



Aids and adaptations policy

Valid from September 2024

1 Introduction

This policy outlines the approach Futures Housing Group (Futures) will take to deliver aids and adaptations so customers can live independently in their home for longer.

1.2 The aim is to support customers who have specific needs to improve quality of life and help them remain independent in their home. Where this is not possible or practical, we will assist customers in finding alternative, suitable, accommodation.

1.3 Futures will work principally in partnership with Amber Valley Borough Council (AVBC), West Northamptonshire Council (WNC), Care & Repair, Northamptonshire Healthcare Trust and Independent Occupational Therapists, Derbyshire County Council (DCC) and any other relevant health care agencies and Local Authorities areas that Futures operate in.

2 Objectives

2.1 Futures aims to find housing of a suitable design, size and location for customers with a disability or specific requirement for adaptations.

2.2 Futures aims to provide an efficient and sensitive adaptations service. Futures will do this by targeting investment in housing that can be recycled and sustained for future households which require adaptations. We aim to use innovative technology as it is developed to help customers stay independent in their home.

2.3 Futures adopts a customer-focused approach to all aspects of service delivery and will consult, inform and involve customers at all stages of the adaptations process. If possible and where funding arrangements allow, customers will be offered some flexibility and choice in the style of aids and adaptations.

2.4 This policy sets out the ways that Futures's stock of housing can be maximized and households can live in suitable alternative adapted homes which meet the long-term health needs of the customer.

2.5 Futures works in partnership with the relevant agencies and professional services. This ensures all work is coordinated to deliver the most appropriate solutions for people who need aids and adaptations.

3 Implementation

3.1 There are 3 types of aids and adaptations that Futures will consider:

- Minor adaptations funded by Futures.
- Major adaptations, part funded by Futures & DFG (West Northants Council only, specifically the former Daventry District Council area).
- Major adaptations, to be carried out via the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) process along with the relevant local authority.

3.2 Each of these is considered in more detail below. Requests for this kind of work come from a variety of sources but are generally sent by customer(s) or via referrals from Occupational Health, Health and Social Care or Care & Repair.

4 Funding

4.1 The funding sources for aids and adaptations include:

- £275k budget per annum, agreed at stock transfer, for a period of 30 years (FHW only)
- £75K budget per annum for minor adaptations (FHL only)
- Disabilities Facilities Grant (DFG) administered by WNC and AVBC and other relevant local authorities.
- Planned work programmes – there is no specific budget within the overall planned works budget, but adaptations are occasionally carried out during the major improvement of a property. For example, a low-level shower could be installed rather than a replacement bathroom suite.
- Self-funding customers.
- Charitable funds.
- Other agencies.

5 Criteria

5.1 Requests for aids and adaptations are normally only considered if the applicant is the customer, their partner or a member of their immediate family who also lives permanently in the household. Requests received for any other person, for example lodgers or other relatives, will only be carried out in exceptional circumstances and if they have been resident with the customer for one full calendar year. This can be proven with documents such as the electoral roll, wage slips or bank statements.

5.2 Requests for adaptations will not be approved where a Right to Buy/Acquire application has been received.

6 Minor Adaptations

6.1 Minor adaptation work is generally classed as works which cost between £1,000.00 to £1,500.00 and will be funded exclusively by Futures. The aim is to complete this type of work as quickly as possible and within 30 days from the request. Some examples of minor adaptations are grab rails over bath showers, half height steps or external handrails.

6.2 Where possible, minor adaptation work will be done without the need for an Occupational Therapist assessment and subsequent survey. Futures's repairs operatives are trained to find the most suitable location for such items at the point of installation.

6.3 All works will be compliant with Part B of the Building Regulations July 2019.

7 Major Adaptations

7.1 Before carrying out major adaptation works, alternative housing solutions will be discussed with the customer and their family or representatives. This is so Futures can find property and adaptations that best meets the long-term needs of the customer and makes the best use of Futures' housing stock.

7.2 An appointment will be made within 7 working days of contact for the Assets Liaison Officer (ALO) to carry out an adaptation assessment. They will also advise on

the most suitable solution based on the customers' needs. This could be, for example, a level access shower or specific amendments to the height of kitchen units. In these circumstances the ALO will work with the Occupational Therapist (OT) service.

7.3 At this appointment the ALO will get more information. This helps Futures to decide whether the work will be completed with Futures paying for the whole amount of work or whether an application for DFG support will be made.

7.4 Futures will consider:

- The architectural and structural characteristics of the dwelling, which may make certain types of adaptation inappropriate.
- If it is practical to carry out adaptations to properties with narrow doorways, halls, stairways and passages which might make wheelchair use in and around the dwelling difficult.
- Conservation considerations and planning constraints which may stop certain types of adaptation being carried out.
- If the property meets the occupants' needs.

