



Bristol City Council: Homes and Landlord Services

Making best use of stock policy

Version 3

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03/07/24	All	Multiple	Desktop Review
July 2025	All	Multiple	Review to ensure compliance with Consumer Standards

May 2026	All	Multiple	Changes to wording to bring in line with Home Adaptations Policy.
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Definitions

Adaptation

A change made to a home to help a tenant live more safely or independently — for example, adding a ramp or a stairlift.

Appropriate bids

Bids placed on properties that meet the applicant's assessed housing need and health needs (where applicable), across the city and tenure.

Disabled

The Equality Act 2010 defines a person as disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to carry out normal daily activities.

Feasibility Study

A check to see if a proposed change to a home is possible, affordable, and practical.

HomeChoice Bristol (HCB)

The system tenants use to apply for and bid on available council homes in Bristol.

HomeSwapper

A website where tenants can find and arrange a home swap with another council tenant.

Major Adaptation

A significant change to a home, usually costing more than £1,000, such as building a downstairs bathroom or installing a lift.

MBUS Panel

A panel that makes decisions on major home adaptations and, where necessary, considers other options such as finding a more suitable property.

Minor Adaptation

A small, low-cost change to a home, such as adding grab rails or changing taps.

Occupational Therapist

A health professional who assesses what changes a tenant may need to their home to help them live safely and comfortably.

Reasonable and Practicable

A way of deciding whether a change to a home is fair, sensible, and achievable with the resources available.

Strategic Interest

A case that is important to the council's wider housing goals, even if it does not meet all the usual criteria.

Tenancy Audit

A check to confirm who is living in a property, whether rent is being paid, and whether there are any issues with the tenancy.

Tenancy Variation

A formal update to the tenancy agreement, for example when a new bedroom is added to the home.

Under-Occupied

A property is under-occupied when a tenant is living in a home with more bedrooms than they need. For example, a person living alone in a three-bedroom house is under-occupying by two bedrooms. This may affect decisions about adaptations and can result in encouragement to move to a smaller, more suitable home.

Void Property

A council home that is currently empty and ready to be offered to a new tenant.

1. Purpose

Bristol City Council's (BCC) Homes and Landlord Services is committed to supporting tenants whose homes no longer meet their needs by delivering timely and effective rehousing solutions through the Making Best Use of Stock (MBUS) team. This policy underpins the strategic management of the council's housing stock by ensuring that properties are allocated and utilised in a way that reflects tenants' changing circumstances, including health, mobility, and household composition.

In addition to identifying alternative housing solutions, MBUS also considers the role of adaptations in meeting tenants' needs and managing stock effectively. Where adaptations are in place or required, MBUS works to ensure these are preserved or appropriately matched to new tenants, reducing the need for repeat works and supporting efficient use of resources.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all properties owned and managed by Bristol City Council's Homes and Landlord Services and sets out the council's approach to making best use of its housing stock for council tenants.

It aligns with the approach established in the Home Adaptations Policy, which sets out the overarching framework for assessing and delivering home adaptations. This policy complements that framework by focusing specifically on how decisions relating to council housing stock are made.

Lift installation and maintenance in council homes are covered under a separate policy.

A list of associated policies can be found in [Appendix A](#).

3. Aims and objectives

- **Maximising Use of Adapted Housing Stock:** to ensure the effective use of adapted and adaptable housing stock to meet the current and future needs of tenants with health or accessibility requirements.
- **Prioritising Allocation Based on Need:** to prioritise the allocation of adapted properties to households that require them, minimising the need for additional or repeat adaptations.
- **Supporting Sustainable Tenancies:** to support sustainable tenancies by facilitating timely adaptations, internal transfers, and collaborative rehousing solutions.
- **Setting Expectations:** to ensure tenants are aware of the policy and understand what they can expect from BCC in relation to the allocation and adaptation of housing, including our priorities, processes, and the support available.
- **Collaborative and Needs-Based Matching:** to work collaboratively across services to build a shared understanding of tenant needs and property suitability, enabling both proactive planning and responsive decision-making that support fair and effective allocations.

4. Roles and responsibilities and authority

The Director of Housing and Landlord Services and the Head of Tenancy Management and Estates are responsible for the implementation of this policy.

All staff involved in tenancy management, property allocations, and stock utilisation have a responsibility to apply this policy in their decision-making and day-to-day operations.

