

## Aids and Adaptations Policy

### 1. Introduction

Citizen is committed to promoting choice for independent living for our customers that meets their current and future needs. Through the provision of an effective aids and adaptations service, we:

- are committed to ensuring our tenants and other permanent members of the household are empowered to live independently in their own homes, wherever reasonably possible, for as long as possible.
- ensure that we continue to make best use of our homes, meeting local housing need and supporting Local Authorities to discharge their statutory duties to enable access to appropriate housing for those in housing need.
- aim to treat people as individuals, recognising and responding to their individual, diverse needs fairly and respectfully.
- aim to ensure all our customers have access to fair and equitable support when they require aids and adaptations

The statutory responsibility for the funding of adaptations is the duty of the Local Authority. Citizen'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).

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

This policy provides a framework that Citizen will implement, operate and monitor the provision of aids and adaptations to its homes across the local authority areas we work in. This will ensure we make efficient use of resources available ensuring value for money, best practice and compliance with the requirements of the Regulator of Social Housing Safety & Quality Consumer Standard. The required outcome of the standard relating to Aids & Adaptations is:

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- Registered providers must assist tenants seeking housing adaptations to access appropriate services.
- Registered providers must clearly communicate to tenants and relevant organisations how they will assist tenants seeking housing adaptations services.
- Registered providers must co-operate with tenants, appropriate local authority departments and other relevant organisations so that a housing adaptations service is available to tenants where appropriate.

We recognise that customers will have differing levels of need, therefore the needs of the customer will be considered on an individual basis when assessing both minor and major adaptations. If for any reason we are unable to carry out adaptations, or the home is not suited to the adaptations required, we will try our best to accommodate and will consider other options such as relocation to another home better suited to the customer.

The development of this policy has included feedback from customer engagement through the Citizen's Together Panel. The policy has also been presented to the Customer Assurance Committee.

## **2. Scope**

Adaptations are defined as being either minor adaptations or major adaptations.

Minor adaptations are things such as grabrails or lever taps which are funded through our usual repairs and maintenance budgets for customers living in our rented homes. We will only carry out adaptations to a home if it benefits a permanent resident in the household.

Adaptations are to aid customers accessibility within their home. We will not fund adaptations that are designed to address individual's health risk behaviours. Budgets will be agreed to carry out adaptations to homes managed for or by others in line with their usual funding arrangements.

Adaptations will not be carried out in any home, which:

- Has a Right to Buy or Right to Acquire application with a live status
- Is a short life leased home
- Is Leasehold, Shared Ownership or an Outright Sale homes
- Is likely to be subject to a major regeneration project.

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For major adaptations such as ramps or level access showers, eligible customers may qualify for help through a local authority Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

Parking and mobility scooter storage is not covered as part of the DFG funding arrangements and therefore is not included within the scope of this policy. Separate mobility scooter guidance can be found in our Lithium Ion Batteries Guidance document.

If a customer requires adaptations due to Domestic Abuse, information on this service can be found in our Domestic Abuse Policy.

### **3. Policy Detail**

The statutory responsibility for the funding of adaptations is the duty of the Local Authority, this is normally used to fund larger adaptations costing more than £1,000. Citizen will offer minor adaptations to help older or vulnerable customers and their households to continue to live independently.

Citizen offers a range of solutions within this policy designed to enable our tenants 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 to move to a more suitable home when an adaptation cannot be made. This may include providing practical support to move.

#### **3.1 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 Citizen Customer Contact Centre using our range of contact methods.

Citizen, however, reserve the right to seek an Occupational Therapist's report on aids and adaptations requests below £1,000 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 working days of the request, from receipt of the OT report or Customer Request. Examples of minor adaptations include, but are not limited to:

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

Where we are unsure of the cost of a required adaptation, we may organise for a contractor to survey and quote the work to determine whether it exceeds the limit.

### **3.2 Major Adaptation**

Works that typically cost more than £1,000 and include items such as level access showers, alterations to doorways and provision of ramps are considered major adaptations and are funded by the Local Authority through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

Citizen do not provide funding for major adaptations, but we will support customers by signposting them to relevant agencies and assisting them to apply for funding.

### **3.3 Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) - Funding**

Customers could be entitled to a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) from their local authority if they're disabled and an occupational therapist has assessed them as needing a major adaptation to their home.

Requests for major adaptation works exceeding £1,000 will be referred to the relevant Local Authority for assessment. Any work will be considered under their Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) schemes. The Local Authority has discretion to cover up to 100% of the cost of any adaptations up to £30,000 in value.

In some local authority areas, a landlord application will be required to access DFG funding and we will provide support to customers to make the application.

DFGs are subject to eligibility criteria and how much grant a customer can access will depend on their household income and savings. Currently in England the maximum DFG funding is up to £30,000. Disabled children under 18 can get a grant without their parents' income being considered.

All major adaptation requests are subject to Local authority prioritisation and approval, as well as being subject to their available budgets. Funding from Local Authorities for an adaptation may also be limited and in some areas a waiting list may be in place.

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Where a DFG has been approved by the local authority, the Occupational Therapist will make a referral to Citizen on the customers behalf with the recommendations needed for the adaptation. Permission will be required from Citizen to carry out any alterations to the home. We will not unreasonably withhold permission for adaptations but there are some restrictions, and these are listed in section 3.6.

### **3.4 Rehousing**

The Equality Act 2010 requires landlords to provide temporary adaptations for disabled people where they are required. However, there is no legal requirement for Citizen to make any physical changes to the home.