7.5 In cases where Futures fully funds the adaptation, the work is programmed and appointed to the appropriate contractor and aims to be completed within 90 days, depending on the type of adaptation.

7.6 Typical examples of major adaptations are:

- external ramps
- low threshold shower trays
- door widening
- stair lifts and hoists
- reconfiguration of property floor plan and
- property extensions (part funded).

7.7 Futures will communicate regularly with customers before, during and after Futures-funded major adaptations start.

8 Adaptations via the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) process

8.1 The DFG process is administrated and funded by the relevant local authorities.

8.2 Futures receive requests for major adaptations which require DFG approval and funding from medical professionals, e.g. Occupational Therapists (OT) and Medical Liaison Officer (MLO).

8.3 Applications for a DFG will be considered by each local authority in terms of whether the requests are “reasonable and practicable” and looks at the same things as in the Major Adaptations section above.

8.4 The maximum amount payable under the DFG system is £30,000 and applicants will be means tested. Dependant on the applicant’s financial circumstances, they may have to contribute towards the cost of the works. Any adaptations which exceed £30,000 will be considered on a case-by-case basis, to ensure the adaptation meets the long-term needs of the applicant, provides value for money and makes the best use of our housing stock. In such cases, we may ask for funding from other agencies or charitable funding.

8.5 After the MLO or OT has carried out their assessment, they will contact Futures to advise that a customer has requested a major adaptation. The ALO and/or the Community Housing Officer will make contact with the customer to talk through their housing options and whether the request will make the best use of the housing stock and meet the long-term needs of the customer. Futures will carry out a home visit to assess the property and discuss what the customer needs. Where other options are identified as potentially suitable for the customer, the relevant Local Authority will be advised that an adaptation may not be the best course of action. In some cases, it may be quicker to move a customer into an already, suitably adapted property rather, than wait for an adaptation to be made to their existing property.

8.6 Where adaptation requests do not meet the long-term needs of the customer and does not make the best use of existing housing stock, Futures may not approve the works outlined in the DFG request.

8.7 Alternative housing options will be discussed. For example, an elderly person living in a 3-bedroom house who requires a stair lift may be refused permission and offered smaller, ground floor accommodation in an area of their choice.

8.8 Details of the proposed works, design and quotes for the alterations and improvements will be forwarded to Futures, who will carry out the relevant tenancy and property checks before giving permission for the work. Futures will also have input into the choice of contractor. Works will be ordered by the relevant local authority, who are also responsible for monitoring the contractor's performance, quality of work and confirming that the works are complete to their satisfaction. Timescales will be in line with Government guidelines for DFG work and the MLO, GO (Grants Officer) and ALO will maintain communication with the customer.

8.9 The DFG budget is limited, and cases may be prioritised within a waiting list system managed by the relevant local authority. The ALO, MLO and GO will meet regularly to review cases and take note of any change in circumstances. Customers who want to move will remain on the waiting list "on hold" for a maximum of six months to enable the Home Choices Team time to find alternative accommodation. Futures will monitor progress monthly to ensure the right housing application forms have been completed and sent off.

8.10 Because there is no specialist budget for adaptations, the wait for some applications could take a very long time. With this in mind and with the customer's health and wellbeing a priority, Futures will consider a range of measures to help improve the situation in the short term. This could include:

- Temporary (or permanent) provision of Technology Enabled Care solutions
- e.g. Telecare or other devices.
- Minor adaptation works as an interim measure.
- Liaison with any other support agencies.
- Assisting with completing DFG applications.

- Assisting a customer to move to a more suitable alternative home.

8.11 Major adaptations carried out by third parties will be inspected when completed by the relevant local authority.

9 Permission requests from customers to install their own adaptations

9.1 Where permission has not been granted by the relevant Local Authority and the customer wishes to install their own adaptations at their own cost, they should apply in writing to Futures for permission. Any requests will be reviewed by the ALO to look at the suitability of the property and the need to carry out such adaptations. The request for permission will be looked at in line with the Futures guidance in 'Making an Alteration to your Home'.

9.2 Where customers install their own adaptations, these will not be maintained by Futures and the responsibility for servicing and maintenance remains with the customers. At the end of the tenancy, the customer will be required to remove the adaptations and make good any damage to the property. If the adaptations are not removed at the end of the tenancy, a recharge will be raised for the cost of removal of such adaptations and any associated work, planning, building regulations, labour costs, etc.

10 Major Adaptations where planned works are identified

10.1 From time to time requested adaptations coincide with a planned programme of works, for example putting in level access showers and low level kitchen cabinets.

When this happens, every opportunity will be taken to do the improvement and adaptation works at the same time. Works identified will be done by specialist suppliers under the supervision of the home improvement contractor who will manage the project, keeping in touch with the customer and ALO throughout.

10.2 This will only happen if the improvement programme is imminent, for example within the same financial year, thus avoiding any unnecessary delay in carrying out the work. The ALO and/or Contractor's Liaison Officer will keep in touch with the customer as the work is planned and done. Inspection of completed works will be carried out as per Futures' internal process.

