



Alterations, Improvements, Aids and Adaptations Policy

Document Type	Document Description			Department
Policy	ALTERATIONS, IMPROVEMENTS, AIDS and ADAPTATIONS POLICY			Tenancy Services
Author	Date created	Version	Last Reviewed	Review Date
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Approved By		Approved Date		
Elaine Morgan – Chief Executive		09/09/2026		
The Board		N/A – Monitoring Only		

1. Purpose

- 1.1. This policy sets out how Hull Churches Housing Association Limited (the Association/HCHA) will manage requests from tenants who wish to carry out alterations, improvements, aids or adaptations to their homes. It aims to support tenants to live safely, independently and comfortably, while protecting health and safety, the long-term condition of the property, compliance with legal and regulatory duties, value for money, and the interests of neighbours and future tenants.

2. Scope

- 2.1. This policy applies to tenants occupying homes owned by the Association. It covers tenant-led alterations and improvements, landlord-approved aids and adaptations, self-funded works, works funded or arranged through a local authority, and works recommended by an occupational therapist, healthcare professional or other competent assessor.

3. Policy Statement

- 3.1. The Association will support tenants to make reasonable, safe and appropriate changes to their homes where these meet a genuine housing, health, disability, mobility, independence or quality-of-life need. Permission for alterations and improvements will not be unreasonably withheld, and requests for aids and adaptations will be considered in a person-centred, fair and proportionate way, having regard to assessed need, property suitability, statutory duties, funding routes, tenancy obligations and the impact on neighbours, communal areas and future maintenance.

4. Definitions

- Alteration
Any change to the structure, layout, fabric, fixtures, fittings, services, boundaries, gardens or external appearance of a property.
- Improvement
Work that adds to, upgrades or replaces an existing feature, fixture, fitting or service, or adds a new feature to the property.
- Aid
Removable or low-impact equipment or fixture that helps a tenant use their home safely or independently, such as grab rails, lever taps, key safes or specialist fittings.
- Adaptation
A physical change to the home or communal access route that helps a disabled, older or vulnerable tenant live safely, independently or with appropriate care and support.

- Minor Adaptation
A low-value, low-risk adaptation that does not usually require structural work, such as grab rails, additional handrails, small ramps, lever taps or minor door-entry adjustments.
 - Major Adaptation
A more complex or higher-value adaptation, often requiring assessment, design, statutory approval or external funding, such as a level-access shower, stairlift, through-floor lift, major ramp, door widening, kitchen alteration or extension.
- Reasonable Adjustment
A change to a service, process or physical feature that helps remove or reduce disadvantage experienced by a disabled tenant.

5. Legal and Regulatory Framework

- 5.1. HCHA will have regard to relevant legislation, regulation and guidance, including the Housing Act 1985 provisions relating to repairs and improvements where applicable, the Landlord and Tenant Act 1985, the Equality Act 2010, planning and building control requirements, Disabled Facilities Grant arrangements, health and safety legislation, fire safety duties, data protection requirements, and the Regulator of Social Housing's consumer standards. The Association will also ensure that any request linked to hazards, damp and mould, disrepair, fitness for human habitation or emergency safety risks is handled in line with repairs, safety and statutory response obligations.

6. Works Requiring Permission

- 6.1. Tenants must obtain HCHA's written permission before starting any alteration, improvement or self-funded adaptation, unless the work is purely decorative to walls, ceilings, skirtings and architraves, and permitted by the tenancy agreement.
- 6.2. Examples of works that require permission include, but are not limited to: installing or replacing kitchens, bathrooms, showers, flooring, internal doors, external doors, windows, heating systems, electrical fittings, satellite dishes, security systems, EV charging equipment, sheds, fencing, decking, hard standings, driveways, ramps, stairlifts, level-access showers, hoists, adaptations, ponds, outbuildings, loft boarding, insulation, structural changes, plumbing, drainage, ventilation, gas works and electrical works.

