



Aids and adaptations policy for council tenants

July 2013



NORWICH
City Council

Purpose of policy

The purpose of the policy is to set out the council's approach to the provision of aids and adaptations for Norwich City Council tenants, who is eligible to receive them, and how they will be delivered.

The assistance available through this policy aims to provide eligible tenants with an efficient, practical and cost-effective solution taking into account the health and well-being of the tenant and household.

The policy should be read in conjunction with the council's *Allocations policy* and *Tenancy policy*.

Authorisation

This policy was approved by Cabinet in April 2013. It delegates the authority to assess individual cases to the head of housing, and where appropriate, and reasonable to do so, agree exceptions to the policy.

The policy will be reviewed on an annual basis and the authority to agree revisions will be delegated to the deputy chief executive (operations).

Relevant legislation informing this policy

1. Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970

Section 1 of the act imposes a duty on the council to provide adaptations or special equipment needs in the home to help with convenience or for safety. Any provision of resources is dependent upon an assessment of need under the NHS & Community Care Act 1990.

2. Disabled Persons Act 1986

The Disabled Persons Act 1986 strengthens the provisions of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and requires Local Authorities to meet the various needs of disabled people, including provision of aids and adaptations.

3. Housing Act 1985

Under section 8 of the act the council has a duty to consider housing conditions in its district and the needs of the district for the provision of further housing accommodation. This may include the provision or adaptation of existing accommodation for its own disabled tenants.

4. Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

Under this act the council has a duty to provide disabled facilities grants to eligible applicants.

5. Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 prohibits discrimination against people with the protected characteristics that are specified in section 4 of the act. Disability is one of the specified protected characteristics.

Contributes to corporate priorities

The policy helps to meet the corporate priorities 'to make Norwich a city with decent housing for all' and 'to provide value for money services'.

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Introduction

The *Aids and adaptations policy* sets out the:

- eligibility requirements
- assessment of applications
- types of assistance available
- terms and conditions
- complaints process
- monitoring and review arrangements.

This policy should be read in conjunction with the council's *Allocations policy* and *Tenancy policy*.

Policy aims

The policy aims to help Norwich City Council tenants, and their immediate household, who are disabled or suffer from long-term ill health to:

- live independently in their home
- help tenants achieve better housing and living conditions.

The council is committed to facilitating the provision of aids and adaptations to properties and will endeavour to deal with requests for assistance as quickly, effectively and sensitively as possible. In most circumstances people will be dealt within date order of their application for assistance. Any exceptions to this will need approval from the head of housing services.

Definitions

The policy refers to 'disabled' persons. A person is defined as 'disabled' under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 if:

- their sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired
- they have a mental disorder or impairment of any kind
- they are physically substantially disabled by illness, injury, impairments that have been present since birth or otherwise.

Generally the impairment of the applicant must have lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months.

Policy development

This policy has been developed in consultation with the following stakeholders:

- NPS Norwich (formerly property services).
- Occupational therapists – Norfolk County Council.
- Tenant focus group (including representatives from sheltered housing, and tenants who have recently had disabled adaptations completed).
- Other relevant council officers.

Eligibility

Who qualifies?

An individual will normally be considered for aids and adaptations to their home if:

- they are either a Norwich City Council tenant, or their partner, or a member of the immediate family, who is permanently resident in the household,
- **and** have an impairment which has a significant or serious long-term effect on their ability to:
 - carry out normal day-to-day activities in and around their home
 - access essential facilities within their home.

Works for others, such as lodgers, will only be carried out in exceptional circumstances and then only if they have been resident with the tenant for more than 12 months.

For individuals who are not a named tenant on the tenancy agreement, they must be registered as living at the property for council tax purposes, and if aged over 18 years, they should be registered on the electoral role for that address. Individuals who have no recourse to public funds will not be eligible for assistance under the terms of this policy.

In cases where a child is disabled and the parents are separated, adaptation works will usually only be completed at the property of principal residence (normally the residence of the parent who is in receipt of child benefit for that child).

Adaptations will only be considered if the property is the main residence of the individual and they do not hold another tenancy or own another property.

Major adaptations will not normally be approved for individuals who are waiting for medical procedures which will improve their mobility until their expected recovery is complete. Temporary or minor adaptations may be considered during this interim period.

Adaptations will be considered where the applicant is waiting to be discharged from hospital and requires their home to be altered.

Generally adaptations will be carried out where a **secure** tenancy is held by the tenant.

