



## PLYMOUTH COMMUNITY HOMES Adaptation Policy

<b>Lead Directorate:</b>	Homes, Neighbourhoods and Regeneration
<b>EIA completed:</b>	August 2012
<b>Approved by:</b>	Customer Focus Committee, September 2012
<b>Version:</b>	Update presented to Regeneration and Development Board, February 2014 Policy updated to reflect current practice, June 2016

### 1. Aims and objectives

The key objectives of this policy are to set out an approach to the provision of adaptations for Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) tenants and members of tenants' households that:

- Recognises that many of our customers and potential customers will have or may acquire a long term illness or disability that may affect their quality of life and ability to remain in their own home.
- Considers the needs of tenants with disabilities.
- Delivers a customer centred, accessible adaptations service, and informs, involves and offers choice to customers.
- Makes the best use of PCH housing stock and available budgets to provide flexible housing solutions that deliver value for money.
- Treats all tenants and prospective tenants in a fair and equitable manner.
- Ensures PCH undertakes adaptations quickly, effectively and in a customer focussed way.
- Ensures PCH meets its legal obligations and operates in accordance with good practice guidance.
- Ensures PCH works in partnership with PCC as the statutory agent and other providers as appropriate to deliver this.

## **2. Definitions**

### **2.1 Definition of a 'person with a disability'**

The Equality Act 2010 states that:

'A person has a disability if:

- They have a physical or mental impairment.
- The impairment has a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to perform normal day to day activities.

For the purpose of the Act, these words have the following meanings:

- 'Substantial' means more than minor or trivial.
- 'Long term' means that the effect of the impairment has lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months (there are special rules covering recurring or fluctuating conditions).
- 'Normal day to day activities' include everyday things like eating, washing, walking and going shopping'.

### **2.2 Major and minor adaptations**

PCH defines a major adaptation as being over £1,000 and up to £5,000. This could include small access ramps, wet rooms and stair lifts.

Where a major adaptation is likely to be high cost / extensive or complex, we will undertake a technical review to establish if the proposed works will add to and enhance our stock of mobility homes as well as looking at alternative options.

PCH defines a minor adaptation as being up to £1,000. This includes very small adaptations of low value which will be available using our 'on demand' service through a trusted assessor.

### **2.3 Priority**

Applications are referred to PCH having been prioritised using the following categories:

- **High priority**

The situation is severely affecting the applicant's health and is resulting in them being completely housebound, at risk of injury, or unable to live independently.

- **Medium priority**

The situation is seriously affecting the applicant's health and is significantly affecting their ability to live independently; the adaptation is required to prevent a significant deterioration to their health.

- **Low priority**

The situation is having a negative impact on the applicant, but is not causing any significant impact upon them or their ability to live independently.

Only applications which are assessed as high or medium priority will be progressed.

### **3. Qualifying for an adaptation and the recommendation and decision process**

To be considered for an adaptation the person who has the disability must be either the tenant or a member of their household who lives permanently at the same address. In making a decision as to whether an adaptation request will proceed, low value minor adaptations carried out through the 'on demand' service will be determined using trusted assessors.

For any other works a referral will be assessed by the statutory service provider (currently Livewell Southwest) who will be able to provide advice and information to our tenants regarding how their difficulties can be resolved. We will look to share information with relevant partner organisations and will need the disabled individual to consent to this.

PCH's adaptation service will consider any recommendations in line with this policy and determine what is 'necessary and appropriate' work and whether the adaptation is categorised as high or medium priority.

('Necessary and appropriate' is one of the tests from the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act (HGCRA) 1996).

In exceptional circumstances we may wish to undertake an adaptation outside of these criteria. In these circumstances, the decision to proceed must be taken by two Heads of Service from the Homes, Neighbourhoods and Regeneration Management Team (HNRMT).

### **4. Funding**

PCH will agree an annual budget to support the delivery of the adaptation service. PCH will undertake to use Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding to support the delivery of the Adaptation Policy where the adaptation is likely to exceed £5,000. The DFG application will be for the capital amount greater than £5,000 such that PCH will contribute the first £5,000.

Where a DFG is utilised, PCH will require the adaptation works to meet PCH design and property standards. PCH will not release its contribution unless the work has been inspected and is to our satisfaction.

Funding and approvals for adaptations will be subject to a feasibility test. This will include:

- A test of whether the adaptation is 'reasonable and practical'.  
(('Reasonable and practical' is one of the tests from the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act (HGCRA) 1996).

- If the adaptation is likely to cost over £5,000, we will hold a technical appraisal to establish if the proposal will meet the requirements of PCH's future stock and asset plan.

