

Aids and Adaptations Policy

Pinnacle Group



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1. Introduction

This policy explains how Pinnacle Group manages requests for adaptations to homes that we own or manage.

We want to help residents live safely and independently. Where possible, this may mean adapting their current home or helping them move to another home that is already suitable or can be adapted to meet their needs.

2. Key terms and definitions

Adaptations are changes or additions to a home that make it easier or safer for a person with a disability to use.

Under the Equality Act 2010, a person is disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities.

A person may still be eligible for help (including funding) with adaptations even if they are not registered as disabled, if an Occupational Therapist recommends the work.

The following eligibility criteria also apply:

- The need for the adaptation must usually be identified by social care, mainly through the Occupational Therapy service, in line with the Care Act 2014.
- The person must be named on our tenancy agreement or recorded on our systems as part of the tenant's household and living at the property permanently. If they are over 18, they should also be registered at the address for Council Tax and/or on the electoral roll. People who have no recourse to public funds, or who do not have the right to rent, may not be eligible for help under this policy.
- If a child is disabled and their parents are separated, we will usually only carry out adaptation works at the child's main home. This is normally the home of the parent who receives Child Benefit for the child.
- Requests from people who are also applying for a transfer or mutual exchange will be considered individually. If someone wants to move to a home that is unsuitable, or less suitable, for their needs, they may not be eligible for help under this policy.
- We may refuse requests for adaptations if the work would cost too much, or if it is not reasonable or practical to carry out. In these cases, the tenant may be advised to apply to move to a more suitable home. This also applies to requests for extensions or other changes linked to welfare, social or medical needs, including overcrowding.
- We may refuse adaptation requests from applicants who have moved from a home that was already adapted, or from a home that was considered suitable for their needs.
- Tenants who want adaptation works to their current home but are also registered for a transfer or mutual exchange, must withdraw their application to move before work can be carried out.
- If a tenant is in arrears, we will make a decision case by case. We will take account of their circumstances and repayment history.
- We will not usually carry out adaptations for people transferring from another social landlord into one of our homes, unless their circumstances have changed significantly since becoming our tenant.

3. Policy

We will only carry out adaptations in homes that are tenanted, or communal areas, where the work benefits our tenants and/or family members who live with them. We will not carry out adaptations where:

- there is a live Right to Acquire application;
- there has been a serious breach of tenancy;
- the layout or location of the current home makes it unsuitable;
- the work would make the home harder to let in the future;
- the applicant is under-occupying or over-occupying the home and can apply for a more suitable home;
- the household is being investigated for possible fraud or for not living at the property; or
- the work would not solve the issue in the long term or would not make a significant improvement.

If we are considering disposing of a property, we will look at any request for adaptations on a case-by-case basis.

We will take reasonable and practical steps to provide homes that meet the needs of tenants, or household members, who are disabled or become disabled and whose disability affects how they use or enjoy their home.

We will not offer a tenancy if the home is unsuitable, or if it cannot reasonably and practically be adapted to meet the needs of the proposed new tenant.

4. Definitions

Adaptations fall into the following categories:

Category	Definition
Minor	A change to the property that costs less than £1,000 and does not need a referral from an Occupational Therapist. These works must still be approved by the client.
Major	A change to the property that costs more than £1,000 and follows an assessment by an Occupational Therapist. Major adaptations will usually only be carried out where the resident has been awarded a Disabled Facilities Grant.

Disabled Facilities Grant

A Disabled Facilities Grant is money from the local council to help pay for adaptations to a home. The adaptations should help residents move into and around their home more easily or give them access to essential facilities.

Minor Adaptation

A minor adaptation is a change to the property that costs less than £1,000 and can be made without a referral from an Occupational Therapist. We aim to complete minor adaptations within 20 working days of agreeing to carry out the work, unless specialist equipment is needed.

Examples of minor adaptations include:

- Grab rails and handrails
- Over bath showers (in some cases)
- Lever taps
- Raising or lowering of individual sockets and switches

The Property Surveyor will contact the resident to arrange a suitable appointment. They will aim to attend within 10 working days to discuss the request and any options available.

Depending on the type of work needed, the Property Surveyor may inspect the property before raising a works order. This helps make sure the work is specified correctly and will meet the resident's needs.

Once the required work has been confirmed, the Property Surveyor should check that the cost is within Pinnacle's funding limits, or within the funding limits of the organisation Pinnacle provides services for, and that there is enough budget available.

