



Adaptations Policy

December 2024

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Contents

1. **Policy Aim**
2. **Scope**
3. **Policy Detail**
4. **Policy Consultation**
5. **Policy Implementation & Monitoring / Reporting**

Appendix 1

Appendix 2

1. Policy Aim

Torus is committed to providing excellent services which address the needs of customers and deliver value for money. For those who experience difficulties in their homes due to disabilities or age-related conditions, services are available which can help maintain dignity and independence as well as offer choices for alternative housing solutions.

This policy has been devised to ensure that a fair, transparent and consistent service is delivered across the group.

Key aims and objectives of this policy are:

- To enable the provision of an inclusive adaptations service.
- To illustrate how Torus will work in partnership to address the needs of the most vulnerable tenants.
- To act as a guide to Torus colleagues, customers, partners, stakeholders and statutory agencies.
- To outline the framework for performance management and service standards related to adaptations, together with an approved decision-making process.

2. Scope

This policy applies to properties owned and managed by Torus. It does not apply to Torus leaseholders, market rent and shared ownership properties where adaptations are not arranged or funded by Torus.

Where Torus owns and manages properties outside of the core local authority areas, arrangements will be in place with the relevant local authorities to fund adaptations in line with their funding for registered social landlords.

Where a significant and detrimental impact of wellbeing exists, adaptations will be considered.

3. Policy detail

Operating Context

This policy has been designed to ensure that legal and regulatory requirements are met, and considers the following legislation:

- The Equality Act 2010
- The Care Act 2014
- The Community Care (Delayed Discharges etc.) Act 2003 Guidance
- Carers & Disabled Children's Act 2000
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regulations Act 1996
- The Children's Act 1989
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970

In delivering this policy, Torus is also compliant with the Regulator for Social Housing Consumer Standards Code of Practice. The Safety and Quality Standard sets out what is required by social landlords in relation to adaptations:

- Not all registered providers directly provide a housing adaptations service, but nonetheless they should all have a process in place to assist tenants in need of housing adaptations, which they must communicate to tenants. As part of this communication, registered providers are expected to inform tenants about the application process, and where relevant, registered providers should make clear any local variations to the application process that may apply. Assistance to tenants requiring a housing adaptation may take the form of, for example, registered providers applying for an adaptation to the relevant organisation on a tenant's behalf or establishing clear timescales with the relevant organisation providing the adaptation.
- Where the housing adaptations service is provided by a third party, the registered provider should not unreasonably withhold permission for a housing adaptation to be installed in a tenant's home. Where the registered provider provides a housing adaptations service, they should not unreasonably refuse a tenant's request for a housing adaptation. Where a registered provider does not meet a tenant's request for a housing adaptation, the registered provider should consider whether it is appropriate to offer alternative measures to support the affected tenant, for example offering to transfer them to a home that is accessible or that can be adapted to meet their needs.

Torus is committed to ensuring that services are accessible to all and that they are delivered regardless of customers' race, disability, gender, gender identity, age, religion, belief and sexual orientation.

Eligibility criteria

All Torus tenants are eligible to be considered for an adaptation to their home. Anyone who is a permanent member of the household may also be considered. If applicable, proof of residence may be requested.

In cases where the adaptation is for a disabled child whose parents are living separately, recommendations will be considered for the address which is the child's principal home. Proof of residence may be requested for such cases.

Where there are rent arrears of 4 weeks or more the recommendations may not be approved unless there is a repayment plan in place, and this is being adhered to. A period of monitoring will be implemented to ensure the agreement is being maintained. Torus may waive this condition in circumstances such as cases of critical need, or where there is an identified risk to customer's health and safety.

Applications will not be considered within 12 months of tenancy start date however, exceptions to this would be where the customer has been diagnosed with a significant and relevant illness or has deteriorated due to an existing illness, or if an accident has occurred which resulted in disability since the tenancy start date.

Torus will not complete adaptations to any property for mobility scooters, either for access, charging or for storage.

For further information please refer to Torus scooter & electrical vehicle policy.

Definition of Adaptations

There are 2 categories of adaptations:

Minor Adaptations

Minor adaptations are non-structural alterations or additions and cost less than £1,000. Examples of this are:

- Grab rails
- Handrails – external or mop stick
- Drop down shower seat.
- Lever taps
- Flashing doorbells / visual smoke alarms or other items relating to sensory disability
- Key safes
- Raised WC's
- Door entry systems
- Window locks or window openers
- External lighting – for visually impaired customers
- Half height steps

Torus will follow the guidance “Minor adaptations without delay – A practical guide for housing associations” 2006 produced by the College of Occupational Therapists. These requests do not require an assessment by an OT - <https://www.rcot.co.uk/adaptations-without-delay>

The process for these requests' mirrors that for repairs, with a standard completion target of 60 working days. Requests which are deemed urgent due to health and safety risk or other priority such as hospital discharge, will be processed within 3-5 working days.

Major Adaptations

Major adaptations involve structural alterations and cost more than £1,000.

Examples are:

- Wet rooms or level access showers
- Stair lifts
- Vertical Lifts
- Ramped access
- Hoists
- Wash/dry toilets
- Door widening
- Kitchen adaptations such as lowered worktops, height adjustable sinks
- Provision of circulation space
- Internal Conversions

- Extensions

Category 1 Adaptations – Cost: £1,000 - £10,000

- Level access showers
- Stair lifts
- Ramps
- Wash dry WC's.
- Hoisting Equipment
- External rails and alterations

Category 2 Adaptations – Cost: £10,000 - £20,000

- Vertical Lifts
- Multiple requests on a single application such as Level access shower, stair lift & ramp etc.

Category 3 Adaptations – Cost: £30,000 and above

- Extensions
- Internal conversions/additions such as significant structural alteration of the property.

Although Major adaptations will be considered in date order, if a customer has a palliative diagnosis of 6 months or less, certain adaptations can be prioritised. These types of adaptations would include:

- Straight track stair lifts
- Ramps

Assessment by an Occupational Therapist is essential. Customers who request major adaptations without having been assessed will be advised to contact the OT service within their local authority area. Their position in any waiting list will be determined by the date that the request is received by Torus from the OT service.

Decision making process

Recommendations for adaptations will be assessed individually with several factors being taken into consideration. These include household details which may consider:

- number of occupants
- length of tenancy
- suitability of property for proposed work
- alternative housing options and availability of properties
- future let ability of property with adaptations
- budget and cost

This suitability assessment will be undertaken by the Adaptations Co-Ordinator who will contact the person the recommendation is for to discuss Torus's policy and options such as re-housing to a more suitable property.

If appropriate, a technical feasibility survey will also be completed which will identify any technical difficulties and could lead to a quicker decision if recommended work is not feasible.

Following completion of the suitability assessment, cases will be presented for decision to the Adaptations Panel.

Torus may refuse recommendations for adaptations on the following grounds:

- Property is under occupied.
- Property is unsuitable for the requested adaptation.
- Recommendation is for communal areas.
- Recommendation is for wet room/level access shower in flat above ground floor and no lift is available.
- Future let ability of property
- Suitable alternative or adapted property is offered and refused.
- Tenant is actively seeking re-housing.
- Works requested exceed 50% grant contribution (£30,000)
- Tenant accepted property and moved in knowing adaptations were previously required.
- Any live Right to Buy-or Right to Acquire application.
- Modular build properties
- Budget exceeds viability assessment and works required would not be considered reasonable nor practicable for an individual property:
https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/media/669a4302a3c2a28abb50d2d5/DFG_Guidance.pdf - Paragraph B84

Should a case be presented at Torus adaptations panel and be refused, customers will have the right to appeal this decision. For Torus to consider any appeal, information not available to the panel at the time of presentation must be provided so that case can be re-presented at the next available panel meeting.

Appeals should be lodged within 4 weeks of receiving outcome of case presentation. Any appeal will have the decision reviewed by the Torus Head of Service for Adaptations or the Group Assets Director.

Appeals will be accepted from both customer and an occupational therapy advocate.

