

ROTHERHAM BOROUGH COUNCIL – REPORT TO MEMBERS

1. Meeting:	Cabinet Member for Safe and Attractive Neighbourhoods
2. Date:	Monday 14 th July 2014
3. Title:	Aids and Adaptations Extension and Policy Review Report
4. Programme Area:	Neighbourhoods and Adult Services

5. Summary

The Aids and Adaptations service has, in recent months, received criticism from customers regarding the maximum mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) available. As this grant limit is set by the Government and is not due to increase, a meeting was held between Housing Options and Occupational Therapy to assess the feasibility of increasing this limit locally, and assess how extensions are currently recommended to see if any alterations could be made to this process. This report details the outcome and recommendations of this meeting.

In addition, in light of these changes the Aids & Adaptations Policy has also been reviewed and changes proposed.

6. Recommendations:

That Cabinet Member:

- **Agree that the grant limit of £30,000 (See 7.1) remains the same for the next 6 months.**
- **Agree that when extensions are approved, but cost over the grant limit of £30,000 they will only receive additional discretionary funding if no alternative solution can be offered. It is proposed that if Additional Discretionary Funding is offered that this value is capped at £35,000. (See 7.1.2)**
- **Agree to make the recommended additions to the Aids and Adaptation Policy detailed in 7.2 and Appendix 1 and Appendix 2 to aim to reduce the number of extensions being recommended and approved and review the effectiveness in 12 months.**
- **Agree to the recommended cost saving strategies detailed in 7.3.**
- **Agree to the proposed amendments (Appendix 4) of the existing Adaptations Policy and adopt these changes into the new Adaptations Policy**

7. Background and Proposals:

After successful completion of the Service Improvement Plan the Adaptations Service have now eradicated the backlog and reduced the time taken from receiving a request to approving it to less than 4 weeks. Following this success, the Adaptations Service are now seeking to improve even further by reducing contractor turnaround times and re-assessing the way extensions are recommended and approved.

To complement this, the existing Aids & Adaptions Policy (2011) has also been revised which will comply with the Occupational Therapy guidelines. The result is a more generic policy that satisfies both Disabled Facilities Grant legislation (Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996) and Occupational Therapy Guidelines when assessing applicants. The policy has also been updated to account for legislative changes and procedural improvements that have been implemented since a change of management has occurred.

There have been a number of Customer, Councillor and MP enquiries in recent months regarding the amount of funding available via DFG. In recent times we have experienced increased costs of labour and materials yet with no increase in the grant limit. Unfortunately there are more and more cases whereby the £30,000 grant limit will not fund the necessary works, leaving a shortfall for customers to pay. Whilst every effort is made to minimise these costs, it is still common for the grant limit to be exceeded.

7.1 The Grant Limit

7.1.1 Cost Based Analysis.

The following data shows the number of extensions that have been priced over the past 5 years along with average costs. It also identifies the different types of extensions required and their associated costs:

- In 2013-2014 the Aids and Adaptations Service received **873 applications**, of which **25 were for extensions** (3%).
- Of the 25 extensions applied for, 16 requests were processed (the remainder were either refused at the Aids and Adaptations panel meetings or cancelled at the customer's request)
- The table below shows that 8 were bedroom and bathroom extensions, of these 7 were over the £30,000 grant limit (88%).
- Bedroom and bathroom extensions were on average £5,883 over this limit.
- Bedroom extensions on private properties are also liable for VAT* this is an extra 20% on approx. half the total cost, meaning a total of £39,471.30.
** as per The VAT ACT 1994: Section 30 and Schedule 8, Group 12, all goods and services provided for disabled people are eligible for zero rated VAT, with the exemption of certain items including bedroom facilities.*

Note – all DFG work on RMBC properties is liable for VAT however we can claim this back so the customer does not experience any extra cost.

Extension Type	Quantity	Average Extension Price (NET, plus fees)
Bedroom and Bathroom	8	£35,883
Bedroom	1	£23,000
Bathroom	7	£20,500
Total	16	£28,347

From the table below we can see the average cost of extensions (with the exception of 12-13) has been increasing each year. Assumedly due to increased materials and labour costs.

Fiscal Year	Average Extension Price (NET, plus fees)
13-14	£28,347
12-13	£21,926
11-12	£26,870
10-11	£25,797

This data firstly proves the theory that the cost of extensions is increasing, and also shows that it is predominantly bedroom and bathroom extensions that are exceeding the £30,000 grant limit.

In light of this data is proposed that rather than increase the grant limit, we should firstly look at alternative strategies to reduce the number of bedroom and bathroom extensions that are requested and recommended. These strategies are discussed below. It is recommended that these changes should first be implemented and then reviewed again in 6 months to see the impact they have had on both the number of extension requests approved and the cost of such extensions.

7.1.2 Additional Discretionary Funding

The term 'Additional Discretionary Funding' refers to the Local Authorities ability to increase the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant limit if they so wish. This is defined in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. There is no upper limit to this increase, and there is no legal obligation to provide any funding on top of the mandatory £30,000.

If Additional Discretionary Funding were to be requested, it will be considered under delegated powers by the Director of Housing and Neighbourhoods Services and the additional costs will be met from the same budget the £30,000 Disabled Facilities Grant comes from. There is no additional budget for this extra funding. It is proposed that if Additional Discretionary Funding is offered that this value is capped at £35,000.

However for extensions costing over the grant limit, it is recommended that in these times of unprecedented public expenditure restraint, Additional Discretionary Funding should only be offered as a last resort, as long as all satisfying criteria have been met legally. Plus with a reduction in Disabled Facilities Grant funding we need to maximise the number of people who can benefit from a grant each year. Furthermore the offer of additional funding would most definitely open up the flood gates for all similar cases.

It is suggested that Additional Discretionary Funding only be offered when all other options have been exhausted and we cannot offer any other suitable solution to meet the customer's needs.