[Appendix B](#) outlines the roles and responsibilities of individual BCC teams in more detail.

5. The Policy

5.1 Legal Context and Consumer Standards

This policy is guided by national legislation and the Consumer Standards, which underpin the effective and equitable management of social housing stock.

The Care Act 2014 places a duty on local authorities to promote wellbeing and independence, which informs decisions about whether to adapt a property or support a move to more suitable accommodation.

The Tenancy Standard supports fair allocation and appropriate use of homes, while the Safety and Quality Standard ensures that properties are safe, well-maintained, and suitable for tenants' needs.

Further legal context can be found in [Appendix C](#).

5.2 Tenants Rights

Under the Equality Act 2010, Disabled tenants have the right to request reasonable adjustments to their homes to support independent and dignified living. As a landlord, Bristol City Council has a legal duty to consider and respond to these requests, ensuring that tenants are not placed at a disadvantage due to disability. In the context of stock management, this means ensuring that adapted properties are allocated appropriately, that decisions about adaptations are fair and transparent, and that the council balances individual needs with the effective use of its housing assets.

In applying this policy, the council will ensure that decisions do not place disabled tenants at a substantial disadvantage, and that reasonable adjustments are considered in line with legal duties.

5.3 Making Best Use of Properties at Allocation

The following commitments outline how Homes and Landlord Services will manage and allocate housing stock in a way that is responsive, fair, and aligned with tenant needs and property suitability:

- Homes and Landlord Services will look for ways to improve our understanding of properties, whether they are occupied or vacant, to make the best use of any existing adaptations.
- The service will carefully assess the needs of new tenants, paying close attention to their current health conditions as well as any health issues that might arise in the near future. To do this, the service will collaborate with relevant health professionals as needed to ensure that all health-related needs are properly addressed and accommodated.
- When a property with existing adaptations becomes vacant, Homes and Landlord Services will review the adaptations to evaluate their condition and suitability for the needs of the incoming tenant. A decision will then be made on whether to retain the existing adaptations. All decisions are made on a case-by-case basis.
- When a property in the city becomes vacant and there are cases of overcrowding, we will aim to increase the number of bedrooms. This will be achieved, where possible, by reinstating parlour rooms. Additionally, where feasible, we will remove gas fires and convert integral garages into bedrooms.
- If an age-restricted property has been advertised and receives no bids from applicants meeting the age criteria, we will consider applicants who are within 5 years of the age requirement. This will be managed on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the applicants who bid on the property, as well as the property type and location.

5.4 Homes and Landlord Services' Approach to Adapting Properties

Decisions relating to adaptations and rehousing will be made in line with the Home Adaptations Policy. This includes a needs-led approach, where the tenant's assessed needs are the primary consideration, alongside a balanced assessment of property suitability, feasibility, cost, and the efficient use of housing stock.

- When evaluating a request for an adaptation, Homes and Landlord Services will determine its reasonableness and feasibility by considering the tenant's or household member's assessed needs, available stock, and the age, condition, construction, type, and suitability of the current property.
- Homes and Landlord Services will consider whether alternative options such as aids, equipment, or rehousing may be appropriate alongside adaptation. Decisions will be made on a case-by-case basis, taking into account the tenant's assessed needs and the most suitable way to meet those needs.
- Tenancy conduct, including rent accounts and occupancy, may be considered as part of the wider case context. However, decisions on adaptations will not be based solely on tenancy breaches or arrears and will always take into account the tenant's assessed needs, legal duties, and any risks to health, safety, and wellbeing.

