


<p><b>Aids &amp; adaptations policy review - Focus group</b></p>	
<p>9 customers attended</p>	
<p>Discussion question - Do you think the top-level budget for a minor adaptation should be increased?</p>	<p>Managers response</p>
<p>Keep at £1k but review 3-4 years as standard, noting ageing population</p> <p>£3k seems reasonable, but be flexible</p> <p>£2.5k - £3k as a starting point, increasing annually in line with inflation</p>	<p>We have reviewed our approach based on your feedback and looked at the adaptation jobs valued over the current £1,000 threshold (and under £3,000) that were funded through the Disabled Facilities Grant last year. There were only seven cases, with a total cost of around £20,000.</p> <p>Changing the financial threshold for referring work to the Disabled Facilities Grant would involve significant costs but would benefit relatively few customers. Currently, most minor adaptations are delivered by our in-house team.</p> <p>As a result of this review, we have agreed to define a specific list of minor adaptations that we will undertake directly. This change is intended to save customers from the need to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant for smaller-scale works. It will also allow any combination of these adaptations to be carried out in a single property-even if the total cost exceeds £1,000-helping to avoid unnecessary referrals to the grant process.</p>
<p>Discussion question - Should we increase our contributions to the shortfall in Disable Facilities Grant budget for adaptations?</p>	<p>Managers response</p>
<p>We think the amount is generous currently, but keep in line with inflation taking into account rising building costs</p>	<p>We agree with your recommendation. We will increase the budget allowance each year in line with inflation, to ensure our contributions remain sufficient to support adaptation works and continue meeting the needs of our customers effectively.</p>
<p>Discussion question - What are the pros and cons for the customer of moving instead of adaptations.</p>	<p>Managers response</p>
<p>Pros</p>	
<p>Cheaper utility costs in a smaller, more suitable property</p> <p>Another property could be adapted exactly to the needs before the customer moves in</p> <p>Frees up properties for families in need of larger properties</p> <p>Move to an area with more amenities</p>	<p>Unfortunately, applications for the Disabled Facilities Grant require the applicant to be a tenant of the property, so adaptations cannot be carried out before the tenancy begins.</p> <p>However, where we are aware of the incoming tenant's specific needs, we will carry out minor adaptations before they move in.</p>
<p>Cons</p>	
<p>Adapting to change - a new area, amenities, public transport, social network</p> <p>Money invested in the current property - decoration, carpets etc.</p> <p>Downsizing to a smaller property - not enough room for all belongings</p> <p>Emotional attachment, lived in the property for many years</p> <p>Moving and transport costs</p> <p>Upheaval, living with work being carried out</p>	<p>We will review this list and our decant policy to determine whether support can be offered when relocation is necessary due to home adaptations.</p>
<p>Discussion question - What are the pros and cons for Selwood Housing?</p>	<p>Managers response</p>
<p>Pros</p>	
<p>Frees up stock more suitable to larger families</p> <p>Reduces to number of adapted properties, reducing costs of returning to standard</p> <p>Will help with the waiting list</p>	
<p>Cons</p>	
<p>Increased costs as more properties are adapted</p>	