For Additional Discretionary Funding to be offered we must first be confident that:

- The extension is absolutely necessary and no alternative adaptations could adequately meet the customer's needs
- There are no alternative ways the extension can be built to cut the cost of works
- We have obtained a minimum of 3 quotations for the required works to ensure the best possible price
- Rehousing cannot be offered within a 6 month period from date of application.

The suggested cap of £35,000 is based on the fact that during 2013-14 of the 15 extensions that were completed only 1 exceeded £35,000 (with 10% fee applied) See Appendix 3.

7.2 Proposed revisions and additions to the Aid and Adaptation Policy

7.2.1 Revisions to the Aids & Adaptations (2011) Policy

Appendix 4 details all the proposed changes to the existing policy.

7.2.2 Policy and Procedures relating to Extensions.

As the existing policy does not contain any guidelines or framework relating specifically to extensions, the inclusion of such a section would be beneficial.

The purpose of the policy addition is to ensure that:

- Occupational Therapists only recommend extensions when there are no possible alternative adaptations.
- Recommendations are fully investigated by the Adaptations Review Panel to ensure no alternative option can be offered
- Housing Options has fully explored the possibility of rehousing and other alternatives
- Customers are fully aware of the financial implications an extension may have.
- A decision is made within the legal time frame of 6 months.

Appendix 1 shows this new sub-section in full.

Appendix 2 shows the process diagram that is to be followed when recommending and approving extensions.

7.3 Cost Saving Strategies

There are several possibilities to reduce the cost of extensions, all of which are identified below along with the suggested action:

1 - Reduce fees on all extensions - NOT RECOMMENDED

- Fee income is used to pay for the work of the team, this is a permissible approach under the regulations. In the event of additional income, this is returned to corporate resources at the end of the year.
- Reducing fees would not only have the impact of reducing the average cost of an extension, but also have a detrimental impact on A&A revenue created.
- Also in 13-14 of the 15 extensions that were completed only 4 exceeded the current grant limit (with 10% fee applied), if we reduce the fee we would be unnecessarily

reducing our profit on the majority of jobs when they actually have no financial implication to customers.

- Below is quantitative data on the number of extensions completed (and project managed) by Adaptations Service in 13-14, the income generated based on the current 10% fee, and the respective reduction in income if this fee was altered, and also the number of customers that paid/would have paid a shortfall amount:

13-14 Actual figures *	10% Fee	7.5% Fee	5% Fee
Total cost of extensions = £331,973.57	£33,197.36	£24,898.02	£16,598.68
Predicted Change in Revenue	£0	-£8299.34	-£16,598.68
No of extensions over £30,000	4	3	3
No of extensions under £30,000	11	12	12

Appendix 3 shows that during 2013-14 out of the 15 extensions carried out there were only 4 that were over the £30,000 grant limit. The table above demonstrates that of the 4 extensions had we reduced the fee to 5% we would have increased the number of extensions under this limit by 1, but at a revenue loss of £16,598.68.

This would suggest reducing the fee is not advantageous, although it would financially help a small proportion of customers (4 out of 15), it would be at a loss to RMBC of up to 5% cost of all extensions completed, the majority of which have no financial implications for the customer (as they are already under £30,000).

It is important to remember that a large proportion of extensions completed do not exceed the £30,000 limit.

**Individual costs for all completed extensions, and the respective fee amounts can be seen in Appendix 3.*

2 - Only approve extensions on properties that do not have a 2nd ground floor room (i.e. dining room) that can be utilised. – RECOMMENDED

- Using the dining room as a bedroom/bathroom will eliminate the need to build 2 new rooms, cutting the costs dramatically and hopefully bringing the total cost within grant limit.
- Looking at last year's figures, the average cost of bedroom and shower room extensions quoted for was £36,000. The average cost of shower rooms alone was £20,500. Using this data we can predict the cost to build a shower room and convert a dining room into a bedroom would be £22,500 (based on around £2,000 for the conversion). Meaning a cost saving of approx. £13,500 per extension. If this were possible on all 8 bedroom/bathroom extensions quoted for last year it would have meant a total saving of £108,000 and on average all extensions would be under the grant limit. In real terms, if this strategy was applied to the 3 bedroom and bathroom extension that were actually completed last year (see Appendix 3) it

would have resulted in a cost saving of £24,000. However please be aware that this strategy will not be feasible in every property type.

- Assessment would need to take place to ensure the existing room is large enough to accommodate the proposed adaptations.
- Natural light/drainage issues would also need to be assessed.

3 - Promoting re-housing as an alternative to an extension. - RECOMMENDED

- Currently rehousing seems to be offered as a “2nd best strategy”, or a last resort. If OT’s can actively promote this as a favourable solution due to less disruption, stress, time etc then more customers may WANT to move, as opposed to HAVE to move.
- Informing customers of the potential extra financial commitment associated with an extension (e.g. bedroom tax, increased insurance and heating costs, decorating costs etc) may persuade them to be re-housed instead.
- Utilising the maintenance officers to assist in the move is an added incentive to be re-housed (as with downsizing). This would save the customer around £200, based on an average removal fee of £50 per hour and an average time of 4 hours.

4 - Possibility of adapting a void to adequately meet customer’s needs instead of extending their current property – *Needs more research before a decision can be reached.*

- For those properties discussed in 7.3.2 that do not have a second ground floor room we can convert to a bedroom, we could look into the possibility of utilising a void property that would allow us to build 1 room instead of 2 required at the current property
- This would cut costs dramatically and hopefully bring the total cost within the grant limit (see figures in 7.3.2)
- However there is still the issue of rehousing and customer’s potential unwillingness to move.
- We are also then creating another void (if a council tenant) and thus further costs will be associated with this.

5 - Utilising the Specialist Equipment Budget to fund specialist baths required as well as extensions. - RECOMMENDED

- This would increase the available budget and reduce customer contributions.
- We can legitimately utilise this budget for this purpose if the customer has an eligible need (as defined by the Occupational Therapist)
- There are limited number of cases each year where this would apply, however as the average cost of a specialist bath is around £9,000 it would be a significant reduction in customer shortfall when an extension is also required. One example of such a case was in Rawmarsh earlier this year; The cost of the extension, specialist bath and all associated fees £41,767. This meant a customer contribution of £11,767. When the Specialist Equipment budget was utilised to offer to pay for the bath the shortfall came down to £2,315

however in this case, the customer was still not in a position to pay the shortfall and also refused rehousing.

