Bristol City Council – Housing Services

Making Best Use of Stock Policy
Version 3_01

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Approved by</th>
<th>Housing Services Management Team</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Date approved</td>
<td>24th May 2017</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date adopted</td>
<td>24th May 2017</td>
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<td>Responsibility</td>
<td>Estates Services</td>
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History of most recent policy changes or Health-check

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Change</th>
<th>Origin of change (e.g. legislation)</th>
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Business Planning & Service Development
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1. Policy statement

1.1 Housing Services is committed to making the best use of its stock by managing its homes creatively to meet the needs of current and future tenants. The effective use of our stock is an important component in meeting housing need across the city.

2. Aims and objectives

2.1. The aim of the policy is to provide clear guidance to staff and tenants about how Housing Services will make best use of its stock.

2.2. The policy will provide clear information to tenants about what they can expect from Housing Services as a landlord and guidance for staff and other services on what we will deliver.

2.3. The policy framework gives Housing Services the opportunity to explore solutions in both a proactive and reactive way, taking opportunities wherever they are presented to help meet housing need.

2.4. The service will use a coordinated response working across other Bristol City Council services and external partners to make better use of our transfers by moving tenants to accommodation that meets their needs now and in the future.

2.5. Housing Services will fully utilise internal transfers, Landlord Agreed Transfers and Mutual Exchanges by moving tenants to create sustainable tenancies.

2.6. Housing Services will endeavour to free up adapted properties, where the adaptations are no longer in use by the tenant or other household members.

2.7. Housing Services will adapt properties that have a long-term benefit to the service as an asset and meet the long-term needs of the tenant and their household.

2.8. Housing Services will proactively manage allocation of homes with adaptations to ensure they are let to households who require the adaptations.

2.9. In cases involving rehousing tenants with health needs, Housing Services will ensure that properties offered meet the tenant’s requirements now and
in the future, without the need for extensive adaptation works to be carried out at a cost to Bristol City Council in the future.

2.10. Housing Services will ensure due regard to the Equalities Act 2010.

3 Making best use of our properties at allocation

3.1. Housing Services will take up opportunities to develop the knowledge of our properties when they are tenanted and also when they become vacant ensuring we make best use of any adaptations.

3.2. Housing Services will work to fully understand the needs of the incoming tenant and take into consideration the health needs of the tenant and the household, liaising with any health professionals who are involved.

3.3. Where adaptations are in place in a vacant property these will be kept, utilised, and reused by the new incoming tenant (Appendix A).

3.4. Where a property becomes vacant in a high demand area of the city and there are cases of overcrowding we will increase the bedroom numbers of the property by reinstating parlour rooms, removing gas fires and converting integral garages into bedrooms.

3.5. Where an age-restricted property has been advertised and no applicants of that age criteria have placed bids on the property, the property will be re-advertised the following cycle with a lowered age limit (five years) to make best use of the property. This will be administered on a case by case basis dependant on the applicants who bid on the property and the property type and location.

4. Housing Services’ approach to adapting properties

4.1. When considering a request for an adaptation, Housing Services will establish if it is reasonable and practicable to carry out adaptations to the property having regard to the age, condition, construction and type.

4.2. Housing Services must be satisfied that all other options including aids, equipment and minor adaptations have been exhausted before adaptations costing over £350 are agreed and commissioned.
4.3. Where an adaptation or a group of adaptations costs over £350 these will only be authorised where there are no breaches of tenancy. If a tenant is in rent arrears, at risk of losing their tenancy, a notice has been served, or enforcement action is, or has been, taken against the tenancy, a decision may be taken to withhold adaptations at the property until these breaches are remedied within a given timescale as set out by Estate Services.

4.4. If the breaches of tenancy are not remedied by the tenant within the given timescales set out by Estates Services, or the tenant fails to engage with the necessary support services offered, the adaptations will be refused.

4.5. In cases where adaptations or major works to adapt a property are required for the tenant or a member of the household and these costs are over £10,000 the case will be discussed at Making Best Use of Stock (MBUS) Panel.

4.6. Where a tenant is already on the housing register and the adaptation costs are over £350 the tenant will be supported by a Making Best Use of Stock Officer to find alternative accommodation and the adaptations will be put on hold.

