



Bespoke Supportive Tenancies Ltd

# Aids and Adaptations Policy

Version: 01

## Review

Date of this review	Date of last review	Policy author(s)	Compliance Manager	Next review date
23/04/2021	N/A	Patricia Mokhberi	Patricia Mokhberi	23/04/2024

## Details of amendments

Version	Date	Update/ amendment detail	Resulting from
	N/A	New Policy Document	

## Approved by

Executive Team	[00/00/00]
Board	[00/00/00]

## 1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Bespoke Supportive Tenancies Ltd (BeST), is committed to promoting the wellbeing of individuals by ensuring they can move safely and independently around their home and can continue with their day-to-day life.
- 1.2 To achieve this aim, BeST will take all reasonable measures to provide a fair and accessible aids and adaptations service, make best use of existing adapted properties and will work in close partnership with external agencies.
- 1.3 An aid or adaptation is any equipment, fitting or modification provided in order to increase a service user mobility, personal dignity and independence and therefore promoting an increased sense of wellbeing by improving quality of life in their own home. Thus, providing an individualised solution to the problems experienced by people in a disabling environment.
- 1.4 BeST has no statutory duty to provide Aids and Adaptations to our service users; however, we will follow good practice within the housing sector.
- 1.5 BeST will set aside a specified sum in reserve each year, to facilitate minor adaptations, where these have been formally approved.
- 1.6 This policy supports related internal and external policies which should be read in conjunction with this document.

### Related Documents

#### External (UK)

- Adaptations without delay (Royal College of Occupational Therapists) 2019  
[Home Adaptations Without Delay Planning Guide - RCOT](#)
- Home Adaptations for Disabled People (2013 updated 2015)  
<https://homeadaptationsconsortium.files.wordpress.com/2013/09/dfg-good-practice-guide-10-september.pdf>

- DFG House of Commons Briefing Paper July 2018  
[Disabled facilities grants for home adaptations - House of Commons Library \(parliament.uk\)](https://www.parliament.uk/library/publications/publication/2018-07-18/disabled-facilities-grants-for-home-adaptations)

## **Wales**

- An Enhanced System for Delivering Home Adaptations – Guidance for all adaptations providers, Welsh Government, February 2017
- ENABLE: Support for Independent Living – A Better Way of Delivering Home Adaptations, Welsh Government
- Housing Adaptations Service Standards, Welsh Government, April 2019  
[housing-adaptations-standards-of-service.pdf \(gov.wales\)](https://gov.wales/housing-adaptations-standards-of-service.pdf)

## **Internal**

- Applicant Referral and Allocations Policy
- Landlord Health & Safety Policy
- Repairs, Cyclical Planned Maintenance and Recharge Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Equality and Diversity Policy

## **Key Legislation**

### **England**

- Equality Act 2010 (section 36 (1) (a), paragraph 2 schedule 4, and section 190)
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Care Act 2014
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (Disability Facilities Grants Section 23)
- The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (Section 2) (if a DFG has been turned down)
- Health and Safety at Work Act 1974
- NHS and Community Care Act 1990

## **Wales**

- Social Services and Well-Being (Wales) Act 2014  
<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/anaw/2014/4/contents>

## **2. PURPOSE**

2.1 This policy and the associated procedure will set out clear criteria specifying the level of service we agree to provide in relation to:

- The aids, adaptations, and alterations service
- The standards that our service users may expect
- The decision-making process
- Timescales for service delivery
- The support and assistance we are able to offer
- The way we will manage the service ensuring that value for money (VFM) is achieved

## **3. SCOPE**

3.1 The Policy applies to all BeST's service users who may need an aid or adaptation to promote a greater level of independence.

3.2 The Policy should be read by the Repairs and Maintenance team, Asset Management, Development Department, Portfolio Managers, support providers, superior landlords, and relevant third-party agencies, including service user's legal representatives and service users who are engaged with this process

3.3 All employees have a responsibility to be aware of BeST's Aids and Adaptations Policy, and to signpost any queries that may arise.