6- Applying a legal charge on privately owned properties – RECOMMENDED.

The Adaptation Policy states that:

- The Council are able to add a legal charge to a privately owned property for the cost of the adaptation should the property be disposed of within 5 years. Where the applicant/customer or in the case of a child, their parent/guardian, are no longer the qualifying owner either by sale, donation or repossession, the property will be deemed as disposed of.
- A legal charge will only be considered where the adaptation/s has increased the floor size of the property or added value to the property. Examples would include, loft conversions, extensions, out building conversions, multiple adaptations.
- The Council will only consider adding a charge where the cost of the adaptation/s is more than £8,000.
- Consideration does not mean that this is a blanket policy and every case will be judged on its own merits in terms of adding a charge.

Although the Council has the power to recoup back costs through legal charges, none have ever been pursued. This is because there have been no mechanisms in place to continue to monitor the property 5 years after the adaptation has been fitted. In order to improve efficiencies new processes have been developed; including a Customer Declaration Letter (See Appendix 5) which will be signed by the customer (private properties only) before an adaptation over the value of £8000 is authorised. The customer will also sign an authorisation form to allow annual inspections of the adaptations for a period of 5 years post completion of adaptations that cost over £8000.

8. Finance

8.1 The proposed recommendations pose no additional financial requirements and undoubtedly present an overall cost saving. Based on implementing a variety of the cost saving strategies recommended in section 7.3, we can reliably assume the overall cost of the majority of extensions will come down, though it is difficult to quantify an annual saving as different strategies will be applied on a case by case basis:

- 7.3.2 and 7.3.4 could save on average £13,500 per extension completed.
- 7.3.3 could save upwards of £30,000 per extension avoided
- 7.3.5 would present no overall saving to RMBC but would reduce the customer shortfall substantially where applicable.

8.2 For 2015/16 the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) will be included in the new Better Care Fund. However the statutory duty on local housing authorities to provide DFG's to those who qualify for it will remain. Therefore each Local Authority area will have to allocate this funding to their respective housing departments from the pooled budget to enable them to continue to meet their statutory duty to provide adaptations to the homes of disabled people.

9. Risks & uncertainties

There is inevitably the risk of continued customer unhappiness and complaint if the grant limit is not increased. However if all the suggested amendments to policy are made and the cost saving strategies implemented we should see a reduction in the number of extensions that are both applied for, recommended and approved and thus the number of unhappy customers should also fall.

Furthermore we must consider the number of unhappy customers we will create if the Grant limit is increased. Ultimately, if we approve more funding for extensions this will have dramatic implications on the already stretched budget and impact on the number of customers we can help each year. For every £30,000 extension completed, we could have completed 15 Level Access Showers.

10. Policy and Performance Agenda Implications

Changes and implementation of these procedures have a direct implication on the Adaptations Policy and changes are reflected in the new process documentation.

11.1 Background papers

- National Assistance Act 1948
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act, 1970
- Disabled Persons Act 1985
- NHS and Community Care Act 1990
- Disability Discrimination Act 1995
- The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- Housing Act 1996
- RMBC Aids & Adaptations Policy
- RMBC Allocations Policy

11.2 Consultation

Sandra Tolley - Housing Options Manager
James Greenhedge - Home and Property Services Manager
Kathleen Oakes - Principal Finance Officer
Linton Steele - Solicitor Adult Social Care and Education
Paul Elliott - Business and Commercial Programme Manager
Jill Wilkinson – Professional Lead Occupational Therapist Manager
Sarah Jackson – Advanced Community Occupational Therapist
Christine Robinson – Senior Community Occupational Therapist
Helen Brown – Housing Occupational Therapist

Housing Options, Occupational Therapy, Legal and Finance have been involved in the suggested recommendations and content of this report and the proposed amendments to Aids and Adaptation Policy.

All suggested actions are in accordance with the Disabled Facilities Grant Guidance and the *Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996*.

12. Contact details

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Appendix 1 – Proposed addition to the Aids and Adaptations Policy when recommending/approving Extension requests.

From time to time, Occupational Therapists may, where no other alternatives exist, recommend the construction of ground floor facilities in order to meet the needs of a customer. When doing so the following procedures must be adhered to;

For an extension request to be approved **ALL** the following criteria **MUST** be satisfied:

1. Necessary and Appropriate:

The OT must clearly demonstrate the customers need for the extension, and in doing so must rule out any alternative adaptation that may also suitably meet their needs.

The Adaptations Review Panel will assess the case and if any alternative solution is proposed this will be investigated prior to making a decision on the case. This could include, but is not limited to; other adaptations, smaller proposed extension or rehousing.

2. Reasonable and Practicable:

The state of the property is important and it must be deemed by the assessing Technical Officer as reasonable and practicable for any adaptation to occur.

In terms of the state of the property, the Technical Officer will look at issues including but not limited to:

- Wear and tear
- Disrepair
- Electrics
- Plumbing
- Heating
- Environmental Health
- Structure including roofing
- Drainage

Where an adaptation is not reasonable and practicable to occur, the adaptation will be refused.

3. Rehousing:

Rehousing must be investigated at the point of identifying the need for an extension. This will be explored in full by a qualified housing OT who will conduct a needs assessment in the customers own home and open a housing application if they are eligible (as defined in the Allocations Policy). If a suitable property that adequately meets the applicant's (and their family's) needs is identified, and rehousing will not create any further care needs, this will be offered as the solution and the extension refused on the basis that the works are not necessary or appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant (see above). In accordance with *Section 24(3)(a) of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996* the Local Authority has the right to discharge duty if a suitable alternative property can be offered.

The term '*adequately meets the need*' refers to both the customer's (and their family's) physical and mental needs, plus social support needs relating to locality (family support, schools etc).

