristics. Consideration will therefore be given to language barriers, accessibility and cultural issues which may affect a tenant's ability to manage their tenancy or seek advice on problems, and resolutions which take account of the individual's beliefs and abilities.

13.3 The council will enable all our tenants to have clear information and equal access to available services and information in a range of appropriate languages and formats will be provided when requested. This policy has been designed to be fully inclusive regardless of the ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religious belief, or disability of service users or residents. The Equality Impact Assessment will be reviewed as part of reviewing the policy document in order to inform any changes that may be required.

- 13.4 From time to time the council may ask tenants to provide details of their gender, age, religion, disability, ethnicity and sexual orientation in line with the protected characteristics identified within the Equalities Act 2010 to help the council to deliver more effective, appropriate and inclusive policies and practices. All data collected is used only for monitoring purposes and kept securely.
- 13.5 A copy of the Equality Impact Assessment completed prior to the approval of this policy is available upon request In line with the Councils Privacy Notice which can be found here [Privacy Notice | Ipswich Borough Council](#)

#### **14.0 Policy Monitoring and Review**

- 14.1 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, or in the event of legislative changes whichever is sooner.
- 14.2 This policy is dated 10 September 2024 (next policy review scheduled no later than September 2027).