If the proposed work is expected to cost more than the relevant funding limit, the Property Surveyor should explain to the resident that they will need to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant. The Adaptations Surveyor should then direct the resident to an Occupational Therapist for further help.

If the resident may need several minor adaptations, the Property Surveyor should explain that they may need to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant. If a resident requests several minor adaptations over time, the Adaptations Surveyor may ask the Surveying Team Leader to review the case before any more minor adaptations are fitted.

Major adaptations will usually only be carried out where the resident has been awarded a Disabled Facilities Grant.

Major Adaptations

If the adaptation is major, which means it is expected to cost more than £1,000, the Property Surveyor should advise the resident to contact their GP or social services to arrange an Occupational Therapist assessment. Major adaptations are larger works that are needed to help a resident stay in their home. Examples include:

- Stair lifts
- Flush floor showers
- Kitchen adaptations – height adjustable worktops, wheelchair access units
- Ramps
- Steps

If an officer thinks the resident is unsure about what to do next, they may refer them to the Property Surveyor. The Property Surveyor should clearly explain the process to the resident.

5. Requests for Aids and Adaptations

The need for aids and adaptations can be identified in different ways. This may include:

- a request from a resident;

- a recommendation from a vulnerability or additional needs assessment, including assessments completed when a home is let; or
- a direct referral from an Occupational Therapist.

Requests can be made in several ways. If the request is not received directly by the Surveyor, the officer receiving it should pass it to the Asset Team Property Surveyor.

If a resident wants to install an adaptation at their own cost, they must apply for permission to alter the property. They must not start any work until they have written permission.

Most disabled adaptation installations are exempt from VAT. A VAT exemption certificate may therefore need to be provided.

Raising Orders

Orders for installation works should follow Pinnacle's authorisation levels for routine repairs and should use approved contractors.

All adaptation costs must be charged to a separate budget code.

Works orders for repairs and maintenance of equipment should follow Pinnacle's Responsive Repairs Procedure.

Disabled Facilities Grants

For major adaptations, or where several minor adaptations may be needed, the Property Surveyor should advise the resident to contact their GP or social services to arrange an Occupational Therapist assessment. Pinnacle will only consider minor adaptations up to £1,000, in consultation with clients where appropriate. Pinnacle will not contribute more than £1,000 towards the cost of major adaptations or several minor adaptations.

Grants Accepted

If the Disabled Facilities Grant application is successful, the local authority must write to Pinnacle, or to the property owner if different, to ask for permission to carry out the work. The request should include details of the proposed work. The Surveyor should review the request within 10 working days before giving permission for the work to go ahead.

The following points should be considered when reviewing these requests:

- Is the adaptation suitable for this type of property? A Surveyor must confirm that the property is suitable before approval is given.
- Will Pinnacle Group have any ongoing responsibilities for the adaptation?
- Will Pinnacle, or a client Pinnacle provides services for, contribute to the cost of the installation?
- Has the client approved the work, where this is needed?
- Is there enough budget available to fund the work?
- What are the estimated costs of maintaining the adaptation?
- What is the likely cost of replacing the adaptation in the future?

- If the review identifies any issues that may prevent Pinnacle from giving permission, the Surveyor should discuss this with the client.

Once a decision has been made, the Surveyor should arrange for written confirmation to be sent to the local authority and the resident within 48 hours. A copy of the correspondence must be uploaded to the relevant IT system.

If Pinnacle refuses permission, the Surveyor should update the tenant's record and discuss alternative options with the Property Manager. This may include a referral to the local authority for rehousing.

If Pinnacle gives permission, the local authority should be asked to tell the Surveyor the dates when the work will be carried out and the expected completion date.

Where needed, the Occupational Therapist should arrange temporary support during the work. This may include hiring commodes during bathroom alterations or arranging respite care with social services while work is being carried out.

Grant Refused

If the Disabled Facilities Grant application is unsuccessful, the local authority will usually tell Pinnacle in writing.

The Surveyor should record the details on the relevant IT system and upload a copy of any written correspondence.

The Surveyor and Property Manager should also consider whether the resident would benefit from moving to more suitable accommodation, such as from an upper floor flat to a ground floor flat.

Adaptation Refused

The Surveyor should contact the resident within 48 hours to tell them the decision.

Where the adaptation has been refused, the Surveyor should contact the Property Manager within 48 hours to discuss the resident's circumstances and whether any other service is needed.

The Property Manager should contact the resident to explain why the request has been refused and discuss what help may be available, such as rehousing advice or referral to partner agencies.