## **4. KEY PRINCIPLES**

- 4.1 The aims of this policy are directly linked to BeST's vision, values and strategic objectives.
- 4.2 BeST are committed to doing everything reasonably possible to ensure our service users are adequately housed and are able to live independently in their own homes for as long as possible.
- 4.3 The key objectives of the Aids and Adaptations Policy are:
- To ensure that the needs of disabled service users are prioritised and met accordingly, subject to the provision of available funding
  - To maximise all local authority grants, BeST's own funding and other available resources for adaptations
  - To manage the expectations of service users who require adaptations with the organisation's duty to manage its housing stock effectively
  - To ensure there are clear channels of communication and established joint working practices with our partners from the local authorities in the areas where we operate
  - To set out the criteria by which BeST will assess all requests for adaptation work and identify limitations to the service
- 4.4 This policy applies to disabled persons who are permanent service users of BeST and require aids and adaptations within their home. Procedures are in place to support the implementation of this policy

## **5. ELIGIBILITY**

- 5.1 Best will normally only consider requests for aids, adaptations, and alterations, if the disabled or vulnerable person is expected to be a permanent service user of the property or would be if the required works are completed.

- 5.2 BeST will normally only consider requests for major adaptations and alterations, where there is 10 years remaining on the lease, and where the property has not been identified as needing to be “handed back” on uneconomic, or other grounds (example: local Commissioner support is scheduled to be withdrawn).
- 5.3 BeST reserves the right to exercise its discretion, on a case-by-case basis.

## **6. PROVISION OF AIDS, ADAPTATIONS OR ALTERATIONS**

- 6.1 Best will not unreasonably refuse a request for a minor adaptation.
- 6.2 Aids and Adaptations are split into two categories, minor and major. The distinctions are based on the nature and costs of the work required and do not correspond to the impact the alteration will have on the individual.

## **7. MINOR ADAPTATIONS (TYPICALLY UNDER £1000 POUNDS)**

- 7.1 Minor Adaptations are defined as non-structural alterations or additions to a home. Aids and adaptations costing £1,000 or less will usually be funded by BeST’s own annual aids and adaptations budget.
- 7.2 In most cases, minor adaptations will need a referral following a health and social care assessment (Occupational Therapist (O.T) Assessment).
- 7.3 BeST will not, however, provide non-fixed equipment to assist with a disability or mobility problem, that are normally supplied by Social Services and re-enablement teams.
- 7.4 BeST will aim to ensure that minor works are completed within 6 weeks from receipt of the O.T. report or service user/support provider request.
- 7.5 Best reserves the right to apply an annual service charge increase, to cover the costs

associated with any minor adaptations that incur an ongoing maintenance liability.

#### **7.6 Examples of minor adaptations include:**

- Lever taps
- Grab rails
- Half step
- Mop stick handrails
- Drop down Devon rails

### **8. MAJOR ADAPTATIONS (EXCEEDING £1000 POUNDS)**

**8.1** Major adaptations are those where there will be structural alterations to the property and require more extensive and complex works. There may be significant costs involved.

**8.2** Adaptations exceeding £1,000.00 will usually be funded through the Local Authority Disabled Facilities Grant Scheme upon application by the service user.

**8.3** All major aids and adaptations work undertaken by BeST will only be carried out because of a health and social care referral following O.T. assessment, to determine eligibility and both short and long-term medical needs.

**8.4** The O.T.'s assessment will determine the urgency of the adaptation work required. Whilst guided by this, BeST will also work to ensure a balance between both priority need, and time spent on the waiting list.

**8.5** Adaptations funded through the Local Authority Disabled Facilities Grant Scheme (D.F.G.) are subject to local authority means testing.

**8.6** Major adaptations will always need prior written authorisation by BeST before any works are allowed to proceed.

8.7 Some service users in need of adaptations may also be eligible to apply for other sources of funding or grants (for example ex-forces personnel).

8.8 The association will ensure that service users are signposted to appropriate governing bodies if those bodies might be able to assist with the service users contribution or may be able to provide aids and adaptations more quickly.

8.9 **Examples of major adaptations include:**

- Stair lifts
- Over bath showers
- Electronic door openings
- Wheelchair Ramps
- Hoists
- Wet room conversions
- Level Access Showers

8.10 The provision of specialised equipment or aids which require fixing to the fabric of the property, will require that a home visit be arranged by the relevant local authority, to conduct a Health and Social Care Assessment, which is usually conducted by an O.T.