Requests for major adaptations will not normally be approved where a Right to Buy application has been received by the council. Following completion of a Right to Buy sale, adaptations could, however, be considered under the council's Private sector financial assistance policy (available on the council's website <http://www.norwich.gov.uk/>) by way of a Disabled Facilities Grant.

Applicants who are seeking a transfer or mutual exchange will each be considered on their individual merit. Whether the applicant is leaving a suitably adapted property will form part of this consideration.

The council recognises that there may be occasions where applications for adaptations fall outside of this policy. These will be assessed on an individual basis by the case worker and Tenancy services manager, where appropriate, and reasonable to do so.

For information on assessment of applications, refer to section 3 of this policy.

Reasons for refusal will be provided to the customer in writing and each case will be considered on its individual merits.

Assesment of applications

Once the council has established that the customer is eligible for assistance, there are a number of factors that it will consider when assessing an application in order to establish the overall suitability of the property for the recommended works:

- the age and structural condition of the property to establish whether the adaptations can be carried out safely without having an adverse effect on the fabric of the property
- the suitability of the property for the size of household (as defined by the council's Allocations policy)
- whether there are any competing needs of family members that need to met in that particular property
- whether there is suitable alternative accommodation available, particularly in cases where major adaptations are required
- the availability of the customer's existing support network and carers
- the customer's intentions regarding the long term use of property
- that the adaptations will meet the long-term needs of the customer
- whether external adaptations, for example ramping, would adversely affect the area for other residents.

Where alternative accommodation is being considered, the likely impact of moving house will be assessed in relation to the customer's health, condition and individual circumstances to ensure that it will not have a serious adverse affect upon them. This will be done in consultation with the customer.

Where adaptations are requested to a first floor or above flat that is not served by

passenger lift, consideration will be given to any additional works that are likely to be necessary. For example where a request has been made to remove a bath and install a level access shower/wet room, then an assessment will be made of the access and internal circulation space and staircases and whether the customer will be able to manage these areas safely in the short to medium term. If it is established that the customer is likely to have access and mobility difficulties then suitable alternatives will be explored in consultation with the customer. It is the council's policy not to install stair lifts in the common parts of a property.

It is important for the council to consider all these factors to ensure it makes the best use of its financial resources whilst meeting the needs of its customers.

Types of assistance available

There are three categories of aids and adaptations covered by this policy:

- Equipment.
- Minor adaptations.
- Major adaptations.

The most appropriate solution will be sought in all cases and will aim to offer best value for money whilst meeting the needs of the customer. This will be achieved by ensuring that the works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled person and are reasonable and practicable depending on the age and condition of the property, prior to authorising the works, as outlined in the legislation guidance (Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996).

Equipment

Aim

The provision of portable or temporary equipment to help those who have difficulties with daily living activities.

Certain items may help if you have any of the following difficulties:

- getting in and/or out of the bath
- getting up from a low toilet
- getting up and out of an easy chair
- carrying things between rooms
- reaching down to put on socks, stockings or shoes
- turning the taps on/off sometimes and/or generally managing in the kitchen.

Scope of works

A wide range of equipment is now available. The most common types are:

- toilet aids
- bathing aids
- moving and handling equipment.

If a person meets the Fair Access to Care Services (FACS) criteria, Norfolk County Council will provide a range of suitable equipment at no cost. For more information please refer to Norfolk County Council's leaflet:

Equipment to aid daily living

<http://www.norfolk.gov.uk/view/NCCI16676>

Applications to Norfolk County Council

Referrals should be made by telephone or letter by contacting Norfolk County Council via the 24 hour customer services telephone number 0344 800 8014 or for general enquiries call 0344 800 8020. A textphone is available through 01603 763 585 or visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/social

Bathing

The council may provide bathing equipment to eligible customers in place of adaptations. Assessment of the customer's

bathing needs will be carried out by an Occupational therapist and the council may provide a bath lift as opposed to a level access shower where practical and appropriate to do so.

Minor adaptations

Aim

To provide minor adaptations to sustain the independence of individuals in their homes without the need for a referral from an occupational therapist. The council recognises that the timely provision of minor adaptations can often postpone the need for more substantial adaptations.

Scope of works

Minor adaptations can include:

- lever taps
- stair rails
- lowering of light switches
- raising floor level sockets (wheelchair users only).

Larger scale or substantial adaptations will need an assessment and recommendation from an occupational therapist.