Generally there will be no rent increase as a result of carrying out an adaptation. However, there are circumstances under which a higher rent would result. This would usually be where the adaptation involves building a substantial extension as this would significantly increase the size of the property or capital value. If there is likely to be any additional rent, we will discuss this with the tenant in advance.

Some adaptations may incur a service charge where ongoing maintenance or servicing is required. One example would be where a stair lift is fitted.

As part of the use of DFG funding tenants will be subject to a means test in relation to the capital cost provided by the DFG funding. PCH may choose to contribute to a shortfall faced by a tenant at our discretion.

## **5. Property**

### **5.1 Property records**

PCH will retain an up-to-date record of properties where adaptations have been carried out. We will also maintain a record of properties which may be suitable for adaptation. PCH will use this information to assist in meeting current and future tenants' needs.

### **5.2 Programmed work**

Where PCH is carrying out programmed or reactive works, we will endeavour to take account of the needs and requirements of the tenant or permanent member of their household for adaptations so that they do not 'disable' the tenant further. Any disability equipment currently used by a tenant should continue to be able to be used if necessary following the works. Examples include ensuring that a raised toilet seat will fit the new toilet and that baths are not replaced with baths that are more difficult to use or where equipment does not fit.

### **5.3 Void or empty homes**

We will usually protect or replace existing adaptations where they are already in a property which becomes void if the property meets the long term and future requirements of tenants and potential tenants.

When a property becomes void and has been identified as potentially suitable for adaptation, we may consider carrying out the adaptation if a priority household has been identified for that adaptation and it will contribute to the overall provision of mobility homes.

## **5.4 Removal of adaptations**

When a property becomes void which has received specific adaptation for the previous tenant, but where the adaptation is not required for another priority household, we will consider removing the adaptation.

## **5.5 Recycling of equipment**

Wherever possible we will recycle unwanted and life-expired equipment. We will identify and support local recycling projects.

## **5.6 Permission for tenants installing adaptations**

We will consider requests for tenants who wish to install their own adaptations, and give permission in writing where these are approved subject to the PCH Alteration to Homes Policy. These will be treated as tenant improvements and consent will be required before undertaking such adaptations. If a tenant installs their own adaptations, we will not normally carry out maintenance, servicing or repairs to them.

## **5.7 New housing development**

We will aim to ensure that at least 20% of any new homes built meet the Lifetime Homes Standard. We are also committed to building a small programme of wheelchair standard houses.

# **6. Letting our homes**

## **6.1 Additional preference for letting our homes**

Where properties are significantly adapted, or have level access, we will advertise those homes with additional preference for households with those needs, in accordance with the Devon Home Choice policy. Where we are unable to meet the needs of a PCH tenant in their existing home we may give preference for PCH vacancies before advertising externally to other applicants.

## **6.2 Making best use of adapted homes**

When a significantly adapted home is let, we will include a clause in the tenancy agreement stating that the tenant may be required to move should the household's need for adaptations change.

Where we carry out an adaptation which is high cost / extensive or complex, we will seek to vary the terms of the tenancy agreement as a condition of the adaptation proceeding. The variation will state that the tenant may be required to move should their circumstances change and the adapted home is no longer required by the tenant or a permanent member of their household.

### **6.3 Support for tenants where adaptations have not been approved**

Where an adaptation has not been approved due to feasibility, and the tenant wishes to move to a more suitable property, we will provide advice and support about their housing options. Where their priority is high or medium this may include providing help and support to enable the tenant to move, for example, help with bidding for a new home, removal and disturbance costs.

## **7. Working with partners**

We are committed to the Devon-wide protocol 'Homes without Barriers', which establishes an approach and performance framework that all social tenants can expect from their landlord. We will also strive to meet or exceed the timescales for completion of adaptations set out within the protocol.

We aim to work closely with representative disabled tenants' groups to improve services to tenants and families with disabilities.

## **8. Promoting the service**

PCH will publish information about the adaptations service and make this available in a range of formats.

## **9. Related requirements and guidance**

### **9.1 Legislation**

PCH will comply with legislation relevant to the Adaptation Policy.

### **9.2 Regulatory requirements**

PCH will comply with the standards set by the HCA (or successor body) which state that:

'Registered Providers shall cooperate with relevant organisations to provide an adaptations service that meets tenants' need'.

## **10. Equality and diversity**

PCH will apply this policy consistently and fairly, and will not discriminate against anyone based on any relevant characteristics, including those set out in the Equalities Act 2010.

PCH will make this policy available in other languages and formats on request. We will carry out an equality impact assessment on this policy, in line with our corporate procedure.

## **11. Monitoring and review**

We will monitor this policy to ensure it meets good practice and current legislation and will review it in accordance with our review timetable for all policies.