4.7. If a tenant is under-occupying the property by two or more bedrooms the adaptation will be refused unless there are exceptional circumstances. Estates Services will instead offer support with rehousing from a Making Best Use of Stock Officer.

4.8. Where tenant has an adaptation refused they will have the opportunity to appeal this decision and their case will be reviewed by the Head of Estates Services.

4.9. This is not an exhaustive list, and other cases will be considered on their own merits where there is a strategic interest to Bristol City Council on a case by case basis.

5. Overcrowded tenants

5.1. Where a tenant is overcrowded, in the first instance, they must apply to be rehoused via Home Choice Bristol (HCB) or seek a Mutual Exchange.

5.2. Housing Services will not adapt or extend a property for an occupying tenant unless they has been actively placing bids on HCB for twelve months, and these bids have been unsuccessful.
5.3. If the tenant has placed no appropriate bids in twelve months and properties matching their housing need have become available throughout the city, Housing Services will not the support the family further.

5.4. Housing Services will consider increasing the bedroom number of a property if it is reasonable and practical to do so taking into account the age, condition and the structural characteristics of the property and the needs of the residents.

5.5. In cases such as 5.3 and 5.4 Housing Services will encourage and support adults living in the property aged 21 years and older to seek their own independent accommodation where it is appropriate and practical to do so. An allowance would be made if the household member is receiving or providing care and are in receipt of Carers allowance.

5.6. This is not an exhaustive list, and other cases will be considered on their own merits if there is a strategic interest for Bristol City Council.

6. Bedrooms

6.1. Housing Services defines the size of a bedroom as being 50 square foot and over.

6.2. Where an extension has led to the creation of a downstairs or upstairs bedroom this will be classed as a bedroom and the valuation and rent for the property will be recalculated and set accordingly by Housing Services.

6.3. There may also be Housing Benefit implications where a property is extended which Estates Services will make the tenant aware of this before carrying out such work. They will also supply a rent figure for the property prior to the works commencing to ensure it is affordable for the tenant.
7. Glossary of terms

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Term</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>Appeal Procedure</td>
<td>To do this the tenant must explain why they are unable to move and provide medical evidence which will be considered by the Head of Estate Services.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Appropriate bids</td>
<td>Bids placed on properties which meet the applicants assessed housing need and health needs if applicable across the city and tenure.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Age restricted</td>
<td>Properties where there is an age restriction on the tenants who can live in the accommodation.</td>
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<tr>
<td>MBUS Panel</td>
<td>A monthly panel made up of health professionals and Housing Services. The purpose of the panel is to ensure consideration of the practicalities of carrying out the proposed work and the needs of the tenant/household. The panel will also consider if it is more reasonable and practical to move the tenant and household to another property rather than fund the adaptations. If the adaptations required are not cost-effective, with no longer term benefit to Housing Services, the option of moving to alternative accommodation will be considered and supported.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Housing Services</td>
<td>Bristol City Council Housing services (formally Housing Delivery and Landlord Services)</td>
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<tr>
<td>HCB</td>
<td>Home Choice Bristol – the housing register for Bristol.</td>
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<td>High demand area of the city</td>
<td>Central areas of Bristol specifically the wards of Lawrence Hill, Easton and Ashely where there are high levels of overcrowding.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Major works</td>
<td>Adaptations works to a property which cost over £10,000 or that change the internal layout or extend the footprint of the property.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Making best use of stock (MBUS)</td>
<td>Freeing up homes in low supply or in high demand including adapted/accessible homes</td>
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<tr>
<td>Overcrowded</td>
<td>As determined within the <a href="#">Home Choice Bristol Policy</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Parlour</td>
<td>Second living room or reception room which can be used as bedroom.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Reasonable and practical</td>
<td>As defined in the <a href="#">Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996</a></td>
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<tr>
<td>Strategic interest</td>
<td>Contributing to the vision and priorities for the city and the council, meeting the aims and objectives set out in the <a href="#">Corporate Strategy</a></td>
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8. Appendix A – Adaptations to be retained at relet

If the property has at least one of the features in List A, or two or more of the features listed in List B the property should be circulated with Accessible Homes and Health and Housing to ensure that the property is allocated to someone needing these adaptations.