8.11 The O.T. assessments are free of charge. The O.T. assessor will write up a report as to what aids are required and what works to the property need to be undertaken.

8.12 D.F.G. Planning and Building Regulations Approval may be required in some cases.

8.13 Executive approval must be provided in the event that any Local Authority requests joint funding to fund a major adaptation, BeST will review any such application on a case-by-case basis.



## **9. SPECIALIST EQUIPMENT**

- 9.1 Where there is a need for maintenance and servicing of an aid or adaptation which has not been carried out by the service user, BeST reserves the right to complete the work and recharge the service user.
- 9.2 From the 1<sup>st</sup> of September 2020 BeST will no longer accept responsibility for the maintenance, servicing, repair, renewal, and insurance of any new stair lifts, through- floor-lifts, ceiling tracks for hoists, Clos-o-mats or other equipment provided by the Local Authority, which has been installed in our homes, once the initial 12-month warranty period has expired.
- 9.3 The ongoing responsibility for maintenance, servicing, and insurance costs will become that of our service user or their legal representative.
- 9.4 BeST will support service users to include these items in their grant application, or to make a 2<sup>nd</sup> grant application if these costs were not included in the original DFG application. However, if a subsequent application is refused, or the service user does not meet the eligibility criteria, BeST reserves the right to maintain the aid or adaptation, on health and safety grounds, and will recharge for the works accordingly.

## **10. MAINTENANCE AND REPLACEMENT OF AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS**

### **10.1 Adapted kitchens and bathrooms**

- 10.1.1 Where a kitchen or bathroom has been adapted, BeST will take responsibility for the maintenance and replacement of the facilities following the end of the warranty period.
- 10.1.2 Where possible, we will replace items with like for like, but this is not always achievable where a fixture of fitting is non-standard or no longer available.

10.1.3 In these circumstances we will try to find the closest match available, but we will not undertake unnecessary works or full replacements simply for aesthetic reasons.

## 11. AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS IN COMMUNAL AREAS

11.1 Where there is a collective need for an aid or adaptation within a communal area, we will consider these works, in order to maintain the value and function of the property. Any works must benefit more than one service user.

11.2 These facilities will be funded, installed and maintained by BeST, but would then be service chargeable to all service users within the scheme.

## 12. DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS

12.1 Either the service user, or the landlord of the disabled person, may apply for a DFG on the disabled persons behalf.

12.2 It is BeST's policy, for legal reasons, that the service user applies for the DFG directly, or via their legal representative.

12.3 Most local authorities will consider DFG's for adaptations/alterations over £1000.00.

12.4 **The awards that can be given are up to:**

£30,000 in England

£36,000 in Wales

12.5 BeST will exercise its discretion to make a decision on a case-by-case basis to carry out major adaptations or to provide joint funding, particularly where written agreement is in place, with the relevant local authority, to fund the costs of restoration works, or where the Superior Landlord agrees to waiver this obligation.

- 12.6 The disabled person must have lived or *intend* to live (health and medical conditions permitting) in the property for at least five years, the property must also be the service user's main residence.
- 12.7 The guidance states that if the alterations needed are not cost effective, the option of moving to alternative accommodation should be considered.
- 12.8 DFG's are means tested, with reference to Department of Work and Pensions criteria (DWP). Dependent upon income and savings, the grants may cover up to 100% of the adaptations, however if the service user's income exceeds the threshold (applicable amount), the grant may be reduced dependent upon income, or may be refused.
- 12.9 Local authorities must provide an answer to an application for a DFG as soon as possible, but not later than six months following the application. The actual payment of the DFG should take place no more than 12 months after the application is made.
- 12.10 Local Authorities have a duty to try to reduce any problems or suffering caused by the lack of suitable accommodation whilst a DFG is being considered, which can include providing funding for a temporary move to more suitable accommodation whilst the proposed works are completed.