Applications

Applications should be made directly to Norwich City Council:

- Telephone: 0344 980 3333, 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday
- Minicom users only (for people who are hearing impaired) Telephone: 01603 212587, 8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday
- Customer centre, City Hall Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday, 8.45am to 5pm Wednesday, 1pm to 5pm (closed from 8.45am to 1pm every Wednesday)
- Write to the following address: Norwich City Council City Hall Norwich, NR2 1NH
- Use the council's on line 'contact us' form available at www.norwich.gov.uk.

Major adaptations

Aim

To provide major adaptations to help eligible individuals to live independently and to carry out essential day-to-day activities.

Scope of works

Major adaptations can include:

- kitchen fittings and adaptations
- bathroom fittings and adaptations
- other internal alterations and adaptations (door widening, stair lifts)
- property access (ramps, drop kerbs).

Assessment

- An occupational therapist will carry out a functional assessment of the needs of the applicant (this may include working with other health professionals, such as a medical consultant or GP).
- In consultation with the tenant, all options will be considered, in line with this policy, to establish the most appropriate solution which will aim to offer best value for money whilst meeting the needs of the customer.
- The occupational therapist's recommendations will normally form the basis of any scheme of works.
- In cases where a move to more suitable alternative accommodation is selected, it is expected that the move will take place within six months from the point of application, and in line with the council's allocations policy.

Applications

Applications should be made by telephone or letter by contacting Norfolk County Council via the 24 hour customer services telephone number 0344 800 8014 or for general enquiries call 0344 800 8020. A textphone is available through 01603 763 585 or visit www.norfolk.gov.uk/social.

Restrictions

Major adaptations will only be carried out following a recommendation from an occupational therapist, for eligible customers, and fitted in suitable properties.

For further information, refer to section 2 for the eligibility criteria and section 3 for assessment of applications.

Cost of adaptations

Adaptations that are carried out by the council within the scope of this policy will normally be funded by Norwich City Council up to a maximum of £25,000.

The council will consider, on an individual basis, whether to fund or part-fund cases where the cost of works is more than £25,000. Should the council not exceed the £25,000 funding, the applicant is eligible to part fund the cost of these works. The council will help the customer to explore the available self funding options.

Where another organisation has agreed to part fund the cost of works, this must be done in agreement with the council and the occupational therapist. Policies and procedures from all parties will apply.

Installing your own adaptations

Secure tenants of Norwich City Council may be able to organise their own adaptations at their own expense. In all cases, the tenant must obtain written agreement from the council before carrying out any alterations or adaptations to their property. The council will only refuse permission with good reason, such as if the work:

- would interfere with any maintenance to the property
- may cause a potential health and safety risk
- would breach any regulatory requirements.

The written request will need to state what works and adaptations the tenant wishes to carry out and who will be undertaking the works. A tenant must not start any works without first gaining written permission from the council. The council may inspect the completed works to ensure they have been carried out satisfactorily.

The council will also advise the tenant prior to approval of an adaptation that they may be required to remove any adaptations and make good any damage to the property at the end of their tenancy.

The tenant may be responsible for the maintenance and repairs of adaptations that they have arranged themselves, for the duration of their tenancy. In addition, Norwich City Council will not generally be liable for any damage or injury caused by adaptations not installed by the council.

The council charges social rent on all of its tenancies. The amount of rent charged will not be affected by installing privately funded adaptations to the property.

At the end of a secure tenancy, tenants who have carried out adaptations at their own expense and with the council's approval may be eligible for some

compensation in accordance with legislation (Housing Act 1985 Part 4 section 99A 'Right to compensation for improvements'). For further information on carrying out home improvements and compensation claims, refer to the council's information leaflet 'Tenant's own improvements to council homes: a tenant guide' which is available in the council's Tenant's Handbook and on line: <http://www.norwich.gov.uk/Housing/TenantsAndLeaseholders/CouncilTenants/Tenant%20Handbook/TenantsOwnImprovements.pdf>.

If adaptations have been carried out at the tenant's own expense without the council's permission then:

- the council may agree to take over the ownership of the adaptations
- the tenant may be required to remove the adaptation and make good any damage to the property
- if the council has to repair any damage after a tenancy has ended, the former tenant may be liable for the cost of such works.

Removing adaptations

Where adaptations have been carried out to a council property and a new tenant moves in, the adaptations will not normally be removed. For example, where a bath has been removed and replaced with a level access shower.

