

HOME ADAPTATIONS AND DISABILITY FUNDING GRANT (DFG) POLICY

Policy Owner

Chief Property Officer

Accountable Lead

Director of Asset management & Procurement



Policy Control	
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Policy Statement

We recognise the contribution that adaptations can make to independent living. We work proactively with local partners to deliver appropriate and cost-effective solutions for tenants. Major adaptation work can be high in cost and we are committed to working with our customers to sign post them towards available funding.

Curo is committed to providing a high-quality aids and adaptations service to enable customers to live safely and more independently within their homes.

1. Scope

- 1.1 This policy describes how we identify the need for, and respond to requests for, adaptations to properties.
- 1.2 The policy covers all our rented properties and our communal spaces and responds to any type of need for a physical adaptation to a property, except for those arising purely from changes to a household size.
- 1.3 The policy enables staff to make decisions about providing adaptations and it enables residents to know what they can expect of us.
- 1.4 The policy recognises that partnership working is a fundamental requirement, and that processes and outcomes will vary from one

local authority to another. We aim to work in partnership with our Local Authority agencies such as Bath and North East Somerset Council, Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Somerset Council etc.

- 1.5 Except where there is a statutory requirement, the scope of this policy excludes any tenancy of a fixed term of two years or less.

2. Definitions

- 2.1 **Aids** are pieces of equipment, generally portable, which enable someone with a disability to carry out an activity with greater ease. They include things like walking frames, raised toilet seats for example. These are things that Curo do not provide.
- 2.2 **Adaptations** are fixed alterations or additions to a property (internal or external) which make the building easier or safer to use by a person with a disability. Items that would be regarded as Adaptations are things such as grabrails for the shower or bath, a ramp to enter your home or motion sensor external lighting.
- 2.3 **Minor adaptations** are those with a cost of under £1,000 (including VAT)
- 2.4 **Major adaptations** are those costing over £1,000 (including VAT) up to a maximum of £2,000 (including VAT).
- 2.5 An **Occupational Therapist (OT)** is able to assess and suggest solutions or pieces of equipment to meet the needs of an individual. An OT assessment is often needed for Major adaptations or DFG funded works.
- 2.6 **Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)** provide public funding, through local authorities, to help meet the cost of providing adaptations.

3. Principles

- 3.1 We recognise that making adaptations to meet physical needs:
 - improves customers' quality of life,
 - increases opportunities for independent living,
 - prevents accidents, and
 - enables mobility.
- 3.2 We make it easy for customers and stakeholders to contact us about adaptations.
- 3.3 We recognise the immense complexity that often accompanies – or hinders – successful outcomes for those needing adaptations and will pro-actively seek to reduce that complexity and support customers through the process.

- 3.4 We empower colleagues to make quick decisions about adaptations.
- 3.5 We will have good working relationships with local authorities:
- ensuring that our policies and procedures are understood, and;
 - ensuring that we receive, and provide, effective help and advice.
- 3.6 We will support these principles by setting aside a financial provision each year which will deliver minor or major adaptations in our homes.
- 3.7 We will not 'means test' applicants, and we will not increase rents as a result of adaptations.
- 3.8 We manage adaptations in a way that makes best use of our resources and the resources of local authorities.
- 3.9 We ensure that equipment is safely installed and maintained. Where equipment is installed by us, or by a local authority, we will maintain it thereafter.

4. Application

- 4.1 All customer requests for aids and adaptations will be assessed against housing need and suitability of the property for their family needs. In some cases, rehousing will be the most cost effective and practical solution.
- 4.2 We will respond in writing to all applications or consent requests for aids or adaptations to confirm the outcome of the application.
- 4.3 We will consider a housing move to a suitably adapted property or a property that could more easily be adapted in preference to substantially adapting an existing property.
- 4.4 We will treat all requests for minor adaptations as a reactive maintenance request and will attend in line with our Repairs Service Level Agreement for P3 repairs priority (non-urgent).
- 4.5 Where a specialist assessment is necessary, this is managed by the Asset Management team. We may ask for or commission an Occupational Therapist report to ensure the adaptations meets the needs of the customer.
- 4.6 We will arrange for an independent OT assessment to be undertaken within 30 calendar days of your request.