When considering rehousing, the Housing OT will use the following guidelines on locality and what is deemed an acceptable radius, and timescale until such a property will become available. For the purpose of this document, an acceptable radius will be defined by the OT on an individual case by case basis taking into account individual care and support needs. An acceptable timescale is defined as one that can be met before the customer's needs become urgent (as defined by the OT), or within the 6 month legal time frame that the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 stipulates a decision on all DFG applications must be made.

4. Under-Occupancy*:

The parameters of Under Occupancy are defined within the Housing Benefit Regulations, the only exception being for the purpose of DFG applications, there are no age constraints on under occupancy.

If a customer is in a situation where they are under occupied and are requiring Major Adaptations, then their case must be presented by the OT to the ARP to discuss the individual case and determine the most reasonable and practicable and necessary and appropriate solution.

In situations of under occupancy in council properties, extensions and conversions will not be considered unless:

- there are no suitable adapted properties within Council stock, or
- there are suitably adapted properties within Council stock, but these are minimal and the likelihood of availability becoming apparent within the defined timescale is very low.

Certain temporary adaptations can be offered to provide a short term solution. However, this would be investigated on a case by case basis and offered only in extreme circumstances.

In relation to customers who are in Council properties, those who are under occupying will be afforded reasonable preference to local accommodation as per the Allocations Policy.

** Please note that under-occupancy criteria do not apply to applicants in owner-occupied properties.*

5. Customer Consent:

As the provision of additional ground floor facilities may result in increased financial expenditure for the customer, before any decisions are to be made on extension applications, the applicant must be duly informed of the implications an extension may have on rent, insurance, benefits, energy bills etc. This is to be relayed via the OT upon their identification of need for an extension, and to be followed up with a letter from the Adaptations Team confirming this potential increased financial hardship, upon approval of the grant/works.

6 Financial Assessment:

Before any decision is made as to whether to approve an extension, a financial assessment must be undertaken to identify any required contributions the customer must

make. If these are not acceptable to the customer for any reason, the application cannot be progressed.

If all the above criteria are satisfied the extension will be approved (subject to DFG regulation). Once works commence the customers housing application will be cancelled by the Housing OT.

Once the above qualifying criteria for an extension are satisfied, an architect will be instructed to draw up the plans. These plans are then vetted by both an Occupational Therapist and a Technical Officer to ascertain whether a smaller scale project could be completed, providing it would still equally meet the customer's needs.

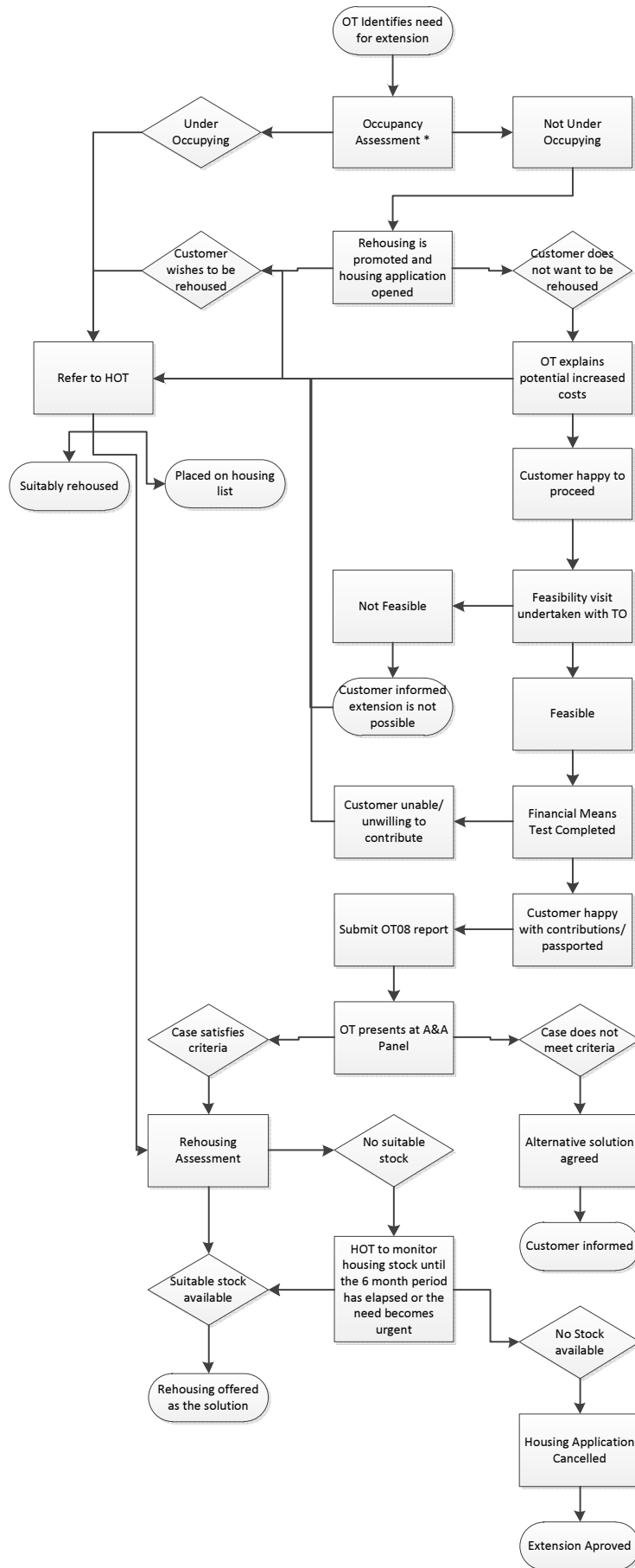
Similarly, to ensure costs are minimised, and to satisfy standing order requirements, the adaptations service will obtain a minimum of 3 quotations for the work, these will be from RMBC approved contractors.

There are 2 distinct variations to this quotation process for different property tenures:

- Non-Council Properties - The customer is entitled to obtain their own quotation from other non-RMBC approved contractors if they wish.
- Council Properties – As per the current partnering contract, all extensions proposed for council properties must be completed by a partner contractor. However this rule is void if the total cost of the extension exceeds £30,000 and would un-necessarily create financial hardship to the customer. In this situation the above 3 quotation process would be employed.