The council advertises available adapted properties through its choice based lettings system, Norwich Home Options, and will make every effort to let them to those tenants who require adapted properties.

Consideration will be given to the removal of stair lifts should they not be required by the new tenant.

Moving or buying after adaptations are complete

Moving on

Following a major adaptation the council would normally expect the customer to remain in the adapted property for a minimum of five years. However, there may be exceptions where the individual's needs have changed and, with agreement from the occupational therapist and the council, a move to a suitable alternative property will be considered. Should the new home require any adaptations to meet specific needs, these will be assessed in accordance with the terms of this aids and adaptations policy.

Transfers

Transfers will be considered in line with the council's allocations policy <http://www.norwichhomeoptions.org.uk>.

Mutual Exchange

Mutual exchanges will be considered in line with legislation (Housing Act 1985 Schedule 3 grounds for refusing a mutual exchange). Therefore, permission may be refused if the property:

- has been adapted or has features that make it suitable for disabled person
- is a property owned by a landlord which lets properties to particularly vulnerable people or
- is for people with special needs (supported housing) and if the mutual exchange took place there would no longer be such a person living in the property.

Right to Buy

Applications to exercise the Right to Buy by tenants who have had adaptations carried out by the council may be refused in line with legislation (Housing Act 1985 Schedule 5 Exceptions to the Right to Buy). All applications will be assessed on a case-by-case basis.

Change of needs

If a tenant's needs change after adaptations have been installed, for example, they can no longer do something that they could manage before, then the council, upon request, will arrange for the tenant's needs to be re-assessed.

Applications falling outside of this policy

The council accepts that there may be circumstances that warrant exceptions to this policy. Applications for assistance that fall outside of this policy will be considered by the Head of housing services and, where appropriate, and reasonable to do so, agree exceptions to the policy.

Complaints

Any complaints about this policy or its implementation will be addressed through the council's corporate complaints system. Complaints may be made on a standard form, available from the council's reception areas, or online at www.norwich.gov.uk. Complaints made in person, by letter or by email will be directed into the corporate scheme.

Monitoring and review

The policy will be monitored in accordance with the council's performance framework. It will be reviewed on an annual basis, and whenever there is a fundamental change of legislative or regulatory provisions. Minor amendments to the policy will be subject to the approval of the Deputy chief executive (operations).

Diversity impact assessment

Title of proposed policy, function or project:

Disabled aids and adaptations policy

What are the aims and objectives?

The policy is in place to provide guidance, and a framework that will help long-term sick and disabled tenants remain in their homes for longer, and carry out essential daily activities or, if this is not possible or practical, to assist them in finding suitable alternative accommodation. This will ensure that:

- Financial resources are spent where they would make the most difference to the quality of life for a resident.
- There are fair and equitable means of distributing limited resources.
- The council and its residents obtain value for money from all adaptations ie that adaptations remain in place and in use for their entire projected life cycle and where possible are not removed where future tenants do have a need for them.
- Any adaptations provided are adequate for the resident now and in the foreseeable future.

Who are the key stakeholders?

- Tenants living in Norwich City Council properties who have applied for an adaptation to their property to meet a disability need.
- Public and voluntary organisations including support agencies, voluntary groups and registered social landlords.
- Relevant Norwich City Council officers.

What evidence has been used for this assessment?

- Consultation.
- Focus group.
- Customer satisfaction data (from the disabled adaptations contract KPI's).
- Customer satisfaction data (taken from STAR survey results).

Have any concerns been raised about the proposed policy?

(Copy and paste this symbol ✓ to tick the relevant fields below)

	Yes	No	Not known
Age		✓	
Disability		✓	
Gender		✓	
Racial group		✓	
Religion or belief			✓
Sexual orientation			✓

What have people from these equalities groups told you about their concerns?

N/A

Do different groups have different needs in relation to this policy?