- 4.7 Following receipt of the OT assessment, we will undertake the recommended work within 15 calendar days, if the work is within the Minor Adaptations threshold and within 30 calendar days if the work is above the Minor but below the Major Adaptations threshold.
- 4.8 For Major Adaptations above £2,000 (including VAT) in value, we will signpost customers to their local authority for delivery through Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG).
- 4.9 We will make financial provision available annually for minor and major adaptation works, based on known expenditure in previous years and anticipated demand, and that budget will act as a cap on expenditure during the year.
- 4.10 We will provide advice to customers about alternative options, and in particular moving to another home where this is more practical.
- 4.11 Where that is a realistic alternative to a major adaptation then we will support customers to move.
- 4.12 All adaptation work is recorded on QL: significant works are recorded as a Component against that property and when vacant is advertised with priority, or with restrictions, for applicants needing an adapted home.
- 4.13 When we remove equipment which is still serviceable we will seek to recycle or re-use it wherever feasible into our homes where there is a need for it (subject to OT assessment if necessary).
- 4.14 We will respond within 30 calendar days to requests for consent for adaptation works. These will be dealt with by Property Operations Department (POD) and Asset Management team using the consents process: we will give consent unless the proposed works compromise the long-term viability of the property.
- 4.15 Equipment we install or is installed by a local authority becomes our responsibility to maintain after the warranty period: our procedures ensure that equipment is recorded, and that any necessary servicing contracts are put in place and managed by the Property Operations Department.
- 4.16 We can only carry out adaptations to properties or on land we own.

5. Eligibility

- 5.1 Curo will consider requests for aids and adaptations from customers who live in rented properties (both social and affordable) owned by Curo.
- 5.2 Adaptations will not be funded by Curo for homes which:

- have a live Right to Buy, Voluntary Right to Buy or Right to Acquire application
 - are leasehold
 - are shared ownership
 - are market or sub-market rent
 - are not owned by Curo
- 5.3 Where a home has been built with, or subsequently benefitted from, significant investment in adaptations, it will normally be exempt from purchase by the customer through the Right to Buy or Right to Acquire scheme.
- 5.4 Curo reserves the right to refuse to fund or provide permission for adaptations for a number of reasons including:
- where there is no record of the person requiring the adaptation being formally recorded as resident in the relevant home
 - where the adaptation appears to be principally to reduce an overcrowding situation caused by the customer's change in circumstances since being granted the tenancy
 - where the needs of the household could be more reasonably satisfied by the customer transferring to more suitable accommodation being provided by Curo or another housing provider
 - where the works are not appropriate for the property or appear unreasonable
 - where the customer is actively seeking rehousing
 - where there has been a serious breach of tenancy resulting in a legal notice being served
 - where the home is scheduled for demolition or disposal

6. Types of Aids and Adaptations

- 6.1 Curo categorises requests for aids and adaptations as either minor or major with the distinction being based on the nature, complexity and cost of the work required.

6.2 Minor Aids and Adaptations

- 6.2.1 Requests for minor fixed aids and adaptations such as grab rails, handrails and lever taps will be accepted directly from customers and provided free of charge. To satisfy the minor aids criteria, any work will generally cost less than £1000.00 including VAT.
- 6.2.2 We will establish a dedicated annual budget for undertaking minor aids and adaptations and subject to the availability of funding within the year will aim to complete work falling into this category within 30 days of receipt of request.

6.3 Major Adaptations

- 6.3.1 Requests for major adaptations, expected to cost over £1,000, but under £2,000 including VAT, may be referred to an Occupational Therapist for an assessment of need and recommended works.
- 6.3.2 Curo will undertake the work recommended by the OT as soon as is reasonably practical but within 30 days of confirmation of the work to be undertaken by the OT.
- 6.3.3 Where the request is for the installation of major equipment and adaptations or where the estimated cost exceeds the threshold, then the customer will be required to make a direct claim to the relevant local authority for the works to be carried out through the DFG scheme. Curo will signpost customers to the correct Local Authority and Liaison.
- 6.3.4 Under the DFG scheme the local authority will be required to seek the approval from Curo to undertake the works, which shall not be unreasonably withheld.