For extensions costing over £30,000 the customer will be required to fund the shortfall between the maximum mandatory grant that has been awarded and the total cost of the works.

Appendix 2 - Process Diagram for the extension recommendation/approval process:



Appendix 3 – Actual costs of all extensions completed in 13-14

Project	Cost of works	10% fee	7.5% fee	5% fee
GF3 Extension for bedroom	£11,772.75	£12,950.03	£12,655.71	£12,361.39
GF2 Extension for shower room	£26,396.00	£29,035.60	£28,375.70	£27,715.80
GF2 Extension for shower room	£28,950.00	£31,845.00	£31,121.25	£30,397.50
GF2 Extension for shower room	£23,511.90	£25,863.09	£25,275.29	£24,687.50
GF4 Extension for shower room	£14,560.00	£16,016.00	£15,652.00	£15,288.00
GF2 Extension for shower room	£8,000.00	£8,800.00	£8,600.00	£8,400.00
GF3 Extension for bedroom	£22,979.00	£25,276.90	£24,702.43	£24,127.95
GF3 Extension for bedroom	£26,950.57	£29,645.63	£28,971.86	£28,298.10
GF2 Extension for shower room	£14,531.28	£15,984.41	£15,621.13	£15,257.84
GF2 Extension for shower room	£22,460.00	£24,706.00	£24,144.50	£23,583.00
GF2 Extension for shower room	£22,951.57	£25,246.73	£24,672.94	£24,099.15
GF4 Extension for bedroom & shower	£27,763.53	£30,539.88	£29,845.79	£29,151.71
GF5 Extension (non specific)	£17,472.00	£19,219.20	£18,782.40	£18,345.60
GF3 Extension for bedroom & shower	£30,585.67	£33,644.24	£32,879.60	£32,114.95
GF2 Extension for bedroom & shower	£33,089.30	£36,398.23	£35,571.00	£34,743.77

Figures in **bold** show the extensions that exceeded the grant limit, and those that would have exceeded the limit if the service fee was reduced.

Appendix 4 - Proposed Amendments to Aids and Adaptations Policy and Procedures (2011)

The proposed amendments to the Aids & Adaptations Policy (2011) are detailed below. The changes will result in a more generic policy that satisfies both Disabled Facilities Grant legislation (Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996) and Occupational Therapy Guidelines when assessing applicants. The policy has also been updated to account for legislative changes and procedural improvements that have been implemented since a change of management has occurred.

The proposed changes are:

2.1 - Addition to Major Adaptations: 'Adaptations are only concerned with providing works that have medical purpose. DFG's do not provide and the Adaptations Team do not facilitate any works to improve the aesthetics or functionality of the property that have no direct medical benefit to the customer.'

3.3 – Remove sentence 'If the property is mortgaged, then permission must be supplied by the mortgage company as well'

3.4 – same alteration as 3.3

3.10 – add new section (after 3.9 and before 3.10) - For council properties, the Adaptations Control Officer will make several checks on the tenancy to ensure it is sustainable. Checks will be made on all occupants for warning codes, and tenancy checks will be performed for pending rent and/or anti-social behaviour evictions. If any pending evictions are apparent, the adaptations will be refused.

4.1 - Remove second paragraph and replace with. 'An exception to this comes where an applicant has been referred by Housing Options Medical Assessment Team to the Housing OT, in this case contact with Assessment Direct is not necessary.'

4.2.2 - Addition 'Occupational Therapist or other assessing officer'

4.2.7 - replace paragraph with 'If the potential cost of adaptations totals more than £8,000, then re-housing MUST be investigated prior to considering major adaptations. Where appropriate, all applicants who require adaptations totalling more than £8,000 must be referred to a Housing Occupational Therapist to investigate rehousing as an appropriate solution.'

4.2.11 - Remove this section and replace with: 'Minor adaptations should be sent by the OT direct to Contract and Service Development Team by completing an OT31 form. Minor adaptations should be started within 28 days.'

4.2.13 – Process map:

- Remove 'At this time the customer needs to be advised to register a housing application...'
- Alter 'if adaptations are likely to be over 8k, refer to Housing OT to look at the possibility of re-housing (council properties only)'

4.2.5 – addition: Following an assessment of need the OT or other Assessing Officer may recommend provision of equipment, request a minor fixing and request a minor or major adaptation, if all these things are needed as a result of their assessment.

4.3.9 – An asbestos report is required for all property types. In the case of council stock and owner occupied properties, the adaptations control officer will check for an asbestos report and if none is available, order one. This report will then be send to contractors along with the order for the works. If it is a housing association property, it is the responsibility of the housing association to provide and pay for an accurate asbestos report. This is detailed in ‘Diagram 1’.

4.3.10 – Reword to say ‘if council stock or owner occupied, the relevant contractor is informed and the asbestos is removed. ‘if a housing association property, then the housing association is to organise and pay for the removal of the asbestos before any works are ordered. If it is not removed, the adaptation will be cancelled’.

Diagram 1 – amended to incorporate the above.

4.3.14 - new section – ‘If a customer is found to have a contribution towards the DFG, they have a period of 3 months to pay such monies, after this the application will be terminated.’

4.6.1 – rewording: ‘Once the adaptation has been completed, the Adaptations Co-Ordinator will check the invoice amount and approve the figures on the Flare system.’

5.6 – rewording: ‘A Technical Officer may ask for a review of the works, if they believe alterations to the recommendation may be required. In such circumstances they should contact the Occupational Therapist who sent the referral. Alternatively the housing OT can be contacted to re-assess the situation.’

6.7 – addition to text: “as per the *Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act (1996)*. If the cost of the works exceeds this grant limit, it is the responsibility of the customer to fund the shortfall. In these times of unprecedented public expenditure restraint the Council is unable to offer any further contribution from Disabled Facilities Grant funding by way of discretionary payment. The Adaptations Team have a responsibility to ensure that the funds are distributed fairly and that the limited amount of funds allocated are spent in such a way that maximises the number of people within the borough that can be helped each year.