Warranties, Cyclical Maintenance and Servicing – Major Adaptations

Where adaptations have been funded through a Disabled Facilities Grant, Pinnacle will ask the local authority to provide a copy of the warranty.

All warranties will be saved on the asset management system.

Where equipment needs routine maintenance or inspection, the Surveyor should arrange for it to be included in the appropriate service contract. If the installation is under warranty, it is not Pinnacle Group's responsibility.

6. Post-inspections

All major adaptations must be post-inspected. Minor adaptations may also be post-inspected where appropriate. The Surveyor will decide when this is needed. Post-inspections help make sure the work is good quality and provides value for money.

Once the completion date has been received, the Surveyor should arrange an appointment with the resident to post-inspect the work within 5 working days.

During the post-inspection, the Surveyor should check that the resident has received clear guidance on how to use and maintain the equipment. This includes specialist equipment such as stair lifts, through-floor lifts, ceiling hoists and bathroom adaptations.

The Surveyor should update the asset management system within 48 hours of completing the post-inspection.

7. Removal of Aids and Adaptations

In some situations, such as after a tenancy succession, a resident may ask for an aid or adaptation to be removed.

If the Property Manager and resident agree that the adaptation can stay, this should be confirmed in writing, and the relevant IT system should be updated.

If it is agreed that the adaptation should be removed, the Property Manager should contact the Surveyor. The Surveyor should first check whether the adaptation was grant funded. If it was grant funded, the Surveyor should tell the local authority about the removal request and ask whether they agree or refuse the removal.

If the adaptation was not grant funded, the Surveyor should consider the following points before deciding whether it should be removed.

- Did the resident pay for the adaptation themselves? If so, the resident is responsible for removing it and making any electrical supplies, walls or ceilings safe and finished to a decorative standard.
- Was the adaptation made specifically for this resident, or could it be used by another person with similar needs? If the equipment is no longer needed and cannot be used by someone else, it may be removed or parts may be recycled.
- Is the adaptation in good working order and condition? If not, the cost of repairing it should be considered.
- If the adaptation is expensive and there is demand for it, could it be reused?

If the Surveyor, or the local authority for grant-funded adaptations, decides that the adaptation should not be removed, the Surveyor should contact the resident to explain the decision and update the asset management system.

If the equipment has been leased, the Surveyor should contact the resident and explain that the resident is responsible for arranging its removal.

Where appropriate, the Surveyor may contact specialist contractors to discuss whether equipment can be recycled.

If it is agreed that the equipment should be removed, the Surveyor should tell the resident that Pinnacle will instruct contractors to remove the equipment within 72 hours.

There may be exceptional cases where the steps above are not suitable. These should be escalated and dealt with case by case. For example, if an adapted kitchen or bathroom is fully functional, it will not be removed until the next cyclical programme is due. However, Disabled Facilities Grant-funded adaptations with associated risks, such as through-floor lifts, will be removed.

8. Empty Homes with Aids and Adaptations

If an empty home has adaptation equipment, Pinnacle will try to let the home to someone who needs those adaptations. Mechanical and electrical items, such as stairlifts and through-floor lifts, will be removed. Wet rooms and adapted bathrooms will be kept if they meet standard sanitation requirements.

If a new resident accepts a home that is not already adapted to meet their needs, including a new-build home, they must apply for aids and adaptations under this procedure.

If a new resident accepts a home that already has aids and adaptations installed, they do not have an automatic right to have them removed later. They must make a removal request. Any risks to the incoming tenant should be identified at the void stage.

9. Replacement of Equipment

When an aid or adaptation reaches the end of its useful life, the Surveyor will contact the local authority to check whether a Disabled Facilities Grant can be used to fund a replacement.

If grant funding is not available, Pinnacle will discuss funding the replacement with the client or property owner.

10. Possession to Retrieve Equipment

If adaptation equipment is in a Pinnacle property, or a property managed by Pinnacle, but the people living there do not need it, the Property Manager should contact the resident to discuss their housing options.

If the resident is not willing to cooperate, Pinnacle should consider whether it needs to use its legal powers to recover possession of the property.

In these circumstances, the Property Manager should discuss the case with Pinnacle's Legal Services Team and agree the most appropriate action.

For assured tenants, Pinnacle can seek possession under Ground 9 of the Housing Act 1988 where the property has special adaptations that the current occupier does not need, and suitable alternative accommodation is available. The court will only grant possession if it considers this reasonable. Pinnacle's Legal Services Team should always be consulted for advice in these cases.

