

ADAPTATIONS POLICY

AST-POL-06-03

January 2024

Summary

Purpose: To set out Plus Dane's approach to delivering its Adaptations service as part of our aim to deliver quality homes and sustainable tenancies.

Audience: All Plus Dane Colleagues

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1 Policy Statement 4

2 Policy Aims..... 4

3 Links to Corporate Plan: 4

4 Our Approach 5

 4.1 Adaptations..... 5

 4.2 Minor Adaptations 5

 4.3 Major Adaptations 6

 4.4 Funding..... 6

 4.5 Rent & Service Charge Changes..... 7

 4.6 Requests that Plus Dane will not consider..... 8

 4.7 Rehousing Options 8

 4.8 Adapted Homes 9

 4.9 Complaints..... 9

 4.10 Removal and Recycling..... 9

5 Assurance 9

 5.1 Roles & Responsibilities 9

 5.2 Customer Standards..... 10

6 Performance Management 10

7 Data Governance 11

8 Links to other policies/documents: 11

9 Equality Impact Assessment 11

10 Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking..... 11

11 Appendix 1: 12

1 Policy Statement

Plus Dane Housing is committed to supporting the wellbeing needs of our customers who are experiencing difficulty living in their home.

We will do this by providing an efficient and effective adaptation service that offers value for money and meets the individual needs of our social housing customers.

We will work in close partnership with external agencies to make the best use of our existing adapted homes. Home letting adverts will highlight the installed adaptation and wherever possible, homes with adaptations will be prioritised for households with a need for those adaptations in line with an Occupational Therapists (OT) recommendation.

The statutory responsibility for the funding of adaptations is the duty of the Local Authority. Plus Dane's customers are entitled to apply for Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) through the Local Authority under the terms of the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 or Regulatory Reform Order (2002).

The application of this Policy ensures compliance with the outcomes of the Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England, responsibility of the Regulator for Social Housing (RSH) as outlined below:

- Registered providers shall co-operate with relevant organisations to provide an adaptations service that meets tenants' needs.

It also aims to comply with the new consumer standards as outlined below:

- Registered providers must assist tenants' seeking housing adaptations to access appropriate services.

2 Policy Aims

This policy applies to general needs and older persons housing. The aim is to provide an adaptation service that will:

- Allow customers to retain independence and dignity in their home while making best use of Plus Dane's assets.
- To make customers aware of the policy and their right to adaptations to improve their quality of life.
- Deal effectively and consistently with requests for adaptations from our customers.
- Promote choice to customers by offering a range of options.
- Ensure the effective use of resources and the delivery of a value for money service.

3 Links to Corporate Plan:

This policy links to

- **Customer Experience.**
 - Building a mutual understanding on the technological and cultural investment to date.

- Create with current and future customers an experience that is efficient and responsive, allows choice, and is tailored to individuals and their circumstance.
- Generating a sense of belonging, that gives a positive value to being a Plus Dane customer.
- **Sustainable Organisation.**
 - High performance and contribution to financial resilience by helping people stay in their homes longer and accessing external grant funding to deliver focused benefits.

4 Our Approach

4.1 Adaptations

Plus Dane offers a range of solutions within this policy designed to enable our social housing customers to remain independent in their home. The solutions may include:

- Helping customers to re-organise their home to help them manage more easily.
- Providing adaptations designed to meet customer needs so that the home becomes more accessible.
- Signposting to the other agencies who can assist with the provision of daily living aids and technology to help manage day to day tasks.
- Supporting customers whose homes are not suitable to be adapted or where the decision is to not provide the adaptation, to move to a more suitable home. This may include providing practical support to move.

The statutory responsibility for the funding of adaptations is the duty of the Local Authority. Subject to an annual budget allocation, Plus Dane will offer adaptations to help older or disabled customers and their households to continue to live independently. The maximum Plus Dane will contribute towards an adaptation request is £15,000.

4.2 Minor Adaptations

Minor adaptations are defined as fixed adaptations to a home with a maximum value of up to £1,000. Customers can make direct requests for minor adaptations by contacting the Plus Dane Customer Access Team, via the following.

- Telephone 0800 169 2988 and free for mobiles on 0300 123 4560
- Email customer@plusdane.co.uk
- Visit or write to any of Plus Dane offices
- On-line at <http://www.plusdane.co.uk/report-a-repair/>
- Plus Dane customer portal

Plus Dane, however, reserve the right to seek an Occupational Therapist's report on aids and adaptations requests below £1000 in value on a discretionary basis, to

ensure the proposed works meet the customer's individual needs in the most effective way.

We aim to complete minor adaptations within 28 days of the request, from receipt of the OT report or Customer Request. Examples of minor adaptations include, but are not limited to:

- Lever taps
- Grab rails and additional banister rails
- Half height steps.
- Key safes
- Flashing doorbells
- Cultural adaptations

4.3 Major Adaptations

Major adaptations are larger scale changes that may involve structural alterations and typically cost over £1,000. Plus Dane requires the provision of a formal written assessment and clear recommendations from an Occupational Therapist (OT) who must confirm the home allocated is suitable for the customer's needs to consider any major adaptations. Examples of major adaptations include, but are not limited to:

- Level access showers
- Stair lifts
- Ramps
- Hoisting equipment
- Specialist toilets

Major adaptation requests will be placed on a waiting list and will be managed in date order. Plus Dane may prioritize requests out of date order where a customer needs an adaptation carried out to their home urgently, for example before they can be discharged from hospital on the recommendation of an Occupational Therapist.