7. How to Apply

- 7.1. Tenants must apply in writing before any alteration, improvement or self-funded adaptation starts. Requests for aids or adaptations may also be made by a tenant, advocate, carer, household member, occupational therapist, health professional or local authority representative with the tenant's consent.

- 7.2. Applications should include a clear description of the proposed work or need, the reasons for the request, relevant medical or occupational therapy information where available, plans or photographs where relevant, contractor details, product specifications, evidence of qualifications, insurance details, risk assessments where appropriate, and details of any planning permission, building control approval, Disabled Facilities Grant application, party wall consent, leaseholder consent or other statutory approval required.

8. Decision Making

- 8.1. HCHA will assess each request on its merits. Permission or support may be granted, granted with conditions, deferred pending further information, referred for occupational therapy or local authority assessment, redirected to a repairs, aids and adaptations, housing options or safeguarding process, or refused.
- 8.2. HCHA will normally respond to alteration and improvement requests within 28 calendar days of receiving all required information. Requests involving aids or adaptations will be prioritised according to urgency, risk, assessed need, available funding and property suitability. Where more time is needed, the tenant will be told the reason and the expected timescale.
- 8.3. Permission may be refused where the proposed work would create a health and safety risk, damage the property, compromise fire safety, affect structural integrity, reduce energy performance, increase future maintenance costs, reduce the value or lettability of the home, breach law or regulation, affect neighbours or communal areas, conflict with planned works, invalidate warranties, reduce accessibility, or fail to provide adequate evidence of competent installation.

9. Conditions of Permission

- 9.1. HCHA may apply one or more of the following conditions when granting permission:
- Work must not start until written permission has been issued.
 - The tenant is responsible for obtaining and paying for all necessary approvals, permissions, certificates and inspections.
 - Work must be carried out by competent and appropriately qualified persons.
 - Gas, electrical, building control and other safety certificates must be provided on completion where required.
 - The tenant must meet all costs unless the Association has confirmed otherwise in writing.
 - The tenant must make good any damage caused by the works.
 - The Association may inspect the work before, during and after completion.
 - The Association may require the alteration to be removed or reinstated at the end of the tenancy.

10. Tenant Responsibilities

- 10.1. Tenants are responsible for ensuring that approved works are completed safely, legally, to a good standard and in accordance with any conditions attached to permission. Tenants must not cause nuisance, obstruction, noise outside reasonable hours, damage to communal areas, or risk to neighbours, staff or contractors. Tenants must keep records of permissions, invoices, certificates and warranties and provide copies to the Association when requested.

11. Association Responsibilities

- 11.1. The Association will provide clear information about when permission is needed, assess requests consistently, explain decisions, record permissions and conditions, carry out inspections where necessary, and ensure that requests related to disability, vulnerability, safety or property condition are signposted to the appropriate repairs, aids and adaptations, safeguarding or wellbeing process.

12. Aids, Adaptations, and Reasonable Adjustments

- 12.1. Where a request relates to disability, health, mobility, age-related need, vulnerability or the need for reasonable adjustments, the Association will consider the request in line with equality duties and aids and adaptations arrangements. The Association may require an occupational therapist assessment, medical evidence, surveyor input, funding approval or local authority confirmation for major adaptations.

- 12.2. Requests will be handled sensitively and proportionately, with consideration of urgency, safety, independence, dignity, suitability of the property, likely duration of need, value for money and alternative options.

13. Categories of Aids and Adaptations

- 13.1. Aids and adaptations may include minor adaptations, major adaptations, equipment, changes to communal access routes, digital or assistive technology, or temporary measures pending a longer-term solution.
- 13.2. Minor adaptations will normally be considered without complex assessment where the need is clear and the work is low risk. Major adaptations will normally require an occupational therapy assessment, technical feasibility review and confirmation of funding before approval or installation.

14. Funding and Disabled Facilities Grants

14.1. Funding responsibility will depend on the type of work, tenancy, property ownership, local authority arrangements and the tenant's circumstances. Minor adaptations may be funded by the Association where they are reasonable, proportionate and within available budgets. Major adaptations may require a Disabled Facilities Grant or equivalent local authority funding route and may be subject to assessment, eligibility criteria, means testing, scheme limits and approval by the relevant authority. Work funded by a grant must not start until all required permissions and approvals have been confirmed in writing.

