

# Policy Template



**Title: Accessible Homes Policy**

**Originator: Communities Director**

**Approval body and date approved: Leadership Board (Chief Operating Officer), May 2025**

**Date for review: May 2028**

## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 Magenta Living is committed to promoting choice for existing residents and applicants for housing that have a disability for them to live independently.
- 1.2 To achieve this we 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 In order to achieve the aims of the policy there is a limited dedicated budget for meeting the adaptations' needs of its tenants. This is reviewed annually taking into consideration factors such as demand, demographics, Business Plan and arrangements for funding through the statutory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) route.
- 1.4 The statutory responsibility for the funding of adaptations is the duty of the Local Authority. Magenta Living residents are entitled to apply for Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), a mandatory grant available to eligible disabled individuals to help them adapt their homes. It is managed by the Local Authority, and individuals can apply for it through them. The grant is means-tested, and a Social Services Occupational Therapist (OT) assesses the functional needs.
- 1.5 Whilst local authorities have the statutory responsibility for the provision of adaptations, Magenta Living will consider cost sharing arrangements with authorities based upon an agreed and strategic approach.
- 1.6 Most of Magenta Living's stock is located in Wirral, where they have cost-sharing arrangements in place. Magenta Living will generally fund requests for minor adaptations that do not involve structural work and are within the property's footprint. Any other type of adaptation requests will be funded and processed through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) route by Wirral Council or the relevant local authority. However, there may be occasions where Magenta Living may use its discretion to approve funding for major works

## **2.0 STATEMENT OF INTENT**

- 2.1 This policy document sets out the approach that will be taken by Magenta Living in its delivery of services for tenants with disabilities. The policy has been designed to facilitate ease of access and clarity for tenants and partner agencies.
- 2.2 The policy also recognises that funding arrangements for adaptations will vary across local authorities. Such arrangements are in place with each of the authorities in which we operate. We will always provide relevant advice and information to tenants in how their adaptations' needs may be met. This may be through the local authority, Magenta Living, or both.
- 2.3 Access to suitable alternative housing for tenants will primarily be through local Choice Based Lettings systems. We will assist wherever possible in exploring suitable options available for its tenants
- 2.4 Magenta Living will ensure it meets its legal and regulatory requirements in regard to providing aids and adaptations services
- 2.5 The Policy does not apply to Magenta Living leaseholders, market rent properties, shared ownership properties or properties for outright sale.

## **3.0 POLICY**

- 3.1 The policy will apply to physically disabled tenants with mobility issues within the home and to those requiring adaptations' services due to a mental disability.
- 3.2 There are two distinct types of service delivery for those with mobility issues:

### **a) Minor Adaptations**

Specified smaller low cost works and equipment will generally, be assessed and delivered "on demand" in a similar way to the responsive repairs service i.e emergency, urgent, non-urgent. An approved list of items is identified in Table 1 below.

### **b) Major Adaptations**

More substantial and expensive works that may require professional assessment of need that will be subject to a chronological waiting list system. Magenta Living will use its discretion in enabling priority to be awarded in urgent circumstances.

- 3.3 The policy will strike a balance between continuously improving levels of provision and services to tenants and the need to achieve value for money and ensure that resources are used to maximum benefit. The policy has been developed around principles of local accountability and local knowledge.
- 3.4 The views of service users and other stakeholders will significantly inform the way in which this service develops and is delivered.

## Scope of Service : Minor Adaptations

- 3.5 The timely provision of minor adjustments to the home can often sustain the independence of individuals who may otherwise become speedily dependent upon more substantial adaptations. Magenta Living will ensure that access to minor adaptations is as simple and practical as possible.
- 3.6 ML specify minor adaptations that will be provided as part of this policy as identified in 3.2 (a) that relate to items as identified in Table 1 below. The list will be reviewed from time to time to reflect new designs and types of equipment available, particularly those supported through technology.
- 3.7 Provision of minor adaptations will not require a professional pre-assessment of need and staff will exercise their discretion in evaluating and processing applications and completing works.
- 3.8 In carrying out minor adaptations, Magenta Living will follow good practice and in most cases follow the guidance - 'Minor adaptations without delay – A practical guide and technical specifications for housing associations' 2006 produced by the College of Occupational Therapists.
- 3.9 The table below outlines the items we will fund as minor adaptations. Aids such as walking sticks and frames etc. are not provided.

**Table 1: Minor Adaptations Approved List**

RAILS	Grab rails Newel rails Stair rails Drop down rails
KITCHENS AND BATHROOMS	Lever taps Carer Screen (on approval only)*
VISUAL IMPAIRMENT	Staircase applications – Slip & tactile stair grip
HEARING IMPAIRMENT	Vibrating Flashing Smoke alarm alerts
GENERAL SAFETY	Door protectors (on approval only)* Reverse Door Opening* Wall Key Safes
ASSISTIVE TECHNOLOGY	Flood detectors, sensors etc (on approval only)*

\*Approval must be given by a manager

Requested works outside the above specified list may be considered dependent upon the circumstances and as approved by a senior manager.