6.8 – add new paragraph: “The applicant is entitled to apply for alternative funding as per the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and in order to do so must have a community care assessment by Adult Social Care. Further details of which can be found in the relevant social care policy documentation.”

7.3 –rewording: ‘These benefits include:

- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Employment Support Allowance (Income Related)
- Pension Credit Guarantee Credit
- Job Seekers Allowance (Income Based)

8.1 – Remove ‘Clinical Lead Community Occupational Therapist Manager’ (post no longer exists)

9.1 – rewording: ‘£8000 - £15000 Adaptations Co-Ordinator. £15000 - £30000 Adaptations Manager’.

10.1 – delete: ‘Fees are applicable only to major adaptations’.

10.2 – add: ‘The same 10% fee applies to all minor adaptations and minor fixings.’

10.2 – addition: ‘The fee is incorporated into the total cost of the works and is to be paid as part of the DFG as per the *Housing Renewal Grants (Services and Charges) Order 1996.*’

10.14 – new section added:

‘10.14 Customers living in Council Properties do not have the right to choose or appoint their own contractor. These works will be completed by RMBC’s tendered partner contractors (Willmott Dixon or Morrison). The only exception to this would be where the use of a partner contractor would result in financial hardship to the customer, in this situation 3 quotations will be obtained for the works from other RMBC approved contractors and the most competitive contractor used.’

10.18 – new section added: ‘VAT 10.18 - As per *Notice 701/7 VAT Reliefs for disabled people August 2002* The majority of works that are eligible for DFG funding are also eligible for zero rated VAT to maximise the available funding. For the purpose of this document is it acceptable to assume all works provided are eligible for zero rated VAT except bedroom extensions as per the above notice.

Eligibility for zero-rated VAT is limited to non-council owned properties, as the beneficiary for works in council properties is RMBC, and the funding does not come from the Capital budget, the VAT charged can be recovered.’

12.2 – end of sentence is missing from current policy... ‘be considered, though preference will be given to the customers current locality if suitably adapted properties are available.’

13.3 – add: If a customer is in a situation where they are under occupied in a property and are requiring Major Adaptations, then their case must be presented by the OT to the ARP to discuss the individual case and determine the most reasonable and practicable solution.

13.5 – add: Similarly, the ARP may deem the recommended adaptations as not necessary or appropriate if rehousing can be offered that suitably meets the needs of the customer.

New section 14 to be added: - See *Appendix 1* and *Appendix 2*

14.1 – reword: Adaptations to void properties will only be removed following approval from the Adaptations Co-Ordinator who will liaise with the Housing Occupational Therapist before making a decision.

A1.0 - Suggested Addition to text after ‘A1.0 Types and Specifications of Adaptation’

‘This policy aims to identify the most common adaptations required as part of a grant application, it does not cover all possible adaptations that may be relevant to the purpose of section 23 of the Housing, Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996 and thus is not limited to its content. Furthermore its intention is to provide guidance, individual needs and circumstances are to be taken into consideration when assessing qualifying criteria of adaptations.’

A2.1 - Remove (d) and replace with: ‘Additional bedroom/ living space can be considered for a client with behavioural problems where safety is a predominant concern; for example, children sharing a bedroom when left unsupervised at night one child poses a significant safety risk to the other/others.’

A.2.2 - Remove (d) and replace with: ‘Additional bedroom/ living space can be considered for a client with behavioural problems where safety is a predominant concern; for example, children sharing a bedroom when left unsupervised at night one child poses a significant safety risk to the other/others.’

A2.3 - Replace (a) with ' Where the customer is unable to walk short distances and/or negotiate access to the property safely a ramp will be considered. If the customer is able to manage with the assistance of a carer a ramp will not usually be provided. However, if the customer would only need a carer to assist with the external access and the provision of a ramp would enable the customer to be independent, a ramp will be considered.'

A 2.3. – alter sentence to read: 'Ramped access would generally be a maximum of 1:12 and ideally 1:15.' Remove: 'Temporary ramps can be used as an alternative and cheaper option'

Addition - 'Concrete ramping is supplied to council stock as standard and modular temporary ramping to private properties. Modular temporary ramping is exempt from the means testing criteria and remains property of RMBC for the entirety of its lifespan. There are however several exemptions from this rule:

- private property residents do have the right to apply for concrete ramping if they desire, however this would then be subject to means test procedures as afore mentioned.
- If deemed appropriate by the Occupational Therapist or Adaptations Technical Officer, modular temporary ramping can be installed in council properties for one or both of the following reasons:
 - Where the property is on 2 floors and is presently suitably un-adapted for disabled use, the use of temporary ramping would allow the property to be easily returned to its original (un-adapted) state if the property were to become unoccupied in the future. If the property is ground floor, or has a level access shower installed this rule becomes void.
 - Where the Occupational Therapists deem it necessary as the occupant is terminally ill.

A2.3 – alteration to sentence: remove: 'potentially temporary ramps could be Minor Adaptations'. Also remove '(not temporary)'

A2.3 - Replace 'BS.5619: 1978' with 'BS8300 (2010)'

A2.4 – Replace with: Criteria/guidelines for a through floor lift:

(a) A through floor lift will be considered when a customer meets the guidelines for a stairlift but is unable to use a stairlift safely or for whom a stairlift is contra-indicated.

The following considerations need to be taken into account:

(a) Health and Safety/Building/Fire Regulations affecting the proposed installation.

(b) Customers with pre-paid meters may need further advice from the contracted company as to whether a through floor lift is appropriate.

(c) Where a client lives alone, or is alone for long periods, the installation of an alarm/telephone to summon help in an emergency should be considered.

A2.5 – alteration: 'costs can range from £1400 - £8000.

The following considerations need to be taken into account:

(a) Health and Safety/Building/Fire Regulations affecting the proposed installation, e.g. minimum stair widths.

(b) Customers with pre-paid meters may need further advice from the contracted company regarding the on-going power needed for charging the stairlift battery back up.