### **13. REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS**

- 13.1 Under the Equality Act 2010 individuals who have been classed as being disabled have the right to ask for reasonable adjustments. These are adjustments that *do not mean* making a physical or structural change to their home.
- 13.2 Reasonable Adjustments are dealt with separately, in BeST's reasonable adjustment policy.

## 14. REASONS FOR REFUSAL – MAJOR ADAPTATIONS/ALTERATIONS

- Where the service user does not meet the eligibility criteria, i.e., has lived in the property for five years, or has the intention to remain a service user in the property for 5 years
- Where the scheme is under occupied (two bedrooms or more) or has been identified as a scheme likely to be “handed back” on uneconomic or other grounds
- Where there is less than 10 years remaining on BeST’s lease, at BeST’s discretion (*see Eligibility 5.2 & 5.3*)
- The property is unsuitable for the service user
- The property is unsuitable for adaptation
- A suitable, alternative, or existing adapted property is offered and refused
- The adaptation requested is unlikely to meet the needs of a progressive condition or ongoing health needs
- All requests for major adaptations in property above ground level will be considered on a case-by-case basis
- Where applicants are in rent arrears of 4 weeks or more, BeST may refuse to provide aid and adaptations services, unless there is a repayment plan in place, and there is evidence that it’s being adhered to
- BeST may, on a discretionary basis, waive this condition in cases of critical need or where there are immediate risks to the health and safety of the service user, or occupants of the property.
- Where existing major adaptations/specialised equipment have reached the end of their operational life (i.e., it is no longer possible to service them or find replacement parts).
- BeST will carry out an assessment with the service user, to determine if the adaptation is still required, or if their needs could be met in other ways. This issue may be addressed through the provision of different adaptations, a management move to an alternative property, or via a new DFG application. This may require that the service user provides BeST with a new O.T. assessment.

## **15. TRANSFER TO SUITABLE ALTERNATIVE ACCOMMODATION**

- 15.1 Adaptations will not be carried out to a property where it is under-occupied by two bedrooms or more. BeST will look to transfer the service user to a more suitable property. Couples who need separate bedrooms for medical reasons will not be adversely affected by this rule and BeST will seek advice from medical professionals in such cases.
- 15.2 It may be decided that the service users' needs are best met through a managed move. This decision would be made by the Head of Housing and the OT in consultation with the service user. A priority transfer within the association's stock would be approved under BeST's Allocations Policy and/or a priority move to another Registered Provider may be arranged.
- 15.3 Where it has been identified that a move to a more suitable property is both reasonable and practicable, the association reserves the right to refuse approval for the adaptations requested for the original home.
- 15.4 The Head of Housing will make this decision and such decisions will be final. The OT will be consulted on the suitability of the proposed alternative home.

## **16. FUTURE TRANSFERS AND MUTUAL EXCHANGES**

- 16.1 If service users for whom the association or local authority has undertaken adaptations wish to transfer or mutual exchange to another property it is at the association's discretion to determine whether such a move can take place. This decision will be taken by the Head of Housing in accordance with relevant housing legislation.
- 16.2 Each case will be reviewed individually to consider personal circumstances and will include consultation with the service user. We will advise service users for whom we

undertake adaptations that we may refuse to carry out adaptations to successive dwellings unless there is an overriding need to move.

## **17. RE-LETTING OUR PROPERTIES**

**17.1** If a service user leaves an adapted property, we will try to re-let it to a service user whose needs best match the type of aid and adaptations in the property. The removal of any aids or adaptations will always be a last resort.

## **18. ACCESSIBLE INFORMATION**

**18.1** BeST will actively promote the service to our service users, by publishing BeST's Aids and Adaptations policy on our website or by making this available in other accessible information format.

## **19. RESPONSIBILITIES**

### **19.1 Responsible Officers**

**19.1.1** The Operations Director and the Head of Asset Management will have operational responsibility for the Aids and Adaptations Service that BeST provides, the implementation of both the policy and its associated procedure, and for revisions to the policy document.

**19.2** Performance will be rated by the following performance indicators:

- Customer satisfaction with aids and adaptations
- Monitor critical/substantial works, and ensure completion within time frames
- Provide an annual financial breakdown of costs to allow for adequate provision for the following years aids and adaptations funding arrangements
- The performance statistics will be reported to service users on an annual basis in the Annual Tenants Report (which is overseen by the Head of Housing)

### **19.3 Training**

**19.3.1** The Head of Asset Management will ensure that all relevant training needs are adequately addressed, and relevant internal procedures are implemented and observed.