(Copy and paste this symbol ✓ to tick the relevant fields below)

	Yes	No	Not known
Age		✓	
Disability	✓		
Gender		✓	
Racial group		✓	
Religion or belief			✓
Sexual orientation			✓

Please explain what the potential outcomes are for these equalities groups:

The disabled adaptations policy is there to provide a framework and guidance that allows us to:

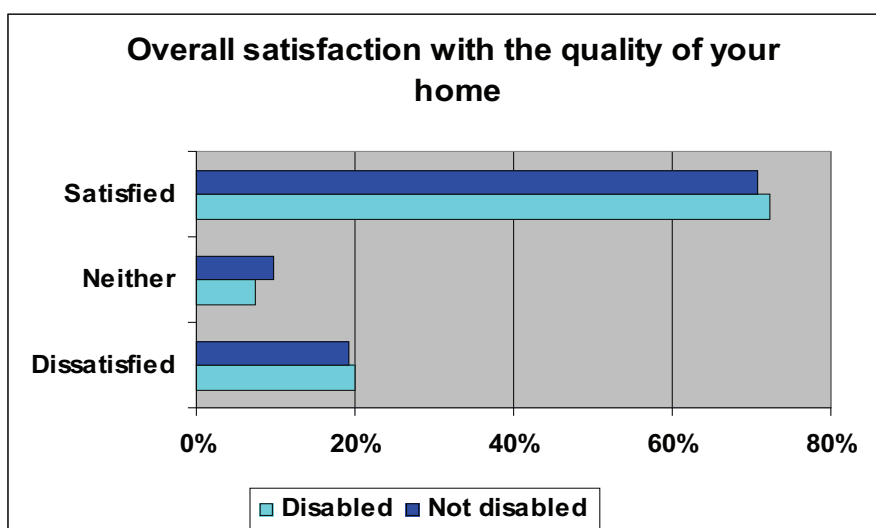
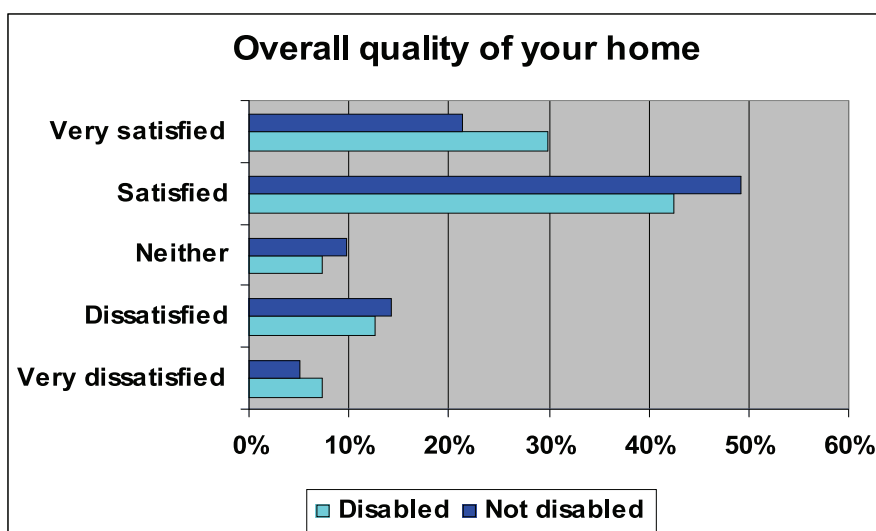
- Carry out reasonable and appropriate adaptations to our assets to meet the resident's disability need.

- Match tenants with specific needs to alternative properties (where appropriate) to make better use of the housing stock.
- Work with our tenants, officers, the county council, caring agencies and contractors to ensure there is minimum disruption for tenants, and time spent carrying out adaptations to occupied properties.
- Cross work with all housing departments to implement more efficient and cost effective processes and procedures.
- Standardize the adaptations and alterations processes throughout the authority.
- Help shape the service ensuring our procedures are in line with best practice and current legislation.

- Make use of temporary or portable equipment to ensure minimum disruption and reduce void times.

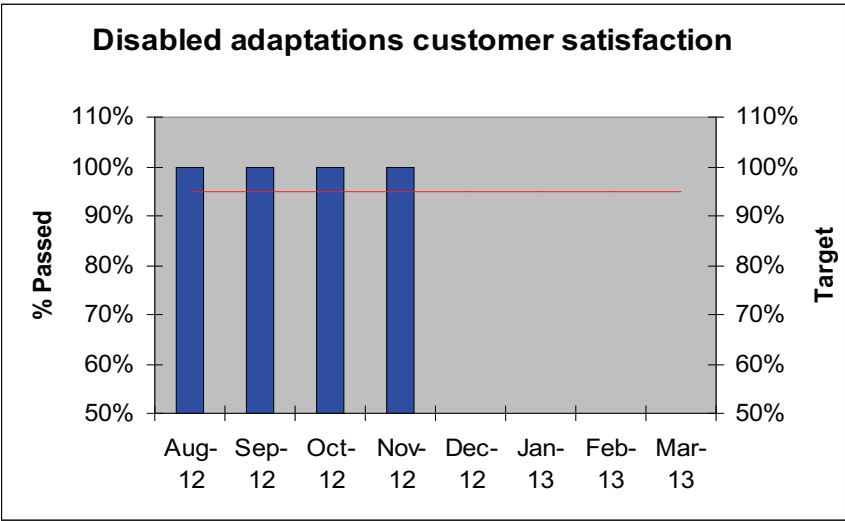
All of the resident’s accessing the service will have a disability need, and that need will have been assessed first by Norfolk County Council, and meet the criteria for assessment/referral for work. As such, the only group that has a need in relation to this policy is the disability group, and the outcome for that group as a result of any action taken under the framework of the policy would be a positive one in the majority of cases.