Subject to budget availability, Plus Dane aims to complete major adaptations within 6 months of receiving grant approval from the Local Authority in line with the eligible OT recommendation.

4.4 Funding

Plus Dane's customers are entitled to apply for Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) through the Local Authority under the terms of the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 or Regulatory Reform Order (2002). Plus Dane will fund up to 50% of the costs of major adaptations through the adaptations budget.

If a customer fails to qualify for DFG funding, Plus Dane will fund up to 50% of the costs of the adaptation, up to a maximum of £15,000. In this case, the customer will fund the remainder of the costs. Customers can also self-fund adaptation works to bring forward the completion date. In these instances, Plus Dane will support the

customer to find alternative funding sources prior to approval and commencement of works.

The maximum amount of funding Plus Dane will provide is £15,000, whether this is 50% funded by the Local Authority or self-funded by the customer.

Where there has been an OT recommendation for a through floor lift or for the construction of an extension to the property, these will only be considered in exceptional circumstances and when all other alternatives, including re-housing have been exhausted. If agreement is provided, works will be funded by Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) from the Local Authority.

Plus Dane will not undertake the design or construction work for extensions and will only make a financial contribution to the completed works. We will consider applications for extensions on a case-by-case basis. The appeal process against any decisions is the formal complaints process.

When carrying out planned maintenance programmes, such as the bathroom and kitchen replacements, Plus Dane we will aim to provide a facility that is suitable for the tenant's needs, where that differs from the standard provision. Where additional costs are incurred because of this higher provision, these will be met by the Adaptations budget.

4.5 Rent & Service Charge Changes

Minor adaptations in this policy will not impact on a tenants rent and service charge, but major adaptations may do.

Where a change to a room either by an extension or other room size / numbers changing, there may be an impact on the rent charged. This will be referred to the Rent & Services Team to identify the impact and a referral should also be made to the Income Team to ensure affordability. This should be communicated to the tenant ahead of works to ensure they make an informed decision before works start.

For adaptations installed where there is an ongoing maintenance commitment, a service charge will be applied for those with non-affordable rents. This will be done, as with the rent change, in communication with Rents and Services Team as well as the tenant and the Income Team. For any tenancy change be it rent or service charge, the appropriate tenancy change form will be completed by the Housing Team.

Those tenants who have an affordable rent cannot be charged a service charge therefore adaptation installation with an ongoing maintenance basis will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis.

Examples of ongoing maintenance is mechanical adaptations e.g., stair lifts, through floor lifts, hoists, they will be subject to a bi-annual service and a bi-annual Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER) inspection. Where such equipment is installed or where a customer starts a new tenancy with an adaptation present, where the equipment requires servicing the customer will be charged the cost as a service charge. A tenancy variation will be requested as part of the adaptations process, in accordance with the Service Charge Policy and the charge made once the equipment has been installed.

4.6 Requests that Plus Dane will not consider.

Plus Dane has a responsibility to ensure that the adaptations budget is utilised appropriately, therefore we will not undertake major adaptations to a home:

- In the first 12 months of a tenancy or an exchange unless the need for the adaptation is because of an unforeseen change in medical circumstances.
- If the home is under or over occupied especially in circumstances where we can offer an alternative home that would better suit their need.
- The adaptation would have a major impact on the future use of the home, for example loss of bedrooms.
- If a suitable alternative adapted home is offered and refused.
- Any works not eligible for DFG funding including alterations for Mobility scooters which are classed as a motor vehicle as opposed to a mobility aid.
- If the home is scheduled for demolition, major refurbishment, or disposal within two years of the original request.
- The adaptation would have a significant negative impact on a neighbour or an adjoining property such as restricting access or right of way.
- Where the request is for the communal parts of building.
- Plus Dane will not process any new requests for aids and adaptations where a current application for Right to Buy or Right to Acquire is active.
- Where the customer has existing rent arrears, with no agreement or regular payments made to address these, unless approved by the Director of Communities.
- Where the customer is not a social housing customer, the adaptation will incur a service charge, unless approved by the Director of Communities.
- Where the customer has existing tenancy breaches, such as anti-social behaviour or home damage, likely to lead to action being taken against the tenancy, unless approved by the Director of Communities and the Director of Homes. This consideration will account for vulnerability and diversity issues and the likelihood of works impacting tenancy sustainment.

If Plus Dane are unable to carry out adaptations the customer will be told why and be offered, where appropriate, suitable alternative accommodation.

4.7 Rehousing Options

Where alternative housing is considered appropriate, Plus Dane will help the customer complete an application request to the relevant choice-based lettings scheme. Where it is not financially viable to carry out an adaptation or where rehousing to another Plus Dane adapted home is a more appropriate solution, financial support to cover the cost of moving will be available in accordance with Plus Dane's Decant Policy.