10.3 Works will be funded from Futures' planned elemental budget.

11 Rent and Service Charge Implications

The rent of a property may be changed following adaption works, for example if the works have resulted in the property having an additional bedroom. A service charge may be introduced where any adaptation(s) require a maintenance contract is needed to service the equipment installed. Customers will be made aware of this and asked to sign something stating they agree before these adaptations are done.

12 Restrictions on Adaptations

12.1 As the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 says, we will only carry out adaptations which are reasonable and practicable for the property. Futures considers all minor adaptations, and some standard adaptations are reasonable and practicable to install in our housing stock "If they can be carried out safely without affecting the structural stability of the property."

12.2 Major adaptations (such as ground floor extensions) will be discussed with all relevant agencies on a case-by-case basis. This is to assess whether the adaptation meets housing needs and can be carried out without affecting the structural stability of the property. Extension permission will ONLY be granted by exception and not by rule.

12.3 Futures may not grant permission for a Disabled Facilities Grant where:

- The applicant is under-occupying the current property.
- The adaptation does not meet the long-term needs of the family.
- Possession proceedings are on-going.
- The customer has submitted a RTB/RTA application.
- Planning permission would not be granted.
- Level access showers (wet rooms) in first floor or above locations.
- Home extensions (only by exception).
- Stair lifts in communal areas.
- The property is identified for potential disposal.

12.4 Futures will not allow a land charge to be placed on any of our homes in the event of a DFG grant being approved.

13 Relhousing and New Applications

13.1 In some situations where major adaptations are required, there may be more suitable options in terms of rehousing the customer and their family to a property which:

- is more suitable, meets their needs or requires very little adaptation work, or
- where suitable adaptations have already been carried out.

13.2 In such cases, Futures will visit the customer to discuss their available options, which may include re-housing through the relevant local authority's property letting system.

13.3 The Community Housing Team, ALO and where applicable, the relevant local authority will identify the needs of individuals/families. Any housing applicant(s) that is a priority case because of their specific needs will be told about suitable vacancies which may become available. Customers who need these adaptations will be offered a transfer to a suitable property in a location of their choice, close to their support, if available.

13.4 Futures will keep details of properties which have had major adaptations carried out on the Housing Management System and Assets Database.

13.5 Due to the limited number of adapted properties and the costs involved in carrying out such adaptations in the first place, it is important that Futures ensures that such properties are appropriately let. Where possible, Futures will try and match applicants to already adapted properties that meet their needs. Where this is not possible, Futures will assist the customers to identify other suitable properties, although these may require adaptation works in the future.

14 Maintenance and Recycling of Adaptations

14.1 With the exception of some stair lifts and some other equipment, Futures does not accept maintenance responsibility for such equipment. Maintenance arrangements for customers are available, but customers are required to pay for this service.

14.2 Where practical and if in reasonable condition, Futures will recycle stair lifts / spare parts from void properties (if they are no longer required) for incoming customers.

14.3 Where adaptations have been carried out to a property for elderly or disabled people and have been let to applicants who do not need such adaptations, these will not be reversed, e.g. where a bath has been removed and a level access shower installed.

14.4 In respect of adapted family accommodation, if a family cannot be found who need the adaptations, they will be removed during the void period. The property will be reinstated and let as a general needs family property.

14.5 Customers who choose to undertake a mutual exchange where the property has adaptations will be expected to live in the property in its current state. Similarly, if a customer chooses to move out of an adapted property into a non-adapted property, they would be expected to fund any further adaptations themselves.

15 Customer Satisfaction

Customer satisfaction with the service will be monitored and feedback from a range of sources used to improve the range and quality of services

16 Complaints

Any appeals against a decision regarding this policy or the aids and adaptation service in general will be dealt with via the Futures' complaints process.

17 Review

17.1 Futures will regularly review this policy, procedures relating to it and staff training needs at regular intervals. This is to make sure it continues to operate best practice and that service improvements are made and implemented.

17.2 Reviews will be carried out at intervals of at least three years, unless there are changes in legislation which require an earlier review. The policy will be automatically reviewed whenever there is a change of policy or legislation from central Government or other bodies.

Aids and Adaptations Policy Document Control							
Valid from	Valid to	Version	Status	Author	Owner	Approval	Description of Change
Jan 2019	Jan 2022	1	Final	Assets Manager	Director of Assets	EPB Feb 2019	Whole Group Policy
Jan 2022	Jan 2025	1.1	Final	Asset Manager	Director of Assets		Updated local authorities
Sept 2024	Sept 2027		Final	Asset Manager	Director of Assets & Repairs		Removed local Authority names & used generic title Removal of section 14 property claim back Changed tenants to customers
Distribution/ Confidentiality:				Customers and team members			

Other relevant documents: