



# RCH Policy:

# Aids & Adaptations

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Approval Body	Social Landlord Operations Committee
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This policy can be made available, on request, in different languages and in other formats such as large print, audio format and braille as required.

## 1. Scope

This is a River Clyde Homes (RCH) policy and therefore applies to all RCH Staff, Board and Committee members.

This policy applies to any referrals made, either by customers via self-referral or from Occupational Therapists at Inverclyde Centre for Independent Living, for requests for aids and adaptations. Any customer of River Clyde Homes can make a request for an aid or adaptation to their property and decisions will be made based on section 4 of this policy.

## 2. Introduction

This policy aims to respond to the changing external environment in which RCH operates. Inverclyde has an ageing population which is set to increase in the next 20 years. Social Care Policy has a key focus on keeping people at home for longer ensuring independent living wherever possible.

Aids and adaptations are an important factor in this strategy and RCH are committed to ensuring aids and adaptations are provided wherever reasonably possible. However, it is important to recognise that not all homes are suitable for adaptations therefore re-housing will also be a key feature of this policy. This policy will seek to increase independent living and improve the quality of life for our customers.

The key objectives for this policy are to:

- Provide a person-centred approach to aids and adaptations referrals ensuring that customers, and their families or carers, are involved in and consulted on decisions made relating to requests;
- Ensure that the needs of customers with disabilities are prioritised and met wherever possible;
- Ensure there is effective joint working between RCH, HSCP and other key stakeholders;
- Manage the Association's stock effectively so that homes that are already adapted are made available to those who can make use of the adaptations;
- Ensure we apply value for money principles in the use of aids and adaptations funding in a cost-effective manner to make best use of housing stock whilst funding is available.
- Promote living at home for as long as possible where it is safe and practical to do so.

- Ensure a fair and consistent approach to all aids and adaptations requests.
- Ensure that adaptations are used as a preventative approach where possible;
- Support HSCP to ensure that Occupational Therapists' time is used appropriately for complex cases and
- Ensure River Clyde Homes make best use of housing stock.

The following RCH Group policies related to this policy:

- RCH Allocations Policy
- RCH Complaints Policy
- RCH Tenancy Sustainment Policy
- RCH Vulnerable Customers Policy
- RCH Void Management Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy and Strategy
- RCH Group Payments, Entitlements and Benefits Policy

### 3. Definitions

Inverclyde Centre for Independent Living (ICIL): the base of the Community Occupational Therapy Service for Inverclyde HSCP who assist with referrals and assessments for aids and adaptations.

Aid: a piece of equipment or device that assists the user, for example, vibrating pillows linked to smoke alarms or grabrails.

Adaptation: a change of alteration in or around a home to reduce risk and allow for independent living.

### 4. Policy Statement and Responsibilities

#### Type of Aids and Adaptations

RCH will provide a range of aids and adaptations to customers which can be categorised into **3** main groups.

**Minor:** an aid or adaptations to the value of under £1,000 which requires no structural changes to the property or surrounding communal areas. Examples include **but are not limited to:**

- Grab rails (internal and external)
- Handrails

- Level taps
- Stair ~~rails~~ Handrails
- Intercom systems
- Electric sockets
- Flashing beacons
- Vibrating Pillow Pads

**Major:** an adaptation of the value of over £1,000 or any request that requires structural changes to the property or surrounding communal areas

- Wet floor showers
- Stair lifts
- Ramps
- Widening of doorways
- Sliding doors
- Kitchen adaptations
- Step alterations

**Major Works:** any request that values over £10,000 that requires major structural works to the property or surrounding areas. Examples include:

- Extensions
- Conversions
- Scooter pods

### **Referral for Aids and Adaptations**

Referrals for aids and adaptations can either be:

- Self-referral directly from the customer or
- Occupational Therapist (OT) from ICIL

Self-referrals can only be made for **minor adaptation** requests up to **the value of £500** e.g. grab rails (internal and external). We will accept self-referral requests from the customer or on behalf of the customer from family, carers or from any staff working with the customers. Any self-referrals received that do not fit the above criteria will be referred to ICIL for an OT assessment to be carried out. The aids or adaptation request will then be subject to ICIL criteria.

Referrals for any major adaptations or major works adaptations can only be made via an OT.

### **Location of Adaptation/Occupancy Rules**

RCH will aim to fit aids or adaptations into any property where reasonably practical to do so. It is important to note that not all homes are suitable for adaptation. Where it is not reasonably practical to adapt a property support with re-housing will be provided.

Major adaptations will not be made in the following situations:

- Properties which are above the 1<sup>st</sup> floor where there is no lift **to serve the property available in that property**, for example the second floor in a tenement flat with no lift.
- Adaptations will only be considered in properties with no more than a total of 16 external steps from the street to the front door.
- **A customer not registered at said property**
- Any property over-occupied (per definition in RCH Allocations Policy)
- Any property under-occupied by more than one bedroom where no reasonable grounds are provided for use of the spare bedrooms (per definition in RCH Allocations Policy) **and it is considered likely that there would be demand for the home for larger households.**
- **If a customer chooses to move from a property that has been fully adapted for their physical needs, no further adaptations will be undertaken to the new property.**

Major Works Adaptations will be considered on exceptional basis. The life span of the adaptation of this nature must satisfy the requirement of the Scottish Government funding criteria.

In reviewing whether it is reasonable to consent to any minor or major works we will consider the following:

- Length of time of tenancy minimum of six months in property, unless **extenuating circumstances therefore discretion maybe applied** ~~confirmation of change in health conditions since moving into property~~
- Extent to which it is practicable to make the adaptation
- Financial and other costs in making the adaptation
- Amount of resources already spent on making adaptations

- The availability of financial or other assistance
- Whether the costs are unreasonable taking into account RCH'S budget
- Whether the work is likely to make the property less suitable for letting in the future
- How well the adaptation meets the needs of the household
- Whether the adaptation will have an effect on the size of the property
- The availability of financial or other assistance
- Whether it will be necessary or possible to put the property back to the way it was before the work was done
- It does not meet all planning and building regulation requirements, or there are legal or contractual reasons which prevents us from carrying out the adaptation; or it would present a health and safety risk.
- Wet floors will not be replaced with a bath unless requested by an OT and each request will be reviewed.

### **Financing the Works**

The Scottish Government makes provision for Housing Associations to claim grant monies for requested adaptations. Where possible, it is RCH's intention to pursue this route of finance for all adaptations.

However, where any grant approved by the Scottish Government has been exhausted or the cost of a required adaptation will exceed the remaining budget, and Scottish Government are unable to provide further funding then they may be held in abeyance until such time as new funds become available.

### **Re-housing**

In some circumstances, re-housing will be a better option for our customers. Re-housing discussions should be treated as a priority for any staff member or partner who is discussing aids and adaptations with a customer. If a customer agrees that re-housing is suitable for them, they will be given priority on our housing list and will be allocated to a group suitable to the individual housing needs.

Where adaptations cannot be undertaken, i.e. for above reasons, re-housing will be the only option for customers.

For customers who are awaiting re-housing, a 6-monthly review will be carried out if no suitable alternative accommodation has been found. This will include a further housing options discussion to revisit areas of choice and ensure housing group is still valid. The allocation request may be reviewed however it is unlikely that the major adaptation request will be granted.

In line with the Housing (Scotland) Act 2014, we will seek to make best use of housing that is already adapted. Customers who occupy a home that is adapted, and they either no longer require the adaptations installed or never needed the adaptations installed may be approached to discuss re-housing. RCH will seek to ensure that this is on a voluntary basis wherever possible, and only if we believe we can make best use of the home for another customer. If a customer is unwilling to move, RCH may consider taking possession of the property as per the legislation. This will only be used as a last resort.

### **Void Properties**

Where a home which is already adapted becomes available, RCH will ensure best use if made of this adapted property. At pre-termination visit or void inspection stage, any adaptations should be inspected to determine if they are fit for purpose. If so, the property should be re-let with the adaptation to the relevant letting group.

### **Priority**

RCH is not responsible for making decisions on the priority of referrals. Referrals from OTs will dictate the priority of the request. Prioritisation may be either medium/high/critical. Works will then be completed based on highest to lowest priority and then by date order of receipt of referral by RCH.

Self-referrals as detailed above (value limit of £500) will automatically be categorised as medium. Priority changes for self-referrals will only take place where there is good reason.

Priority changes can be requested by OTs at any given time and will be submitted to the Aids & Adaptation Team with a reason for the priority change. RCH will accept priority changes without question.

Requests for critical referrals will only be accepted when submitted by the Lead OT for HSCP. This category should only be used in extreme circumstances for example where a customer is bed-blocking and cannot be released from hospital until the adaptation is completed.

### **Performance Monitoring**

A performance management framework is in place for monitoring the time taken to undertake aids and adaptations in accordance with the Scottish Housing Regulator's Guidance.

## **5. Complaints**

A customer may submit a complaint if they feel RCH have failed to apply this Policy correctly, or if they are dissatisfied with the standard of service RCH has provided. All complaints will be dealt with in accordance with RCH's Complaints Handling Procedure. Tenants also have the right to refer complaints to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, if they have exhausted RCH's Complaints Handling Procedure and remain dissatisfied with our response.

## **6. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion**

RCH will apply this policy fairly and consistently. In implementing this policy, we will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people because of their race, religion or belief, gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, or any other grounds. Our commitment to equality and fairness will apply irrespective of factors such as age, disability, gender reassignment, marital or civil partnership status, pregnancy or maternity, race, religion or belief, sex, sexual orientation, or other personal attributes.

An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken that shows no adverse impact on equalities groups resulting from this policy. In addition, RCH collects equalities data, and this formed part of the analysis in the review of this policy.

## **7. Review**

This policy will be reviewed in its entirety every 3 years, unless an earlier review is required due to changes in legal, regulatory or best practice requirements, or because monitoring and reporting reveals that a change in policy is required sooner.