4.8 Adapted Homes

When homes with major adaptations become available, Plus Dane will advertise the home as being adapted. Those applicants whose needs match the adaptations would be given priority within the normal choice-based lettings scheme. The applicant will require an OT assessment and recommendation.

Plus Dane reserves the right to remove the adaptations if considered to be the best use of our resources to meet local housing need, or to directly match this home to a household requiring this specific adaptation.

4.9 Complaints

Any customer using the adaptation service can use our complaints procedure if they are dissatisfied with the service they have received or wish to appeal against a decision made in relation to this policy. Any queries with service charges will be dealt with under that policy.

4.10 Removal and Recycling

Major adaptations will only be removed from homes in the following instances:

- Technical assessment that the adaptation cannot be repaired or is beyond economic repair.
- The home cannot be let with the adaptation, where the adaptation was so specific to the needs of the previous customer.
- The equipment is no longer in use by the person assessed as needing it and leaving in situ would cause a hazard to the other occupants.
- If equipment is no longer needed and can be of help to someone else, it will be recycled, for example stair lifts.
- We will not remove a wet room and replace with a bath.
- Where existing equipment comes to the end of its useful life cycle or is deemed to be beyond economical repair, Plus Dane requires the provision of a formal written assessment and clear recommendations from an Occupational Therapist (OT) who must confirm the suitability of the equipment to be replaced.

5 Assurance

5.1 Roles & Responsibilities

Under this policy, the teams / colleagues detailed below have the following responsibilities:

Director of Homes	Oversight of the policy and monthly financial and operational performance.
Director of Communities	Support the Homes Team, with support from the Housing Team where it is not financially viable to carry out an adaptation or where rehousing to another Plus Dane adapted home is deemed a more appropriate solution.

Director of Customer Experience	Support the Homes Team to deliver effective services by ensuring the Customer Access & Income Teams are aware of the applicable policies, procedure and processes for adaptation requests and repairs.
Head of Assets & Delivery	Managing the processes detailed within the policy and report on performance meeting these requirements.
Head of Compliance	Responsible for ensuring servicing and Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations (LOLER) inspections are completed and reported as part of compliance reporting.
Finance Manager	Responsible for ensuring the correct rents and service charges are applied rent accounts for adapted homes
Managers	Ensure their teams are aware of the policy, procedure and processes to deliver the activities outlined in this policy and that colleagues have the required competencies to deliver these activities effectively.

5.2 Customer Standards

The following standards which have been agreed with customers are in place for this policy. Plus Dane will:

- Provide a named contact for all aids and adaptations enquires who will give practical help and advice before, during and after the works have been completed.
- Complete agreed minor adaptation requests within 28 working days from first contact with us.
- Consult with and advise customers about the extent of the work to be undertaken and how the work will be carried out reduce any disruption to them and their home.
- Keep customers informed of the timescale for the work and update them if it changes; arrange suitable appointments with customers to enable access; offer, where possible, customers a choice in the colour and type of products used.
- Advise customers and demonstrate how to use any new equipment fitted and provide information about what to do if there is a problem with the adaptation.
- Post-inspect all major adaptations on completion to ensure that the work meets the required standards and that the resident is satisfied with the work.
- Complete major adaptations within 6 months of date of funding confirmation.

6 Performance Management

Performance indicators will be reported on a quarterly basis. These will include:

- Customer satisfaction with the adaptation, the service, and the contractor carrying out the works.
- % of major adaptations completed within six months from the date of the DFG approval.
- % of minor adaptations completed within 28 days of request.

7 Data Governance

Plus Dane will store and maintain comprehensive records for all homes with adaptations on CX and Keystone to allow the lettings team to identify adapted homes once they become void. Quarterly reconciliation will be carried out by the Asset Management and Compliance Teams to ensure that homes, where Plus Dane has installed an adaptation, is included in the servicing programme.

Where applicable the Rents and Service Charge team will be notified of any new adaptations that may impact rent and/or have service charges to ensure the rent account is updated.

8 Links to other policies/documents:

- Rechargeable Repairs Policy
- Capitalisation Policy
- Rents Policy
- Service Charge Policy
- Empty Homes Policy

9 Equality Impact Assessment

An EIA has been completed to ensure that the service is inclusive, fair and recognise the diverse needs of our customers. Reasonable adjustments will be made to support customers and / or those that have additional needs which require addressing when accessing the service.

10 Modern Slavery & Human Trafficking

Plus Dane has a modern slavery & human trafficking statement and policies that enable identification and how to deal with modern slavery or human trafficking.

Any complaints made that could potentially expose instances of modern slavery or human trafficking will be dealt with in line with Plus Dane's statement and the relevant policy.

- Safeguarding Policy
- Whistleblowing Policy
- Code of Conduct
- Anti-Fraud Policy
- Anti-Bribery Policy
- Anti-Money Laundering Policy
- Conflict of Interest Policy
- Procurement Policy

- Code of Conduct

11 Appendix 1:

Link to the Process and Adaptation Request & Installation Procedure stored in Promapp

[Adaptation Request & Installation Procedure](#)