

## Policy Name: Aids & Adaptations Policy

### 1. Policy Summary

- 1.1. This policy sets out Midland Heart's approach to the provision of aids and adaptations and how we will deal with requests, either directly or in partnership with the appropriate local authority. Aids and adaptations are alterations to make the home easier to live in so that the customer or family member can enjoy more independence. The aids and adaptations service is available to Midland Heart tenants who meet the eligibility criteria.

The policy provides the framework to manage applications fairly, efficiently and effectively so that we can offer customers the required support to live independently in their home, as well as make best use of our housing stock and financial resources.

The actions we will take are driven by our Mission "to be a leading housing organisation, delivering homes and services across the Midlands that enable people to live independently and our Values:

- People Focused
- Inclusive
- Professional

### 2. Policy Principles

- 2.1. Under the terms of this policy, a person is regarded as being disabled if they have a physical, sensory, or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities within their home. A long-term effect refers to disabilities that have lasted for at least 12 months, or where the effects of which will last for at least 12 months, or which are likely to last for the remainder of a person's life. The policy specifically refers to all disabled adaptations to properties managed by Midland Heart. It covers works which do not include structural alterations, known as 'minor works' and works which do include structural alterations which are known as 'major works'.
- 2.2. Midland Heart will consider requests for aids and adaptations from customers living in our general needs properties, including those in affordable rented homes, and from customers living in our retirement and supported living properties.
- 2.3. Midland Heart will not fund aids and adaptations for customers living in shared ownership, leaseholders or customers applying for Right to Buy or Right to Acquire. For these exceptions Midland Heart will only consider granting permission for the aids and adaptations to be carried out and not financial assistance.

### **3. Key Principles and Service Standards**

- 3.1. This policy aims to support Midland Hearts vision of supporting tenants to be healthy, safe and resilient by adapting homes to enable our tenants to remain living safely and independently. The adoption of this policy will ensure that there is a fair and consistent approach to all tenant requests for adaptations in their homes.
- 3.2. Midland Heart has committed to improving service standards and will undertake regular customer satisfaction surveys to ensure continual service improvement.
- 3.3. There may be occasions where there is good reason to apply discretion when making decisions and we will always consider the individual circumstances of the individual involved.

### **4. Accessibility and Awareness**

- 4.1. We will consider how best to communicate to our tenant base and seek advice from expert organisations that can assist with signposting and other forms of support.
- 4.2. In the absence of known reasonable adjustments required we will discuss with the person concerned and seek to reach agreement on what may be reasonable in the circumstances.
- 4.3. If language barriers are identified, we will utilise interpreting services to effectively communicate with them and explore alternative methods.
- 4.4. The Aids and Adaptations procedure information is accessible on the Midland Heart website. Applications can be made directly on the digital contact form or request a paper form to be sent out to them.

### **5. Reasonable Adjustments**

- 5.1. Each case is assessed on its merits, and we have the flexibility in our policy to make reasonable adjustments to overcome any disadvantage. To further support those who may be more disadvantaged, a guidance notes of external agencies that may be able to offer support will be available for colleagues to refer to and share the names of agencies.
- 5.2. A proactive approach is taken to ensure our specialist contractors are aware of the customer demographics receiving this service as this information can be shared to ensure all contract administration personnel are aware of the diverse customer groups and the reasonable adjustments which may be required during the works.

## 6. Policy Detail

**6.1. Funding of Minor Adaptations** - Minor adaptations to Midland Heart properties are funded from the Revenue Account (revenue). 'Non-standard' works will be considered on a case-by-case basis, determining whether they are eligible for minor works funding.

Examples of minor works can include:

- Ramps
- Handrails
- Grab rail
- Over bath shower
- Lever taps

**6.2. Funding of Major Adaptations** - Examples of major works include large ramps, stairlifts, though floor lifts, door widening, drop down kerbs (this is not an exhaustive list).

Working closely with our local authority partners, Midland Heart will generally refer requests for major adaptations to the relevant local authority for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) if the referral does not have a DGF application included. A DFG is the main form of assistance available from the Local Authority to allow a disabled person to live independently or to be cared for at home. The grant is mandatory for certain adaptations and is means tested.