Criteria/guidelines for a stairlift:

(a) It is severely painful or functionally very difficult for the client to climb the stairs.

(b) It is medically contra-indicated for the client to climb the stairs, even with additional stair rails.

(c) The prognosis is static/deteriorating (i.e. that rehabilitation or recovery following illness has been considered)

(d) Stairlifts will not usually be recommended where the disabled person has access to a downstairs bathroom and toilet and where there is adequate space for a bed downstairs.

(e) Where there have previously been two separate rooms which have been converted into a through room, the expectation would be that room would be restored to its previous condition (as part of the adaptation), thus providing two rooms again, one of which could be used as a bedroom for the person with disabilities' (if there is a bathroom and toilet downstairs already).

(f) Where a person has a downstairs toilet (inside with heating) and is able to negotiate the stairs safely once in the morning and once at night, a stairlift will not normally be recommended'.

(g) Stairlifts to first floor flats will not usually be recommended where the person is able to negotiate the steps once per day. A door entry system would be considered.

A2.6 Replace recommendation section with:

'A hoist will be recommended when:

(a) A moving and handling assessment has determined that hoist transfers are necessary and other equipment has been considered and is unsuitable.

and

(b) There is insufficient room for a mobile hoist

or

(c) Provision of a ceiling track hoist will reduce the number of carers or support the carer(s) by reducing the physical exertion of moving and handling.'

Customers with pre-paid meters may need further advice from the contracted company regarding the on-going power needed for charging the hoist when not in use.

A2.9 – Addition to (a): However exceptions may be made by the OT on an individual needs basis when considering individual care package needs. Change 'expectations' to 'exceptions' on 3rd paragraph in (d). Remove E and F.

A2.10 – replace criteria section with: 'A level access shower can be recommended when one or more of the following criteria is fulfilled:

(a) the disabled person fulfils the guidelines for an overbath shower but is unable to lift their legs over the bath side even with assistance. The level of discomfort and pain must also be considered when assessing whether it is appropriate for the customer to be assisted. If a client would be dependent on a carer for assistance and a care package is being considered for this alone, a level access shower could be considered to promote independence.

or

(b) Single incontinence and inability to use equipment independently.'

Addition 'An information sheet is to be sent to all customers detailing the above, with regard to what they are and are not entitled to as part of the DFG. Under no circumstance (unless authorised by the OT) will the adaptations team pay for, or indeed facilitate any works not mentioned above unless it has direct impact upon the installation of the Level Access Shower.'

Alteration: Costs can range from £1800 - £3500

A2.11 - Replace criteria section with:

'Overbath shower will only recommended where the client has one or more of the following problems:

(a) Double incontinence

(b) Unpredictable epilepsy or black outs

- (c) Confirmed medical condition where bathing is contraindicated.
- (d) Inability to use bathing equipment safely. A bath board and seat has been considered but is inappropriate due to the customer's degree of functional loss. If a client can achieve independence with the provision of an overbath shower, provision will be considered to avoid the necessity of a care package. The client may have to consider purchasing a bath board or swivel bather to enable them to access the overbath shower.'

A2.12 - Replace A2.12 section up to and including (c) with:

'A2.12. Toilets:

Additional (Standard) W.C.

E.g. provision of a W.C. on ground floor. This will only be considered where chemical W.C. and commodes are inappropriate because there is only one ground floor room plus kitchen and the client lives with other family members.

Criteria

- (a) There is a permanent medical condition affecting frequency/urgency of micturition and/or bowels.
- (b) The client's functional ability to reach the existing W.C. is severely restricted due to the nature of their disability.
- (c) Where access to existing amenities cannot be provided.
- (d) A chemical W.C. and special commodes have been considered and are inappropriate.

Special W.C.

An automatic W.C. that provides flushing, warm washing and drying functions from one operation, i.e. it combines the functions of a W.C. and a bidet with an additional drying facility.

Criteria

- (a) The client is unable to maintain proper hygiene after toileting due to degree of their functional loss.
- (b) The provision would give the client an appreciable degree of independence in toileting.

Combined W.C./Shower Unit

Criteria

- (a) The client meets the criteria for an additional W.C. and for a shower.
- (b) No alternative is available.'

A2.13 - Replace 'H61 to Housing and Environmental Services' with ' OT35b referral to the Adaptations Team'

Delete section on temperatures

Addition to text directly above 'Radiator Outputs and pipe work.....'

'Consideration on placement of the temperature controls must also be taken into account to ensure clients always have comfortable access to them, especially if the occupant lives alone and/or does not have carers visiting regularly.'

A2.14 - Addition to start of section:

'A2.14 Kitchens

Additional Space in Kitchens

Criteria

- (a) The client is a wheelchair user.
- (b) The person with disabilities is the predominant user of the kitchen, and is responsible for preparation and cooking of food for self or family.

Redesign/Reorganisation of Facilities of Existing Kitchen Criteria

The extent of the adaptation will be dependent on whether the person with disabilities is the predominant kitchen user or not. Where light use only is envisaged, the provision might be no more than access and a lower/higher work surface. The adaptation will take into account the use of the kitchen by other members of the household.'

Addition to (existing) page 50:

'A2.15 Paths Around the Property

Where a client has difficulty in walking, has visual impairment or is at risk of stumbling. Where the client uses walking equipment or a wheelchair, the path should be sufficiently wide and of sound condition to allow easy and safe access, for example, to the gate of the property and such outbuildings as are used regularly by the client.

A2.16 Access to Garden

Access to the garden will be considered where it is not possible for the disabled occupant to go round the outside of the house to reach the garden. Wheelchair access to some or part of the garden or adaptations to create easy going steps and tubular rails will be considered on an individual basis.'

A3.3 – addition '...926mm internal door where necessary...'

A3.5 – alteration: 'standard step size will be 600mm x 900mm however this can change on an individual need basis, all steps should be of equal tread and depth.'

Addition to page 53:

'A3.13 Lighting

To enhance residual vision of client with visual impairment as confirmed by eligibility to be on Register of Partially Sighted People.