Additional costs to return properties to standard at the end of a tenancy	
Discussion question - Should we allow adaptations from the start of all tenancies?	Managers response
Yes, allow minor adaptations from the start of all tenancies	We agree and have updated our policy to allow minor adaptations from the start of the tenancy. In most cases, we will retain major adaptations to preserve the availability of adapted homes within our housing stock.
Allow adaptaions if the customer agrees to cover costs of converting the property back to standard	Any outdated minor adaptations can be removed when the property becomes empty and is being prepared for a new tenant, with minimal cost.
Selwood Housing should not offer properties where extensive adaptations will be needed	All housing options will be considered before agreeing to carry out adaptations. If a property is deemed unsuitable, the customer will be referred to the local authority to explore more appropriate housing options from other providers.
Selwood Housing should warn prospective customer of waiting time for adaptations (minor or major). This could reduce the number of unsuitable properties taken	We also agree to inform customers of the expected waiting times for both adaptations and rehousing.
Discussion question - In what circumstances do you think adaptations should be refused until all alternative housing options have been explored?	Managers response
Major adaptations needed	Our policy has been updated to include these items.
Structual changes are required	
Discussion question - Is there a point at which we should stop adapting a property?	Managers response
Should be looked at on a case by case basis	We will assess each case on an individual basis.
If a property is not going to be completely suitable after adaptations are carried out. i.e. garden not accessible. If the property is not going to be suitable for future adaptations, based on customers potential needs	If a property is unsuitable for adaptations or unlikely to meet the customer's needs, we will work closely with our lettings team, occupational therapists, and the local authority to identify more appropriate housing options that provide a better outcome.
Discussion question - Is the information on our website easy to find?	Managers response
Customers were asked to take a look at the website in their own time and feedback.	
It isn't obvious on the website, after a few minutes of searching, I found it under 'Your home' and 'Making changes to your home'	We will update our website in response to the feedback received, with a focus on making the adaptations pages easier to find and improving the clarity and relevance of the information provided.
I had to search using the search bar to finds aids and adaptations as I wasn't too sure where to look. Once I was in the page, I felt it was well set out with clear instructions. Very easy to navigate the bullet points, with relevant information under each one. The information is short but to the point and not overwhelming. Also includes a contact number for those who do require more information.	The updated content will clearly outline the types of adaptations available, who is eligible, and how customers can request them. This will make it easier for customers to understand the support we offer, what to expect from the process, and how to access the services they need.
If I put aids and adaptations in the search bar it takes me to a page with just 3 links covering constructing ramps/installing hand rails and making room for mobility scooter. This doesn't really cover enough as an opening page in my opinion, when someone is looking specifically for information on aids and adaptations.	Our aim is to create a more user-friendly experience that supports informed decision-making and better meets the needs of our customers.
Discussion question - What other information would be helpful to have on the website?	Managers response
Customers were asked to take a look at the website in their own time and suggest possible changes.	
I have concentrated on ease of use of the website: 1) If I start with the 'Making Changes to your home' page, it does cover the full list of possible changes. But even if I click aids and adaptations at the top of the list, it still only covers the three items I mention above. I just feel access could be made easier.	
So - if someone was looking specifically for aids and adaptations for health reasons, they may struggle to find the appropriate page quickly or easily, albeit there is a link in the text to the aids and adaptations Policy.	Please see comments in section above

2) Although the DFG (Disabled Facilities Grant) is mentioned in the text following links from the ramps/hand rails/mobility scooter list, it is not mentioned in the text on installing a wet room for example. So I suggest there is room for a paragraph on this and information around the referral from doctors and occupational therapy etc.

Other questions/comments	Managers response
<p>Comment - Be careful not to discriminate when making a decision to adapt or not</p>	<p>We are committed to making fair and impartial decisions and do not discriminate under any circumstances. We observe our responsibilities under the Equality Act 2010 and ensure that all individuals are treated with dignity, respect, and fairness. All decisions will be made in collaboration with the customer, occupational therapists, and the local authority to ensure the most appropriate and positive outcome for each individual's needs.</p>
<p>Suggestion - Review housing options (3 monthly) for a specified period of time before agreeing to adapting current property</p>	<p>For larger-scale major adaptations, we will consider all housing options and work in partnership with the local authority to assess available alternatives. We will continue to monitor the situation for an appropriate period, based on the urgency of the case, to identify any new housing options that may become available.</p>
<p>Suggestion - Incentivise customers to move to a more suitable property - i.e. cover moving costs, decoration, carpets etc</p>	<p>We understand the importance of helping customers find homes that better suit their needs. We work closely with the local authority and occupational therapists to identify the most appropriate property. If a suitable home is available within our housing stock, we do consider financial support-such as covering moving costs, decoration, or carpets-on a case-by-case basis. This is particularly the case where it results in a better use of our housing stock or is financially beneficial overall.</p>
<p>Comment - Make sure customers are aware of aids &amp; adaptations policy and costs and timescales for Disabled Facilities Grants at initial viewing, giving them the option to opt out of an unsuitable property</p>	<p>We undertake a robust letting process to identify a customer's needs and ensure the property is suitable for them. This means that a heavily adapted property would not be allocated to someone who does not require that level of adaptation. There are customers on the local authority waiting list specifically for these types of properties, and we will allocate appropriately to ensure the best use of our adapted housing stock.</p>
<p>Suggestion - Match customers to more suitable properties to reduce number of adaptations needed and related costs</p>	<p>As above.</p>
<p>Can Selwood Housing hold empty adapted properties until the right customer comes along?</p>	<p>We have amended our policy so that we will do exactly as you suggest. Adapted properties can now be held unallocated until a suitable customer is identified, ensuring they are matched appropriately to those who need them.</p>