### **19.4 Recruitment**

**19.4.1** BeST will ensure that its recruitment and organisational development procedures incorporate relevant experience as being a necessary consideration in any advertised job role.

**19.4.2** It is essential that all employees within the repair and maintenance and asset management departments should hold relevant qualifications and certification and have relevant experience commensurate with the advertised role.

## **20. REPORTING AND MONITORING**

**20.1** The Head of Asset Management and the Senior Maintenance Coordinator will report to the Operations Director and the Executive Team.

**20.2** The Head of Asset Management will provide written KPI updates to the Executive Team and Board, which will be made available as and when required, and will assist conduct internal audit as directed.

**20.3** The Head of Asset Management and the Senior Maintenance Coordinator, will be responsible for ensuring that details of all aids, adaptations and alterations are passed through to the relevant Portfolio Manager, including cost details, to facilitate the updating of the Aids and Adaptations Spreadsheet/Register, to allow for future financial planning.

**20.4** The Head of Asset Management, and the Senior Maintenance Coordinator are responsible for ensuring the policy and associated procedure are complied with.

## 21. DEFINITIONS

**BeST** – Bespoke Supportive Tenancies Ltd

**Service User** - Tenant or License Holder

**Aid** - an aid is a piece of equipment which is portable and not permanently fixed in your home

**Adaptation** - An adaptation is the provision of fixed equipment and/or modification to the property, or associated land, where it has been recognised by an OT that an aid alone or specialised equipment, will no longer meet an identified need to enable tenants or other permanent members of the household to live independently and safely in their home

**Disabled Person** - Someone with a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his / her ability to carry out normal day to day activities.' This adverse effect is both substantial and long term. **(DDA 1995)**

**DFG** – Disabled Facilities Grant

**DWP** – Department of Works and Pensions

**OT** – Occupational Therapist

**VFM** – Value for Money

## 22. EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

22.1 BeST is committed to mainstreaming equality and diversity throughout all its activities as well as meeting the general and specific duties imposed on it through the legislation. Please refer to BeST's Equality and Diversity Policy to read the Policy details in full.



## Appendix 1

Funding	Minor Adaptation	Major Adaptations
<p>BeST will fund minor adaptations up to a maximum cost of £1,000.00 Examples may include...</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lever taps</li> <li>• Grab rails</li> <li>• Half step</li> <li>• Mop-stick handrails</li> <li>• Drop down Devon rails</li> </ul>	
<p>If an adaptation cost more than £1,000.00 BeST will support customers who fit the criteria to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).</p>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Straight stair lifts</li> <li>• Over bath showers</li> <li>• Electronic door openings</li> <li>• Extensive door widening</li> <li>• Ramps</li> <li>• Hoists</li> <li>• Major Kitchen Alterations</li> <li>• Wet room conversions</li> <li>• Level Access Showers</li> <li>• Stair Lifts</li> <li>• Through Floor Lifts</li> <li>• Ceiling Track Hoists</li> <li>• Clos-o-mat</li> <li>• Extensions</li> </ul>
<p>Items not funded by BeST.</p> <p>However, we will signpost customers to equipment assessments and support customers to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant for equipment e.g., stair lifts, through floor lifts etc.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Portable equipment e.g. commodes, bath seats, walking frames</li> <li>• Anything fitted to a person's belongings e.g. bed rails, chair seat raisers</li> <li>• Hard-standing, cover or electrical charging facilities for mobility scooters, unless in communal facilities</li> <li>• Wall hung shower chairs</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stair lifts</li> <li>• Through floor/internal lifts</li> <li>• Ceiling tracks for hoists</li> <li>• Clos-o-mats (Equipment provided in this way is for the individual. They will be responsible for the service and maintenance of the equipment until it is no longer required. This cost may be included in the grant application)</li> </ul>

This is not an exhaustive list. Customer's applications will be considered on an individual basis according to their needs.