Therefore, adaptations that require removing or altering the physical features of a home, will be considered but may not always be practical, safe or appropriate. In such cases we may ask the customer to consider a move, to more appropriate accommodation.

Where alternative housing is considered appropriate, Citizen will support the customer in identifying an alternative property in line with our Lettings Policy or may consider a discretionary move if deemed necessary. Customers occupying 3 or 4 bedroom homes may also be considered for a move through our 'Rightsizing' arrangements.

Where it is not viable to carry out an adaptation or where rehousing to another Citizen adapted home is a more appropriate solution, we may where appropriate, consider discretionary compensation dependant on individual circumstances and in line with our usual discretionary move process.

Options for rehousing will be dealt with sensitively and consideration given the individual needs of the customer.

### **3.5 Retention and reuse**

When a home with a major adaptation becomes empty, Citizen will work with the Local Authority to identify the most appropriate allocation. If the adaptation was provided to meet a specific customer's requirements and cannot be used by another customer, it will be removed.

### 3.6 Restrictions

DFGs are provided under the terms of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. Any adaptation work recommended must be both **necessary** and **appropriate** and also **reasonable** and **practicable**.

Citizen must be satisfied that it is reasonable and practical to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling or building. There may be times when it is simply not reasonable or practical to adapt a home, based on technical issues related to home design or layout.

In which cases, we reserve the right to refuse applications to carry out adaptations to a home. This may be due to the impact on other customers of the home by limiting existing facilities, planning permission constraints which could prevent the works and difficulties adapting homes with certain characteristics, for example, narrow doorways, halls or stairs.

We also have the right to decline requests for adaptations to a home where customers have accepted the home with awareness that it did not meet their needs at the time of letting.

We will advise customers for whom we undertake adaptations that we may refuse to carry out adaptations to successive dwellings unless there is an overriding need to move, for example overcrowding and downsizing.

In the case that a customer should choose to give up their home which has been adapted, we will not provide support for or adapt a home that you have chosen to move to without reasonable justification.

In the event of your death, if your successor does not require the adaptations, we may ask them to move to alternative accommodation so that the adapted home can be used with someone else who requires as set out in our Lettings Policy.

We will not reasonably withhold permission, but we retain the right to refuse the request if it is likely to result in there be a long-term detrimental impact on the ability to let the property in the future. If the request is refused, this will be confirmed in writing, within 10 days of the decision, setting out the reasons for refusal and will direct customers to our complaints procedure should they wish to raise a complaint regarding the decision.

### 3.7 Rent and Service Charge Implications

We carefully consider the needs of customers in our planned investment programme, such as the replacement of baths with showers in our housing for older people schemes.

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Where homes with adaptations become empty, we will generally advertise these with adaptations, but we may remove the adaptation where this is the best use of our resources or to meet housing need.

The rent of a home may be reviewed following an adaptation, if the works completed have resulted in an additional bedroom.

A service charge may be introduced where adaptations require a maintenance contract to be taken out to maintain/service equipment installed. Customers will be made aware of this and their written agreement to meet the service charge is obtained prior to installation. Any changes to the rent due need to be agreed and changed legally through a notice of variation before work can begin.

Citizen may replace equipment at the end of its useful life where it is still required and further funding is available; for example, if the original adaptation was paid for by a DFG the customers will normally be required to seek a further DFG.

Customers may be required to contribute towards the cost of the adaptation if the costs of the adaptation exceed the DFG threshold.

#### **4. Roles, Responsibility and Governance**

It is the responsibility of the Board to seek assurance that this Policy is successfully implemented. The Senior Leadership Team and Heads of Service are responsible for ensuring the effective implementation of this Policy and that all staff understand the importance of this Policy, the related procedures and that they comply with them.

Managers are responsible for ensuring that their team have undertaken the appropriate Policy eLearning and training,

Any changes to this Policy must be made in line with the requirements set out in Citizens Standing Orders and our Policy framework.

#### **5. Monitoring and Review**

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years, unless legislation, service delivery or sector developments require otherwise ensuring the policy continues to meet its objectives and take account of good practice developments.

Where appropriate service delivery reports in respect of this policy as incorporated into our quarterly reporting suite.

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## 6. Equality Impact Assessment

This policy has been subject to an Equality Analysis. Staff working across Citizen have considered the impact of this policy on different groups and communities that we work with. In framing this policy, our staff are committed to not discriminate adversely against any group and will respect the diversity of the communities we are working within.

The Belonging and Inclusion Strategy sets out our commitment to improving the lives of all our customers and making our society a better place for everyone. We want to ensure that all our customers have a meaningful voice, and that we provide them with the best customer experience. In line with our legal and regulatory duties we must ensure that the services we provide are accessible, and where possible are tailored to the individual needs of our customers.

This includes identifying barriers and adjusting the way we deliver services. For example, we may need to change the way we communicate with customers, how we deliver a service to make sure it does not adversely affect a customer group, or in the context of adaptations, identify necessary changes to customers' homes to make them more accessible or support customers to live independently.

Colleagues can contact our Belonging and Inclusion Manager for more guidance on how we ensure we consider reasonable adjustment and the needs of our customers through adaptations.

## 7. VERSION CONTROL

VERSION	DATE	AMENDMENTS	APPROVED AT/BY	REVIEW
V 1.0	Sept 2019	Policy updated to Citizen brand format	n/a	
V 2.0	June 2021	Policy Review	ELT	2024
V3.0	Dec 2022	Light touch review	Director of Housing, Care and Support	Full review Feb 2024
V6.0	February 2025	Full review (Versions 4 & 5 unpublished drafts)	ELT	November 2027

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