Funding for adaptations

Torus will provide an annual budget for both major and minor adaptations. This will be identified within the business plan and reviewed annually to ensure that effective and efficient use is made of the resource.

In addition to this, partnership working will be delivered to ensure maximum use of available resources, to make use of Disabled Facility Grants and to assist tenants in this application process.

Every major adaptation submitted to Torus that is approved will require a disabled facilities grant. It is agreed that should major adaptations be approved Torus will match fund the submitted disabled facility grant up to a maximum of £30,000 with the local authority meeting the additional £30,000. No adaptation will be approved if the cost exceeds £60,000.

Should the agreed annual budget be used before the end of that financial year then any outstanding Major adaptations will be considered within the following financial year.

Re-housing

The cost of the recommended adaptations and value for money must be considered alongside the needs of the customer, and how these needs can be best served within the demand for the service and budget availability. Approving the adaptation may not always be the most appropriate solution.

Should a suitable property become available that is within the existing area that customer resides and it is confirmed by occupational therapy that the property will meet service users long term needs, this property will be offered to customer instead of adaptations to existing property.

It is acknowledged however that the prospect of moving can be daunting and may represent further challenges. As such, the likely impact of moving should be considered in relation to health and individual circumstances to ensure that it will not have an adverse effect.

In all cases Torus will offer advice and assistance to access suitable alternative properties.

Customers with disabilities should not be excluded from choice-based lettings schemes. They can therefore register an application for housing and bid for properties which do not meet their needs. In such cases Torus would bypass the applicant and not make the offer on the grounds that it would not be suitable.

Right to Buy

Recommendations will not be considered for adaptations in properties where a Right to Buy application has been received. If a Right to Buy application is received for properties where adaptations have been installed, Torus will ensure the cost of these will be reflected within the valuation via the cost floor calculation.

Mutual Exchanges / Transfers

Customers are entitled to apply for transfer or to mutually exchange with a customer of Torus or any other social landlord. Where adaptations have been completed, customers will however be advised that adaptations to further dwellings will not be approved. Provision of major adaptations is a ground for refusal of a mutual exchange application.

Landlord permission

Customers may apply to Torus for permission to install adaptations at their own cost. They will be asked to provide Torus with details of the proposed works and the contractor who will be carrying these out. Customers wishing to install their own adaptations should contact their area housing office and request permission in writing.

Written permission must be given by Torus before works commence, and customers must allow Torus access on completion to inspect the works. A charge of £240 may be applicable for this approval service dependant on the adaptation. Where stair lifts are fitted, customers will be advised that servicing and repairs to this equipment will not be carried out by Torus.

Where customers have installed lift equipment themselves and request repairs or services Torus can consider taking ownership of this equipment. In these cases, a stock condition survey will be carried out by the contractor managing lift stock in the area. If the lift is in good condition and parts are readily available, Torus may add the lift to the maintenance schedule on condition that the customer transfers ownership.

4. Policy Consultation

Consultation has been carried out with partners including Liverpool City Council, St Helens Borough Council and Warrington Borough Council in addition to Torus colleagues and customers. The policy has also been presented to the Torus Landlord Operations Committee (LOC).

Torus is committed to equal opportunities and values diversity. This policy has been subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

5. Policy Implementation & Monitoring / Reporting

Service Standards and Performance Management

The standards for this policy are:

- Number of OT recommendations received
- Number of adaptations completed
- Average cost of adaptations
- Average waiting time for adaptation installation by type

Information relating to these standards will be collated monthly and reviewed on a quarterly basis.

Communications

Once a major adaptation has been received, customers will receive regular quarterly communications confirming that they are still on the waiting list and when the estimated start date for their adaptation will be.

Customer satisfaction

A customer satisfaction survey will be completed within 6 weeks of completion of works. Responses will be recorded and reviewed, and where appropriate comments will be used for continuous improvement purposes.

Complaints

If customers are unhappy with any aspect of service delivery throughout the process this will be dealt with through Torus's complaints policy

Review

This policy will be reviewed every 3 years to ensure contents remain relevant and appropriate.