15. Property Suitability and Housing Options

15.1. Before approving a major adaptation, the Association may consider whether the current home is suitable for the tenant's needs in the short and longer term. Where the property cannot reasonably or practicably be adapted, where an adapted property already exists, where the costs would be disproportionate, or where the household's needs may be better met elsewhere, the Association may discuss rehousing, transfer, mutual exchange or other housing options with the tenant.

15.2. Any such discussion will be handled sensitively and will take account of the tenant's wishes, support networks, medical needs, local connections and the availability of suitable accommodation.

16. Maintenance, Servicing, Removal and Re-use of Adaptations

16.1. The Association will clarify responsibility for maintenance, servicing, inspection and removal when an adaptation is approved. Where the Association installs or accepts responsibility for an adaptation, it will maintain and service it in line with legal, safety and manufacturer requirements.

16.2. Where a tenant installs an adaptation privately, the tenant will normally be responsible for maintenance, servicing, certificates, insurance and removal unless agreed otherwise in writing.

16.3. At void stage, the Association may retain, remove, adapt or re-use aids and adaptations where safe, practical and beneficial.

17. Unauthorised Works

17.1. If works are carried out without permission, or not in accordance with the permission granted, the Association may require the tenant to stop the works, provide evidence of safety and compliance, make good defects, remove the alteration, reinstate the property, or pay the Association's reasonable costs. Serious or unsafe unauthorised works may be treated as a breach of tenancy and may result in enforcement action where proportionate.

18. Repairs, Maintenance and Future Liability

18.1. Unless agreed otherwise in writing, tenants remain responsible for maintaining tenant-installed improvements and for any repairs arising from those works. Where an improvement becomes part of the landlord's fixtures, the Association will determine future repair responsibility by reference to the tenancy agreement, statutory obligations, the nature of the fixture and the circumstances in which permission was granted.

19. Compensation for Qualifying Improvements

19.1. Where applicable, eligible tenants may be able to claim compensation for qualifying improvements at the end of their tenancy, subject to statutory rules, tenancy terms and the Association's procedures. Compensation will not normally be paid for unauthorised works, works of poor quality, works without required certificates, items removed before the tenancy ends, or improvements that have reached the end of their useful life.

20. Moving Out and Reinstatement

20.1. At the end of the tenancy, the Association may require tenants to remove alterations, reinstate the property to its original condition, or leave approved improvements in place. The decision will depend on the terms of permission, the condition and safety of the works, the future use of the property, and whether the alteration affects reletting, maintenance, compliance or value. The Association may recharge reasonable costs if reinstatement or remedial work is required because of unauthorised, unsafe or defective alterations.

21. Equality, Diversity and Inclusion

21.1. The Association will apply this policy fairly and consistently and will make reasonable adjustments for tenants who need support to access the process. Decisions on aids and adaptations will be person-centred and based on assessed need, safety, independence, dignity, legal duties, technical feasibility and value for money. Decisions on alterations and improvements will be based on legitimate property, safety, legal and operational considerations. The Association will monitor the policy to ensure it supports fair outcomes and does not create avoidable barriers.

22. Complaints and Appeals

22.1. Tenants who are dissatisfied with a decision may ask for it to be reviewed and may use the Association's complaints process. The Association will explain the reasons for refusal or conditions imposed and will consider any additional evidence provided. Complaints will be handled in accordance with the Association's complaints policy and the Housing Ombudsman Complaint Handling Code where applicable.

23. Monitoring and Review

23.1. This policy will be reviewed at least every three years, or sooner if there are significant changes in legislation, regulation, funding arrangements, good practice, operational requirements or regulatory expectations. Compliance will be monitored through records of requests, decisions, occupational therapy referrals, Disabled Facilities Grant outcomes, complaints, inspections, recharges, servicing records, safety issues, equality outcomes and lessons learned.