This list is not exhaustive and other adaptations may be included.

List A:

If the property features one of the adaptations listed below it should be kept on relet and offered to someone needing these features.

- Extension with the purpose of providing more room for a service user or that a DFG was used to build
- Through floor lift
- External lift
- Wet room
- Major ramping to access property i.e. for wheelchair use
- Wheelchair accessible property: this may include properties which have turning spaces in all rooms including the hall, lowered kitchen units, widened doorways, or automatic door entry systems.

Properties with one of these features should be advertised for a minimum of two cycles on HCB before being considered for allocation to someone without any need for the adaptation. The property information should be shared with internal stakeholders including rehousing, Health and Housing, Homelessness and OTs in Social Care prior to the second advert.

If an applicant with a need for the adaptations cannot be found after two advertisement cycles, a discussion should take place between Accessible Homes, Asset Management and Estate Management about whether to allocate the property to someone with no health need for the adaptations, and whether removal of the adaptation(s) is appropriate.

Removal would only occur if the adaptations are in a property type which would prove difficult to allocate to a health case, the ongoing maintenance costs of the adaptation are high, and the property could be better allocated as a general needs property.

Adaptations that could be considered for removal are:

- A wet room in a walk-up flat above ground floor with no lift
- Wet rooms or level access showers in a house which are not on the ground floor with no access to the upper floor via a lift or stair lift.
List B:

If the properties feature two or more of the following adaptations, this could also be considered as adapted or accessible stock and should be flagged to Accessible Homes and advertised for at least two cycles before being considered for allocation to an applicant without need of these features:

- Curved or straight track stair lift
- Cubicle shower
- Bath suitable for equipment: this may be viewed as a bath that already has a bath board or lift with a grab rail or a bath that had an inch or wider ledge on each side to accommodate a bath board with a shower over.
- More than two grab rails to bathroom, such as drop down grab rails near the toilet
- Ramping to front door with no or low threshold
- Any bungalow or ground floor flat where minor ramping to any door to gain access. Minor ramping being a shallow ramp (usually concrete) that doesn’t involve major landscaping works to install.
- A downstairs WC with turning space or space to make into a shower with a parlour-type living room close by on the same level.
- Doors that are wider than standard width or have been widened
- Straight runs of stairs that appear to be quite wide ideally with electric provision located near to the top or the bottom of the stairs.
- Properties with accessible height switches, heating controls, sockets etc.
- Properties with level access to a car parking space nearby.

9. Appendix B – Suitable alternative accommodation

This is not an exhaustive list but illustrates the types of factors Housing Services would take into consideration when deciding if an offer of accommodation is suitable. This would include the following:

1) the nature of the accommodation which it is the practice of the landlord to allocate to persons with similar needs;

2) the distance of the accommodation available from the place of work or educations of the tenant any members of his/her family

3) its distance from the home of any member of the tenant’s family if proximity to it is essential to that member’s or the tenant’s wellbeing;

4) the needs (as regards extent of accommodation) and means of the tenant and his family;
6. **Appendix C**: Process for adaptation request and checks for breaches of tenancies

Accessible Homes send a list of referrals of adaptations to MBUS Team

MBUS team check for any breaches of tenancy, if there are any the referral for an adaptation is put on hold

MBUS Team informs tenant of breach of tenancy and informs the service managing the breach

Estates Services inform MBUS Team if the adaptation works can go ahead
7. **Appendix D**: Process for under occupiers of two bedrooms or more

- Accessible Homes send a completed MBUS form to the generic MBUS email account.

- MBUS Officers contact the tenant & explain the policy and offer support with rehousing.

- MBUS officer sends letter to the tenant confirming the decision & the offer of support with rehousing.

- No: MBUS officer contacts the tenant in three months time to check whether they would like support with rehousing again.

- Yes: MBUS Officer to record outcome and inform OT.

- MBUS Officer owns case & works with the tenant to find appropriate accommodation.

- Tenant Appeals decision in writing & the case is reviewed by Head of Estates Services.