6.4 Disabled Facility Grants (DFG)

- 6.4.1 Requests for major adaptations, expected to cost over £2,000 including VAT will not be funded by Curo, however, customers will be referred to their Local Authority to apply for a Disabled Facility Grant (subject to eligibility criteria that the Local Authority may have).
- 6.4.2 Curo will support customers through their application for funding by ensuring you are signposted to the correct Local Authority.
- 6.4.3 Any application for Consent to modify their home will be reviewed in line with our Property Consent policy.
- 6.4.4 In the event that works take place under the DFG scheme, Curo will require customers and their chosen contractors to comply with the terms of the Consent approval. The requirements would include, but not be limited to:
 - The provision of required insurance certification
 - Risk Assessments and Method Statements that identify any risks and hazards and plans to mitigate
 - Electrical certification (where required)
 - Warranty information (where required)
 - Planning permission or listed consent (where required)

7. Transfer and Mutual Exchange

- 7.1 It is Curo's discretion to determine whether such a move can take place.
- 7.2 Customers who choose to undertake a mutual exchange with another customer and in doing so move from an adapted property

to one that needs adaptation would be expected to fund any adaptations themselves.

8. Maintenance, Repairs and Servicing

- 8.1 For equipment not covered by any valid servicing or maintenance warranty, or not serviced or maintained by the local authority, Curo will maintain and service equipment and adaptations covered by this policy which have been installed by Curo or through the DFG scheme.
- 8.2 Sometimes we will need to charge for this through a service charge. We will also replace such equipment at the end of its useful life subject to confirmation of a continuing requirement and the availability of further funding; for example, if the original adaptation was paid for by a DFG the customer will normally be required to seek a further DFG.
- 8.3 Where we undertake improvements or alterations to a customer's home and we or the customer are concerned about the impact the change might have on them, we may undertake an assessment using an OT to ensure that we do not cause an accessibility issue.
- 8.4 An example of this may be where we fit improved doors, they are usually heavier and this may cause someone a challenge or some difficulty. We would undertake an OT assessment which may result in an adaptation such as a powered door opener to overcome this difficulty.

9. Responsibilities

- 9.1 The Board and Executive, through the Policy Owner, ensure that the policy delivers Curo's strategic objectives and reflects corporate values.
- 9.2 The Accountable Lead is accountable to the Executive for the effective implementation of the policy in Curo, so that
 - the principles are achieved through appropriate team plans and objectives, and
 - procedures – with appropriate RACIs (A RACI is a table that outlines who is **R**esponsible, **A**ccountable, to be **C**onsulted and **I**nformed of specific tasks and actions under a procedure or process) – translate the policy objectives into practice
- 9.3 The Chief Property Officer (CPO) has overall responsibility for the policy, its implementation, and the delivery of an adaptations service to customers.
- 9.4 The Director of Asset Management & Procurement is responsible for:
 - The delivery of major adaptations,

- Overseeing the DFG funded works undertaken on behalf of local authorities,
- Preparing and holding budgets for adaptations work.
- Ensuring that equipment is installed safely and properly maintained and serviced thereafter.
- Maintaining a register of adaptation requests and progress
- Ensuring accurate data capture of any major adaptations or DFG works to ensure appropriate ongoing management of our stock.

- 9.5 The Director of Property Maintenance (DoPM) is responsible for the delivery of minor aids works principally through responding to customer requests in accordance with our response repair policies and procedures.
- 9.6 The Asset Management Surveyors are responsible for ensuring that procedures delivering asset management responsibilities are in place and are adhered to.
- 9.7 All Curo colleagues are responsible for supporting tenants who wish to move in the circumstances identified in this policy.

10. Associated Policies and procedures

- Aids and adaptations procedure
- Property Consents Policy
- Emergency Housing Temporary Accommodation and Home Loss

11. Reasonable adjustments

- 11.1 Colleagues are empowered to make reasonable adjustments based on individual customer needs ensuring equal access to services.
- 11.2 Colleagues are encouraged to assess each situation thoughtfully and make adjustments where appropriate, considering factors such as accessibility, medical or specific requirements. These adjustments should be made in a way that meets statutory and regulatory requirements, maintains a high standard of service, and supports customers in a fair and respectful manner.