If the resident moves to another property through a mutual exchange, they should follow this procedure to request or remove aids and adaptations.

11. Monitoring, Review & Evaluation

All major adaptations will be post-inspected by a member of Pinnacle staff and/or the contractor's supervisor.

If the estimated cost is more than £1,000, the work will not usually be agreed for new tenants, including people moving from another social landlord. In exceptional cases, the decision will be made with the relevant local authority.

We will work with local authorities to assess applicants' needs and help match them to suitable homes.

Social services have a duty under the Care Act 2014 to arrange practical help in the home, as well as adaptations that improve safety, comfort or convenience.

Where a move is needed, the resident will be advised to register on the transfer list through the relevant local authority allocations process.

Where a move to a larger home is needed, we will complete an affordability assessment to check whether the move is affordable and sustainable.

Priority will be based on each local authority's banding assessment. Applicants with the highest bands will receive priority when bidding for another home.

In exceptional circumstances, we may consider making a direct offer. A direct offer will only be considered where:

- the tenant is registered with a local authority and has been awarded medical priority;
- the tenant has been bidding for suitable homes but has been unsuccessful; and
- an adapted home, or a home that can be adapted, becomes available and the cost of adapting it is less than adapting the tenant's current home.

A direct offer may also be considered where a tenant no longer needs the adaptations in their current home and the home would be better suited to someone else, for example where the person who needed the adaptations no longer live there.

Where a direct offer is agreed, we will make one suitable offer only. If the offer is refused, no further direct offer will be considered unless there has been a significant change in circumstances.

If an applicant later successfully bids for another home that needs adaptations, we may not agree to fund the work if the cost is higher than the adaptations needed at the home they previously refused.

Where homes need to be adapted, we will aim to complete the work within agreed timescales that reflect how complex the work is.

We will make sure adaptation works provide value for money, are good quality, meet tenants' needs and aspirations, and keep future maintenance costs as low as possible.

If we do not think the proposed adaptation provides value for money, or if planning consent cannot be obtained, we will advise the applicant to apply for more suitable accommodation. This may be one of our homes or, where available, a home from another provider. We will recommend that the tenant registers to transfer through the relevant local authority allocations process.

Most adaptations are assessed by the relevant local authority Occupational Therapy Team or specialist service. The Occupational Therapist will advise whether priority should be given because of the person's circumstances.

We will offer tenants a reasonable choice of products, based on a joint assessment of their needs and taking account of other factors such as building regulations and value for money.

We will recycle major adaptations wherever possible, including stair lifts, wash and dry toilets and modular ramps.

We store information about adaptations on our housing management system. Where disabled applicants request housing, we will try to assess their needs by visiting the property with them.

We are responsible for maintaining and replacing equipment installed by our contractors, unless we agree otherwise with the tenant and the local authority social services team.

We will only replace equipment where:

- the equipment needs to be replaced; and
- the tenant the property was originally adapted for still lives there.

Some minor adaptation works are carried out by the local authority Occupational Therapy Service, in line with guidance on responsibilities between the council and local housing authorities.

We record all third-party contractor installations on our housing management system, except minor works such as internal grab rails, and make sure compliance requirements are met.

If a third-party installation creates an ongoing compliance or servicing requirement, evidence of this must be provided to the asset team.

We will work with other equipment providers to make sure relevant work is carried out properly, that any needed certification is provided, and that our property records are kept up to date.

Approval must be given before any work is carried out in our homes.

12. Further policy details

If a property is refused, the tenant can stay on the local authority housing register and continue bidding in line with the local authority's policy.

It is the tenant's responsibility to find a suitable adapted home, or a home with the right features to meet their needs.

Any offer and any work carried out will depend on confirmation that the property is suitable. The tenant must sign the tenancy agreement for the new property before the work starts.

If we receive medical information to support a request for adaptations, we may ask an independent medical specialist for advice before deciding whether to fund the work or consider other options.

13. Policy review

We will review this policy every two years, unless changes in legislation, the business or the housing sector mean it needs to be reviewed sooner. The review will make sure the policy still meets its objectives and reflects good practice.

14. Key Legislation

- Care Act 2014
- The Disability Discrimination Act 2005
- Equality Act 2010
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, as amended by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002

- Housing Acts 1985, 1988 and 2004
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
- Children Act 1989
- Data Protection Act 2018 and UK GDPR
- Homes (Fitness for Human Habitation) Act 2018