The recent STAR survey shows that disabled residents are more likely to be satisfied with the overall quality of their home. The results of this survey are shown below.



In addition, disabled residents who have accessed the service and benefitted from a resulting adaptation to their home are extremely satisfied with the service they have

received, as can be seen in the customer satisfaction results shown below, taken from the customer satisfaction forms returned to us by residents upon completion of the work.



A focus group was held in December 2012 with a number of disabled residents invited to participate. These residents were a mix of those who had recently benefitted from adaptations to their properties, and those who have a registered disability but may not have accessed the service, or not accessed it recently.

The policy and the service were well received, and there was no negative criticism from the group as a whole. Constructive criticism was that our neighbourhood housing officers need to be made more aware of how residents access the service initially (via Norfolk County Council), and that an accompanying leaflet be made available to all residents that can be included in the future with the tenant’s handbook.

Is there a chance to: a. promote equality of opportunity and b. promote good relations in the community?
 (Copy and paste this symbol ✓ to tick the relevant fields below)

	Yes	No	Not known
Age	✓		
Disability	✓		
Gender		✓	
Racial group		✓	
Religion or belief			✓
Sexual orientation			✓

Please explain whether the potential is for a positive or neutral outcome:

The council carries out disabled adaptations for tenants housed in Norwich City Council owned stock. In the majority of cases, tenant’s access the service initially through Norfolk County Council’s adult and children’s social services teams, or through their phone assessment team operated by their subsidiary company, Norfolk Care Connect. The method of external assessment by qualified occupational therapists ensures that there is consistency, fairness and transparency in each referral.

Since October 2011 Norwich City Council has employed its own occupational therapist on a secondment basis from Norfolk County Council, in order to ensure that once received, the referrals are dealt with promptly, and to audit the referrals, checking for accuracy and that the works requested are reasonable, appropriate and practicable to meet the need of the tenants.

In addition, for minor adaptation requests tenants can access the service directly; minor aids and adaptations such as lever taps, adjustments to electrical sockets, and small handrails can be ordered directly through Norwich City Council’s property services team without the need for a referral from Norfolk County Council.

The service provides a high level of customer service and satisfaction, and following each assessment works are tailored to the tenant’s specific needs and we can provide assistance and advice throughout the process as required. This support is available in person or over the telephone through our property services team, our occupational therapist, and through our contractor who has a dedicated resident liaison officer for disabled adaptations.

The service regularly involves its internal and external stakeholders, partners and support agencies, who provide invaluable feedback. Since 2010, Norwich City Council has used this feedback to improve the service overall, and our disabled tenants who require adaptations benefit from this ongoing process of improvements; at present there is no waiting list* for disabled adaptations to be carried out, regardless of the priority need.

**From point of referral being received by Norwich City Council from Norfolk County Council, or direct from the customer.*

Is there evidence to suggest that the policy may have a disproportionate adverse impact on an equalities group?

(Copy and paste this symbol ✓ to tick the relevant fields below)

	Yes	No	Not known
Age		✓	
Disability		✓	
Gender		✓	
Racial group		✓	
Religion or belief			✓
Sexual orientation			✓

Please explain what this potential impact is and how you intend to mitigate against it in a proportionate and relevant way:

N/A

Please outline key recommendations and actions committed to in the future:

**On the basis of this assessment,
should this policy go on to the
further impact assessment stage?**

Yes No

Please explain:

N/A

Please note that the further impact assessment is only necessary if a potentially disproportionate negative impact has been identified.

If you require this leaflet in another language or format eg large print, audio cassette or braille please contact Norwich City Council.

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