A3.14 Strengthened Glass

Where a client is a danger to self and others due to regular breaking of ordinary window/door glass.

A3.15 Ventilation

The provision of a manual/mechanical ventilation/extractor or alternative type of window:-
E.g. where client is unable to open the existing window in kitchen, own bedroom, living room, bathroom and windows cannot be reasonably adapted by the provision of winders, etc.'

A5.1 – addition ' Internal grab rails are moulded and fluted white PVC and external grab rails are steel finished with white powder coating'

A7.1 - Technical Officers (social care) is changed to 'Technical Officers and Support Workers working in health and social care'.

A7.3 – Replace 'Occupational Therapists' with 'Community Occupational Therapists' as only COT's can recommend Major Adaptations.

Appendix 5 – Customer Declarations – *currently being approved by the Legal Team*

Adaptations Team
Neighbourhood and Adult Services
Housing and Neighbourhoods
Key Choices Property Shop,
20-21 Old Town Hall, Rotherham S60 1QX
Direct Line: 01709 336009
Fax: 01709 336560
Email: adaptationsteam@rotherham.gov.uk
*Email the Council for **free** @ your local library!*

Your Ref:	Please ask for:	Date:
Flare Ref	Officer Name	Date

Customer Declaration – Grant Condition Period

Housing Grants Construction & Regeneration Act 1996.
Disabled Facilities Grant Ref – Flare Number

Customer Name
Customer Address
Customer Address
Customer Address
Customer Address

Detail Of Works

I can confirm that for the duration of the grant condition period (5 years), or such shorter period as my health and other relevant circumstances permit, the above property will be my only or main residence. I understand that should my residency of said property terminate before this period has expired, for reasons unrelated to my health or other relevant circumstances, RMBC may pursue legal action to recover the costs associated with the above works. I also confirm that the above works will be used as proposed on my application form for the entirety of the grant condition period. I hereby consent to random periodic inspections of the above works from RMBC technical officers during the grant condition period provided they have the appropriate identification upon arrival.

SIGNED:

PRINT:

DATE:

Rotherham Agency Service

ADAPTATIONS TEAM



Authority Form and Certificate of Future Occupation for Grant Aided Building Works

Authority to the Director of Housing Services to act as agent for the purpose of obtaining a Disabled Facilities Adaptation

Award/Grant Ref. No:

Name:

National Insurance Number:

DOB:

Address:

Type of Adaptation:

Part 1

*I/We *am/are the *owner/occupier/landlord/tenant of the above property.

*I/We give *my/our authority to the Rotherham Agency Service to act on *my/our behalf for the purpose of obtaining estimates for the works and also to make such other enquiries of the Department of Financial Services as may be necessary to determine the amount of *my/our contribution to the works.

*I/We agree that should *I/We withdraw *my/our application for at any time before completion of the grant aided works that *I/We will reimburse the Rotherham Agency Service for all costs occurred incurred in relation to *my/our application.

Should *I/We agree to proceed with the grant, *I/We agree to pay any contribution towards the cost of works to the Rotherham Agency Service before commencement of the said works and also give *my/our authority to the Rotherham Agency Service to continue to act on *my/our behalf in accordance with the Agreement for Grant Aided Building Works and to pay the amount of *my/our grant money together with any contribution *I/We may have made, when due, to the contractors appointed on my behalf by the Rotherham Agency Service.

Part 2 (TO BE COMPLETED BY APPLICANTS FOR DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS ONLY)

*I/We understand that the approval of a Disabled Facilities/Adaptation Grant for item(s) of specialised equipment for use by a disabled person (stair lift, through floor lift, ceiling track and hoist system) is subject to the condition that the said equipment is offered for return to Rotherham M.B.C. when no longer required for use by a disabled person.

*I/We *am/are Council tenants and agree to transfer, free of charge, the said equipment to the Council on the understanding that the Council agrees to undertake to secure at no cost to myself/ourselves, repair and annual servicing of the said equipment.

*I/We agree that *I/We are responsible for arranging the lifting of carpets and arranging the lifting and moving of furniture when required.

Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 – Section[s] 21, 22, 23

Tenant's Certificate

Owner's Certificate

To accompany [owner's] [tenant's] application for Disabled Facilities Award/Grant

To: Rotherham Metropolitan Borough Council

1. For use with; [my] [owners'] [my tenant's] application for disabled facilities award/grant in respect of «detail»

See Note A 2. I HEREBY CERTIFY that I [have acquired] [propose to acquire] a qualifying owner's interest in the [dwelling] [flat].

See Note A 2.1 I HEREBY CERTIFY that this is a tenant's application

See Note B 3. I INTEND that, throughout the grant condition period (5 years), or such shorter period as [my] [his] [her] health and other relevant circumstances permit, the [dwelling] [flat] will be the only or main residence of and will be occupied by

See Note C [me] [the disabled occupant.]

Should my occupancy cease during the grant condition period (5 years) I agree to repay the full grant amount awarded should RMBC request it.

See Note D Tenant (Signed)

Owner (Signed)

Address

PASSPORTING BENEFITS

Does the relevant person receive Housing Benefit / Income Support; Income Related Employment & Support Allowance, Pension Credit Guarantee Credit, Income based Job Seekers Allowance? Is the work for a child under the age of 16, or a child under the age of 19 in full time education? Yes / No.....

DECLARATION

**WARNING: IF YOU KNOWINGLY MAKE A FALSE STATEMENT
YOU MAY BE LIABLE FOR PROSECUTION**

I declare that to the best of my knowledge, the information I have given above is correct. I am *[the applicant] [one of the applicants] [the relevant person (but not the applicant or one of the applicants)] [a relevant person (but not the applicant or one of the applicants)].

For the purpose of this application, I give my consent to RMBC to refer to information provided by me for the purposes of my application(s) and agree to the adaptations service checking official records (Land Registry and benefit systems) to verify my given information. I also consent to my details (non-financial) being passed to organisations (for the purpose of this application only) electronically.

Signature:

Date: