

Adaptations Policy

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| Lead Officer | Director of Operations |  | Last Review | October 2024 |
|  |  |  | Next Review | October 2027 |

1 Purpose

* 1. This policy sets out our approach to dealing with requests for adaptations in our homes to meet the needs or changing needs of our customers and their families.
  2. It applies to all properties where Arches has a responsibility and obligations under the tenancy/lease agreement for repairs.
  3. The full provisions of this policy applies to customers living in general needs, supported housing; it does not apply to shared ownership homes.
  4. This includes individual homes/properties and communal areas.
  5. This policy does not apply to leaseholders or shared owner’s individual homes as this is designated as the leaseholders’ responsibility under the terms of the lease.
  6. This policy details Arches approach to how adaptation requests are managed and how Arches will respond to requests for adaptations when made an offer of a property through our Access to Housing Policy or when needs of our customer or their family changes during the life of their tenancy with Arches Housing.
  7. Arches staff may identify needs for adaptations during their daily duties and will advise customers in line with this policy on how we can or cannot assist including sign posting and being able to access requests for assessments through the local authority for funding for major adaptations in their home.
  8. In addition to providing a safe home environment to our customers, Arches will comply with all relevant legislation and regulation to meet the Home Standard.

**Aims**

* To support the development of a culture that places the customer and their safety at the heart of our thinking and approach
* To seek to assist all tenants requiring aids or adaptations where these are necessary to enable the tenant or a member of their household to live independently, or to otherwise ease the circumstances surrounding caring for a disabled family member.
* To provide clear lines of responsibility within Arches for requests made for adaptations.
* To specify individual responsibilities in the granting or refusal of requests for adaptations
* To clarify the approach to requests made for adaptations and be clear on what Arches will or won’t do as part of our obligations under the tenancy agreement
* To establish a clear, accessible process to enable customers to request adaptations
* To tailor responses to ensure the individual needs of customers are taken into consideration

2 Policy Statement

4.1 This document should be used by all employees, contractors, customers and stakeholders to understand the obligations placed upon Arches to maintain a safe environment for their customers and employees within the homes of each customer and within all buildings.

4.2 This policy applies to all buildings within Arches portfolio where Arches have the responsibility to maintain the asset.

4.3 Arches are committed to:

* Offering advice and assistance to customers living in our properties, including information on how to access funding for major adaptations through Disabled Facilities Grants
* Undertaking minor adaptations (works under £ 500.00) as part of our obligations under the tenancy agreement
* Complying with legal and regulatory requirements
* Implementing arrangements designed to ensure that suitable and sufficient responses are given to initial requests for adaptations
* Identifying if the request for an adaptation is major (over £ 500.00) or minor (under £ 500.00).
* Minor works to be ordered where required, or if major works advice will be provided and assistance to access an Occupational Therapist assessment to apply for a disabled facilities grant where the Customer or a member of their household requires changes to support or enable them to continue to live in their home
* Increasing awareness for Customers through communication and information on how to apply for an adaptation including publishing this policy on the website
* Ensuring there are adequate levels of basic awareness and staff knowledge on how to access adaptations in homes through effective training programmes.
* That the components are installed as part of the responsive repairs and maintenance service and planned investment programmes are cost effective and meet sustainability and affordability criteria.

4.4 Requests for the repair of adaptations previously carried out will be treated as repair requests and not as new aids and adaptations.

4.5 Replacement and ongoing regular servicing of equipment will be within investment planning and annual service programmes

4.6 Arches will consider requests for adaptations direct from tenants, and will act on referrals received from Occupational Therapists or other suitably qualified professionals. Where staff consider that the needs of the tenant are complex or outside the capabilities of staff to properly assess, they will encourage the customer to seek suitable professional advice to ensure the adaptations are appropriate to meet their needs

4.7 Arches will normally seek Occupational Health advice through the referral source which is usually the local authority or NHS, but may seek paid consultancy advice in exceptional circumstances

4.8 Major works which Arches will not normally fund include the following: equipment normally provided by social services, mobility scooters, alterations or storage to accommodate mobility scooters, extensions, changing a bathroom to a wet room, replacement of kitchen units to adjustable height units, increasing width of doorways, installing a stair lift, hoist or through floor lift. As a guide, Arches will follow the levels of complexity within the “Adaptations without delay” decision-making framework of the Royal College of Occupational Therapists and not undertake “targeted or specialist” changes.

4.9 Arches will not normally refuse tenant requests for adaptations provided, at their own expense

4.9 Arches will consider long term impact of changes in respect of value or demand to property where the adaptation requested is major works and may refuse permission in exceptional circumstances

4.10 Where an adapted property becomes available for letting, Arches will seek to advertise and identify prospective tenants from priority cases via the local authority systems that require such adaptations. It is not normally practical or efficient to remove, store and re-use equipment in different locations, due to the small number of such occurrences and the varied nature of the Association’s stock. Therefore, we will not seek to do this and if no suitable match can be found the adaptation will be removed and the property relet as general needs unless restrictions apply in the title deeds or classification for example funding criteria.

4.11 “Minor” adaptations are defined as those that require minimal disruption to the structure or fabric of the home and/or is readily available off the shelf/retail solution, that can reasonably be completed for up to £500.00 and will be carried out by Arches Housing as part of their obligations under the tenancy; common minor adaptations might normally include: lever taps, grab rails, alterations to steps and paths, intercoms and door entry systems, high level WC.

4.12 Arches Housing will not ordinarily contribute to “Major” adaptations costing over £ 500.00 where these are eligible for a statutory Disabled Facilities Grant.

4.8 Easy access to the request adaptations will be offered to enable customer’s different routes including telephone, in person in our offices, email and via our website with secure account login.