When assessing requests for major adaptations, we will consider the needs of the tenant, the suitability of the property for the proposed adaptations, scope of the works and the future letting of the property. Requests for adaptations funded by statutory DFGs, are assessed by occupational therapists who seek permission from the landlord to approve the proposed adaptations.

In some cases, re-housing will be the most cost effective and practical solution. Midland Heart may prioritise and support a housing move in preference to adaptations wherever possible.

The budget for major adaptations is fixed annually within the envelope of capital funds available in that year. If demand exceeds the funding available, then to manage this budget, Midland Heart will prioritise applications based upon Occupational Therapy priority criteria and chronological order. All adaptations are subject to budget availability.

Major (usually over £1000) examples, not an exhaustive list, are given below:

- Ramps
- Stairlifts
- Through floor lifts
- Door Widening
- Drop down kerb.
- Level Access Showers

- Major structural work

When requests are reviewed for major adaptations the following assessment criteria will be used as a guideline, however each case will be reviewed on its own merit taking the specific circumstances into account.

- Is the property over or under occupied?
- Would re-housing be a better long-term solution for the customer?
- Are we likely to get another request at a later time to further adapt the property?
- Will significant alteration be required to re-let the property in the future?
- Is the work funded via DFG?

**6.3. Eligibility Criteria** - Midland Heart will normally only consider a request for adaptations if the disabled person:

- Is the tenant, the tenant's partner, or a member of the tenant's immediate family and
- Is permanently tenant in the household (which will be substantiated through a residency check) and
- Has a disability as outlined above which has a significant long-term impact on their ability to carry out day-to-day activities in and around their home

Adaptations for children of parents with shared access arrangements will usually only be carried out at the property that is the child's main and principal home.

**6.4. Declining adaptation referrals** - Requests for major adaptations will not normally be approved where a Right-to-Buy application has been received. Tenants in these cases will be signposted to the assistance available through the Council's DFG programme once they have bought their home. If the Right-to-Buy application is cancelled or withdrawn, applications for major adaptations may be reconsidered under this policy.

If the applying customer or family member who is the tenant has expressed the intention to move from the property, e.g. by way of transfer, mutual exchange or other method, Midland Heart under most circumstances, will not approve major adaptations at their current property.

However, applications with exceptional circumstances may be considered on their individual merit. Adaptations will not normally be approved where the customer has been served with a Notice Seeking Possession, for any reason. These requests will be considered on a case by-case basis by the Midland Heart Adaptations Panel and will consider individual circumstances. The customer will receive additional support and it may be necessary to look to move to more affordable or more suitable accommodation.

Potential adaptations for a property that is under or over occupied will be referred to the Midland Heart Adaptations Panel.

## 7. Legal and Regulatory Framework

7.1. Midland Heart have considered the following legislation when developing this policy.

Legislation	Main powers and relevance to Aids and Adaptations
The Equality Act 2010	The Equality Act 2010 legally protects people from discrimination in the workplace and in wider society. This Act imposes duties on landlords to make reasonable adjustments to rented premises or consent to tenants to make improvements, for the benefit of a disabled occupier.
Section 23 of the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (the Act)	This Act makes Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) mandatory for certain purposes.
The Regulatory Reform (Housing Grants) (England and Wales) Order 2002	This Act introduced new powers for RSL's to provide assistance to improve housing conditions, including those of disabled occupiers. To use those powers RSL's must first publish a policy setting out who it will assist and how.
The Regulatory Framework for Social Housing in England (April 2012)	There are 3 economic standards to demonstrate in line with this framework: Governance and financial viability standard Value for money Rent Standard

## Policy Document Control

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**Directorate:** Property Investment

**Version Number:** V4.0

**Customer Insight (if applicable):** *Tenant Involvement into this policy and associated changes has been obtained through tenant engagement meeting in January 2024.*

**Approved By/Date Approved:** Matthew Willcox, Director of Property Investment  
October 2024

**Next Review Date:** October 2029