

1 Scope

- 1.1 The purpose of an adaptation is to modify the home to enable independent living for individuals and their families. Our focus is to identify and implement a person-centred solution to make sure a customer can use their home more effectively, rather than focussing on the physical adaptation itself.
- 1.2 As the general population grows older and life expectancy increases, we can expect an increased demand for aids and adaptations within our homes.
- 1.3 Aster recognises a disability as a physical or mental condition which has a substantial and long-term impact on the ability to do normal day-to-day activities.
- 1.4 A suitable, well adapted home can be the defining factor in enabling a disabled person to live well and independently. At a time of financial constraints and policy change, delivering help with home adaptations in the most efficient and effective ways and making best use of resources is more important than ever.
- 1.5 This policy is applicable to all Aster Customers who hold a tenancy, except those in temporary accommodation, for properties owned and managed by Aster Group.
- 1.6 Anticipated outcomes and benefits of this policy are to enable our customers to live independently in their home whilst also improving wellbeing, physical and mental health, improved social inclusion, privacy, confidence and dignity.

2 Policy Statement

- 2.1 Subject to the criteria for provision detailed in the Aids and Adaptations Procedure:
 - We will carry out minor adaptation works (any works costing up to the value of £1,625 inc VAT) for customers with identified disabilities to help them live more comfortably in their home. This could include things like lever taps or grab rails.
 - We will carry out major works (any works costing above £1,625) between the value of £1,625 and £3,800, subject to an annual increase in line with inflation, to any suitable Aster home.
 - We will refer all major works above the threshold of £3,800, (on a case by case basis) subject to an increase in line with inflation, to the Local Authority for consideration of a Disabled Facility Grant (DFG).
 - Where overall costs exceed the DFG limit set by the Local Authority, and the Local Authority or their agencies request funding to top up the grant, we may consider contributing towards the cost of the works on a case by case basis to a maximum of £5,000.
 - We may not install major adaptations to properties where customers are registered on a transfer or exchange list as they are assumed to be actively looking to move to a more suitable property. However, they may be eligible for minor works up to the value of £1,625. Any work over this value shall not normally be permitted but may be considered in exceptional circumstances on a case by case basis.

- 2.2 We will work closely with other agencies, including statutory and Local Authorities, when required.
- 2.3 We will not install major adaptations for customers who are in temporary or private sector leased properties.
- 2.4 We will require customers to seek permission before any works can commence under the terms of their tenancy. We will not withhold permission unreasonably, as with any other alteration. An inspection may be required before permission can be granted.
- 2.5 If a customer has not sought permission and we become aware of any adaptations that have been installed, we would either grant retrospective permission if the adaptation has been installed to an acceptable standard or refuse permission and expect the customer to reinstate the property to its former condition, as we would with any other alteration. If the customer does not do this, we reserve the right to reinstate the property at cost to the customer, in line with our Recharge Policy.
- 2.6 We will not install adaptations for customers who have an active application to buy their property.
- 2.7 In some circumstances a transfer to more suitable accommodation may be a better solution for the customer, as well as ensuring the best use of Aster's homes. Examples could be if there is a sole tenant in a family home who is able to downsize, or where a stairlift was required but a bungalow was available. When all suitable alternative housing options have been explored, we will install adaptations in family accommodation to ensure the current occupiers are able to live safely in their home. We reserve the right to require customers to transfer to suitable alternative accommodation, where appropriate.
- 2.8 We will carry out adaptations to properties following an assessment of what is reasonable and practical to adjust, and not undertake major adaptations before receiving an assessment from an Occupational Therapist (OT). Aster do not currently employ any OTs so this referral would come from the Local Authority.
- 2.9 We reserve the right to refuse permission for any adaptation which is a health and safety or fire risk, or conflicts with safeguarding policies / procedures.
- 2.10 Where it is necessary to move a customer to suitable alternative accommodation, we will work closely with the Local Authorities as required, and a proportion of reasonable moving expenses may be paid for out of the aids and adaptations budget. This would not exceed £3,800 (including any minor aids or adaptations already installed at the property) and would be decided on a case by case basis by the relevant Manager.
- 2.11 We will refuse permission for works if a customer has rent arrears on their account, unless a payment plan is in place and being adhered to.
- 2.12 We reserve the right to apply a service charge for any adaptation that has an ongoing maintenance liability. Any warranty period would not be affected or charged for.

- 2.13 We will take customers' views about works into account throughout the process, and keep customers, and if required their family or friends with informed consent, notified and updated on the progress of any works due.
- 2.14 Where properties with adaptations become empty, we will generally advertise these as with adaptations, but reserve the right to remove the adaptation if this is viewed as best use of our resources, or to meet housing need.
- 2.15 If a customer moves into a property with adaptations and wants to remove them, this would be treated as an alteration request. If permission is granted, we may require the customer to reinstate the adaptation at the end of their tenancy.
- 2.16 We will take on servicing and inspection responsibilities of any equipment that we have granted permission for and/or been involved in the installation of.
- 2.17 When an adaptation comes to the end of its life and is due for renewal or replacement, such as a stairlift or other mechanical equipment, we will not automatically renew the equipment. We would require the relevant permission request and supporting evidence as if the aid or adaptation was a new installation.
- 2.18 We wouldn't normally accept aids or adaptations where a customer organises an installation privately and advises us a third party will be responsible for the ongoing maintenance and servicing of the installation, sometimes known as 'managed by others'. However, at the time the servicing/inspection is due, we may accept documentary evidence that the equipment is being properly maintained. This would be under exceptional circumstances and viewed on a case by case basis then agreed by the relevant Head of Housing.
- 2.19 The implementation of this policy involves colleagues from different teams working together across the customer service departments. Specific roles are set out in our Aids & Adaptations Procedure.
- 2.20 We will support customers who are unhappy with our decision to not provide aids or adaptations, or unhappy with how we have provided this service, to seek resolution through our complaints process.

3 Monitoring and Review

- 3.1 The effectiveness of this policy will be monitored with a range of performance indicators and management information.
- 3.2 If an application has been handed to the local authority for a DFG the responsibility of timescales and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) transfers to the Local Authority.
- 3.3 The effectiveness of this policy will be scrutinised after 12 months by the *Customer Experience Panel*.
- 3.4 This policy will be reviewed every 3 years as standard, unless a change in legislation, regulation or business need prompts an earlier review.

3.5 We will monitor customer complaints and any lessons learnt regarding this policy.

4 Related Policies and Procedures

- 4.1 Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- 4.2 Health and Safety Policy
- 4.3 Equality and Diversity Policy
- 4.4 Lettings Policy
- 4.5 Tenancy Policy
- 4.6 Service Charge Policy
- 4.7 Income Management Policy
- 4.8 Empty Homes Policy
- 4.9 Recharge Policy
- 4.10 Aids & Adaptations Procedure
- 4.11 Home Improvements & Alterations Procedure
- 4.12 Lifts & Lifting Equipment Policy and Procedure
- 4.13 Honesty Policy

5 Governance

Effective From:	01/10/2020	Expires:	30/09/2023
Policy Owner:	Regional Director – Wiltshire & Hampshire		
Policy Author:	Policy Officer		
Approved by:	<i>Customer Community Network</i>		
Delegation Matrix Reference:	R062	Version Number:	6.2