5 Organisation Roles and Responsibilities

6.1 Chief Executive

The Chief Executive and ultimately the Board have overall responsibility for the Adaptation Policy but delegate actions to a ‘Duty Holder’ and responsible staff. These actions also relate to contractors acting on behalf of Arches. Key actions are set out below;

* Ensuring there is a customer focussed culture which places safety alongside with treating people with dignity, empathy and respect at its heart
* Ensuring adequate resources are allocated to managing the risks and legal responsibilities relating to repair responsibilities and obligations
* Ensuring adequate processes and procedures are in place to manage the risks and legal obligations relating to repairs
* Ensuring sufficient information, instruction and training is carried out
* Monitoring the performance of staff and contractors
* Ensuring that members of the public, staff and contractors are not unnecessarily exposed to risk
* Ensuring that Arches complies with its overall legal duties

6.2 Director of Operations – ‘Duty Holder’

The Director of Operations shall be the ‘Duty Holder’ and be responsible for the strategic management of adaptation requests within Arches Housing, reporting directly to the Chief Executive and shall:

* Formulate and revise Arches policy
* Ensure there is a customer focussed culture which places safety alongside with treating people with dignity, empathy and respect at its heart
* Facilitate audits to ensure that the provisions within the policy are being met
* Ensure that policies and procedures are maintained and up to date
* Ensure requests are processed and customers are given decisions on whether the adaptation can be done or not.
* Ensure customers are clear if Arches will fund the adaptation or an application for assessment and funding via DFG is required.
* Ensure adequate training is maintained to effectively manage requests for adaptations to meet our responsibilities and obligations
* Appoint a designated deputy (Head of Asset Operations – Responsible Person) to provide cover in their absence
* Maintain an up to date knowledge of legislative requirements and best practice
* Ensure all relevant staff receives adequate information, instruction and training. This includes the provision of regular refresher training to maintain skills

6.3 Head of Asset Operations – ‘Responsible Person’

The ‘Responsible Person’ is the Head of Asset Operations, who with the support of the Asset Team is the operational lead for the day to day running and implementation of the Adaptation Policy, and they will:

* Provide advice on the application of this policy on an individual case by case basis and deliver a service that our customers feedback is positive
* Ensure that all assets are designated with repair responsibilities (leaseholder, shared owner, tenant or managing agent)
* Be the business owner of the data within the systems that feed adaptation servicing, repairs and replacement
* Provide adaptation policy information to staff, contractors, tenants and members of the public as required
* Ensure adequate training is maintained organisationally and in accordance with current regulations for the delivery of the repairs service
* Appoint a designated deputy as appropriate to provide cover in their absence

7. Employees

7.1 All Employees, irrespective of their position shall:

* Advise and process requests as appropriate for adaptations within this policy as part of their daily duties
* Co-operate as appropriate with other staff and agencies to ensure compliance with this policy and all other legal requirements
* Report any concerns that they may have in relation to the management of the repairs service or this policy to the Operations Director or Chief Executive

8. Tenants and Leaseholders

8.1 In undertaking our duties, we will ensure that tenants and leaseholders (where applicable) are aware of their responsibilities including:

* Allowing access to undertake repairs
* Reporting of repair items

9. Contractors

Arches will maintain an approved list of contractors to carry out repairs under this policy. In some instances, specialist work will be required and relevant accreditation and checks including qualifications, availability, skill and expertise will be required.

Arches will provide a safe environment for contractors to work within.

10. Communication and Access

10.1 Customers will be able to report and monitor progress of adaptation requests with us by telephone, in person in our offices, email and via our website with secure account login.

10.2 The Association or contractors on behalf of Arches will contact tenants in advance via telephone, text or appointment card to notify of appointments.

10.3 Each tenant will have the opportunity to rearrange appointments made where these are not suitable. If a tenant does not allow access for a matter that is a risk to Health and Safety enforcement of the grounds in the tenancy agreement or an injunction will be sought to carry out the repair.

10.4 Abortive visits for no access will be chargeable under our Chargeable Repairs Policy unless 24 hours’ notice is given to cancel or re-arrange.

10.5 Access must be provided in line with the terms of the tenancy agreement to contractors working on behalf of Arches Housing and/or staff to carry out repairs or inspections under this policy.

10.6 Access has to be via the tenant or a member of the household who is over 18 or the contractor or staff member will not be able to enter the property. A person over 18 will need to be present throughout a visit while repairs or an inspection is completed.

11. Quality and Value for Money

11.1 The association requires work to be completed to a high quality standard, providing value for money and is working towards a “right first time” completion target.

11.2 Monthly contract monitoring and performance meetings are held with each contractor and reported to Executive Leadership Team.

11.3 The association will benchmark performance and cost via Housemark, Regulator of Social Housing average cost per unit and other sources where available.

11.4 The service will be subject to periodic scrutiny as part of the role of the Customer Excellence Panel to identify areas for improvement and outcomes of the service delivery.

11.5 Formal customer complaints will be reviewed no less than bi-monthly, any themes associated with adaptations will be identified and appropriate action taken and recorded.

12. Review

12.1 This Policy shall be reviewed and updated by the Adaptations Duty Holder (Director of Operations) triennially.

13. Governance and Assurance

13.1 Exception reporting in relation to Arches legal or regulatory responsibility and/or health and safety for repairs service will be reported to the board quarterly.

14. Equality and Diversity

14.1 All involved will recognise their ethical and a legal duty to advance equality of opportunity and prevent discrimination on the grounds of; age, sex, sexual orientation, disability, race, religion or belief, gender reassignment, pregnancy and maternity, marriage and civil partnership.

15. Publicising this Policy

15.1 The policy relating to adaptations will be publicised on the Arches Website.