## Scope of Service : Major Adaptations

3.10 Major adaptations are more substantial and expensive works requiring structural works that may also involve changes to installation of fixtures or fittings. Typical major adaptations that we may approve are shown in the table below.

**Table 2: Typical Major Adaptations**

BATHROOM FITTINGS AND ALTERATIONS	Level Access Showers* Suffolk Showers High Level WC Access to bathing facilities Bathroom Conversion
KITCHEN FITTINGS AND ALTERATIONS	Low Height Work Surfaces Creation of Turning Space Kitchen Conversion (on approval only)
PROVIDING FRONT OR REAR ACCESS TO HOMES, ROOMS & FACILITIES	Galvanised Hand Rails Ramps & rails** Shallow steps & rails Door level threshold Door Widening Sliding Doors
HEARING IMPAIRMENT	Microphone Pickup Unit – flashing doorbells, flashing lights Bellman Pager System - vibrating pad, attached to flashing doorbell, attached to telephone
VISUAL IMPAIRMENT	Internal lighting (on approval only)
ELECTRICAL	Additional Electric Sockets Electric Ventilations Lighting

\*L.A.S that will not be funded within this policy will be processed via DFG route

\*\*Where modular ramps are identified as the solution, these will be provided by the local authority.

3.11 The list in Table 2 is not exhaustive and the works can vary widely dependent upon individuals need and the configuration and location of the property.

3.12 Major adaptations may be subject to a professional assessment and recommendations provided by an OT or in certain cases by an alternative recognised agency. Magenta Living will also apply in-house expertise in carrying out low level assessments. The service manager must approve requests where a full professional assessment will not be required.

- 3.13 All aspects of the evaluation, approval and authorisation of major adaptations are centrally controlled by the Adaptation Team.

### **Reliance on the Occupational Therapy Service and Recognised Agencies:**

- 3.14 The assessment of individuals' need for adaptations is the statutory duty of the Local Authority through its Occupational Therapy Service.

However, low level assessments, including bathing needs may be carried out by Magenta Living in-house Assessors who are qualified to Trusted Assessor level or the Advanced level. For more complex cases requiring an OT, there may be periods when waiting times for such assessments are excessive due to demands. To alleviate undue delays in meeting the needs of customers, this policy will allow for the provision of independent Occupational Therapy services in exceptional circumstances and on approval by a senior manager.

- 3.15 Within Wirral, where the cost of adaptations exceeds approximately £6000 and/or there is no practical solution to meeting needs within the property, tenants will be advised to seek alternative suitable housing via Property Pool Plus. Magenta Living will also try to assist where possible. In other areas, local agreements will apply.
- 3.16 Removal costs up to a maximum of £2,000 will be considered by Magenta Living for tenants moving to suitable alternative housing.

### **Prioritising Adaptations**

- 3.17 Magenta Living will aim to complete minor adaptations within 28 days and major adaptations for tenants within 12 months of their application being approved.
- 3.18 The policy recognises that the nature of this provision means that cases will arise that are not anticipated in the policy framework and that require a separate decision-making process. Exceptional cases will be evaluated by a service Director, who will have the authority for approval.

### **Refusal of Adaptations' Requests**

- 3.19 Magenta Living is unlikely to invest in the provision of adaptations where the benefit achieved to the resident is short term; it is not reasonable or practicable where strategically, it makes no sense to do so. Recognising the sensitivity of such cases, decisions to refuse requests for adaptations will always be made by a service manager and will be subject consultation and agreement with the local authority. These include the following examples.
- Where a tenant has not lived in the property for more than 2 years, tenants will be advised of their statutory rights and that they can apply for mandatory DFGs. Exceptions to this policy approach must be approved by the Director.

- The request is for a wet room or level access shower above the ground floor level of a property
- When the adaptation requested is likely to cause safety or entrapment issues within the property and it is not therefore feasible for the adaptation e.g. change to location of w.c creates insufficient moving space for applicants.
- Where provision is requested for the use of motorised scooters (including storage facilities or charge points), visitors (including carers) or for animals.
- A suitable, alternative or already adapted property is offered and refused (depending on individual circumstances and subject to review).
- The property is unsuitable for the resident e.g. too large or too small for their household (statutorily overcrowded). In the case of under-occupation, we may on a discretionary basis waive this condition where no other suitable housing is available
- The property is unsuitable for adaptation
- Where the request is for the communal parts of building

In all cases, households (and advocates), and relevant agencies will be consulted prior to a decision being taken. The tenant will be provided with advice and support in finding a resolution that may include rehousing via Property Pool Plus (or its equivalent), applying directly for a DFG (where applicable) or self-funding.

In all cases, formal consent must be given by ML for any works to be carried out in its properties that is funded from alternative sources.

### **Expenditure Thresholds and Financial Support**

- 3.20 Works in excess of £6,000 will always be subject to a review to consider alternative solutions, which may include external funding sources or re-housing to a more appropriate property.
- 3.21 When a decision to re-house is agreed with a resident, Magenta Living will offer to meet removal costs, in addition to the provision of reasonable adaptation works to the new property. Where arrears exist, any financial contribution will be offset against those arrears.

### **Funding in addition to that provided by Magena Living**

- 3.22 Tenants who choose to fund their own adaptations (including through DFGs) will be asked to consider that Magenta Living carry out the works in the first instance. In such circumstances, Magenta Living will maintain the structure and

certain equipment such as showers or standard W.C.s. However, if a third party is appointed to carry out works, the tenant must:

- Obtain ML written approval to complete the works
- Provide ML with details and drawings to allow an effective evaluation of the proposed works
- Complete works using a qualified and competent contractor
- Allow ML to inspect the works on completion
- Take responsibility for maintaining and repairing the self funded works

3.23 Tenants may wish to enhance the standard, quality and/or specification of adaptations equipment provided by M, subject to the following conditions:

- The upgrade must involve no increased installation or maintenance costs for Magenta Living.
- The difference in cost between the standard equipment normally provided and the cost of the enhanced provision must be met by the resident and the sum paid to Magenta Living before the installation of the equipment.
- The resident will sign appropriate documentation confirming that the equipment is entirely owned by Magenta Living.

3.24 Where we cost share an adaptation with a local authority, the agreed procedure will apply.

3.25 New lifts funded by Magenta Living will be 'gifted' to tenants who will own and be responsible for the insurance and maintenance of the equipment. Wirral tenants requesting lifts will be advised to apply directly to the local authority for a DFG. If the application is accepted, formal consent must be given by Magenta Living and the tenant will be responsible for repair and maintenance of the lift.

### **Allocation of adapted properties**

3.26 Any allocation of adapted stock or assessment of a disabled applicant household will involve Magenta Living Trusted Assessors to ensure the suitability of the allocation, and risk. The assessment may also include relevant agencies. The process and outcome will be clearly explained to applicants.

3.27 For health and fire safety reasons we will not allocate flats in upper levels to disabled households as follows:

- properties without lifts - preference will be given for ground floor units
- properties with lifts – preference will be given for floors below the sixth floor.

## **Relationships with local authority, Key Agencies and providers of specialist services.**

- 3.28 The provision of adaptations can be a complex process involving a number of statutory and specialist agencies. ML favour a collaborative approach in addressing disability issues that offers value for money and efficiencies to its tenants. This includes the adoption of relevant cost sharing arrangements with local authorities. Such arrangements will be subject to continuous review and it should be noted, that the *statutory rights of tenants to apply directly for a DFG will not be affected*.
- 3.29 ML also works closely with Merseyside Fire and Rescue in assessing risks in tenants' homes. Where specific types of alarms are recommended due to a sensory impairment, Magenta Living work in partnership to ensure that these are fitted as soon as possible by the relevant agency or contractor.

## **Succession**

- 3.30 Succession to a tenancy may be reasonably refused where the property has been substantially adapted for a (deceased or departing) resident and the remaining occupier does not need such features. In these circumstances, suitable alternative housing will be offered to the occupier. Legal advice should be obtained by Magenta Living if the occupier refuses to move.

## **Complaints**

- 3.31 Complaints about the way an adaptation application has been processed will be handled within our Complaints Policy.

## **4.0 Implementation**

- 4.1 The revised policy is due for implementation from June 2025 and will be available to all staff via its intranet. Managers will remind their staff of new or revised policies.
- 4.2 The responsible Director for formulating this policy and ensuring its effective implementation is *Communities Director*.
- 4.3 The responsible officer for formulating, reviewing and monitoring the effective implementation of the processes is *Neighbourhood Manager and Assessment Team Leader*

## **5.0 Consultation**

- 5.1 Internally, the views of a range of staff including the Senior Leadership team have been incorporated within the development of this policy. Consultation has also previously taken place with the Tenants Scrutiny Panel. All views have been fully considered and incorporated where applicable within the body of the policy.

5.2 Externally, the views of relevant stakeholders including local authorities and OT Managers will be considered and incorporated within this policy.

## 6.0 Equality Analysis

6.1 We believe all people should be treated with dignity and respect regardless of their age, disability, gender reassignment, marriage and civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race (including, nationality, ethnic or national origins), religion, belief or non-belief, sex, or sexuality or by association with someone with any of these characteristics or perception of having any of these characteristics.

6.2 The Equality Analysis was undertaken in May 2025 and awarded Green status.

## 7.0 Monitoring Performance

7.1 Performance will be monitored through local operational and financial performance indicators and customers/stakeholder feedback by the Assessment Team Leader and Neighbourhood Management.

## 8.0 Scheme of Delegation.

8.1 The responsible authority for approving this operational policy is *Leadership Board*.

8.2 The responsible Director for formulating this policy and ensuring its effective implementation is *Communities Director*.

## 9.0 Policy Review

9.1 The policy will be reviewed every three years or earlier if deemed necessary through the performance monitoring process or if there are any key legislative changes.

## 10.0 Amendment Log

Date of revision	Record of amendments	Reasons for revision
September 2021	Minor amends to responsible person roles and available adaptation equipment.	3yr policy review and internal consultation
May 2025	Policy rewrite including minor amends to roles and responsibilities. Updated reasons for refusal in Section 3.23	3y policy review