- 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 £20,000 the case will be discussed at Making Best Use of Stock (MBUS) Panel.
- MBUS referrals submitted via Occupational Therapists from the Accessible Homes Team will be reviewed at the next available MBUS Panel meeting. The MBUS panel meets monthly.
- If the MBUS Panel agrees that a family needs a larger property to accommodate a disabled person, the family must register on Homechoice Bristol and bid regularly on suitable properties. Accessible Homes may, where feasible, initiate an order for extending and adapting the existing property. Given the long wait times for rehousing and adaptations, both options may be pursued simultaneously.
- Where a tenant is also seeking rehousing, adaptation and rehousing options will be discussed and may be progressed in parallel where appropriate.
- Where a tenant requires level access accommodation, both rehousing and adaptation options will be considered. The most appropriate option will be determined based on the tenant's assessed needs, the feasibility of adapting the existing home, the availability of suitable alternative accommodation, and wider relevant factors.
- Homes and Landlord Services are dedicated to supporting tenants in finding suitable new homes. From the outset, they will clearly communicate the availability of suitable stock and, if options are limited, support tenants to consider alternative solutions to meet their needs.
- The MBUS Team are an aid to assist tenants in finding more suitable accommodation. While on the MBUS waiting list tenants are supported to use Home Choice Bristol to bid on suitable properties or identify a potential mutual exchange to a more suitable property via Home Swapper.
- When evaluating a request for an adaptation, Homes and Landlord Services will determine its reasonableness and feasibility by considering the tenant's or household member's assessed needs, available stock, and the age, condition, construction, type, and suitability of the current property.
- 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.

This approach ensures that adaptations are delivered in a way that is consistent, transparent, and strategically aligned with the Council's wider housing objectives. All decisions will be proportionate, evidence-based, and recorded, demonstrating how the tenant's needs and relevant legal duties have been considered.

5.5 Bedrooms and Under-Occupancy

To ensure consistency, fairness, and effective use of housing resources, Homes and Landlord Services applies clear principles when managing bedroom classifications, property extensions, and under-occupation.

- Homes and Landlord Services defines the size of a bedroom as being 50 square feet or more.
- Extending a property may affect tenants' Universal Credit or Housing Benefit entitlement, and the Tenancy Management Team will inform the tenant of this before commencing any work. They will also provide a revised rent figure to ensure affordability. The tenant must sign a tenancy variation before work begins.

- Where a tenant is under-occupying a property by two or more bedrooms, this will be a significant factor in decision-making. In such cases, the council will normally prioritise exploring alternative housing options that better meet the tenant's current and future needs, including accessibility, affordability and overall suitability, with the aim of supporting informed and voluntary moves.
- The council encourages tenants in under-occupied homes to consider internal transfers or mutual exchanges, particularly where there is high demand for larger family homes. This approach helps to free up valuable housing stock for households in need, while also supporting sustainable tenancies and making the best use of available resources. This approach not only supports tenants in moving to homes that better suit their current needs including potentially adapted properties but also enables incoming households to access appropriately sized accommodation, helping to make the best use of Bristol City Council's housing stock.

5.6 Case Reviews

Cases referred to MBUS that qualify for assistance will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis to confirm whether the tenant's and household's circumstances have changed and to explore options for expediting the move. This may include widening the search area or coordinating with Registered Providers.

Cases can be reviewed at any time if new information regarding the tenant's circumstances is provided.

Where a tenant stops engaging with the service or decides they no longer wish to be supported in finding more suitable accommodation they will be removed from the waiting list but may re-join within two years upon their request.

6. Equality and Diversity

We will act sensitively towards the diverse needs of individuals and communities, and we will take positive action to reduce discrimination and harassment.

We recognise that some residents may be disproportionately impacted by the application of this policy, particularly disabled people, older residents, those on low incomes, and households facing multiple disadvantages.

The council will actively consider and, where possible, mitigate any disproportionate or adverse impacts arising from policy decisions. This includes ensuring that reasonable adjustments are made where required and that a person-centred approach is taken to decision-making to avoid placing individuals at a substantial disadvantage.

An Equalities Impact Assessment has been carried out and agreed by the Equalities Team.

7. Request to Review

Tenants who have an adaptation request refused may request a review of the decision within three months.

Where a request for review is received, the case will be reconsidered at the next available decision-making panel, taking into account any new or additional information provided, as well as the original assessment and rationale.

The review will involve appropriate senior officers and/or relevant professionals who were not directly involved in the original decision, ensuring an independent and balanced reconsideration.

Cases will be scheduled for the next available panel wherever possible, and tenants will be notified in writing of the outcome and the reasons for the decision within a reasonable timeframe following the panel.

The review process does not restrict the tenant's right to pursue a complaint through the council's complaints procedure.

8. Complaints

If residents are unhappy with the services provided by BCC or how their concerns have been handled, they're encouraged to use the official complaints procedure: [Complaints and feedback](#).

9. Quality Assurance

9.1 Publishing

This policy will be published on the BCC Website and communicated to relevant operational teams via policy briefings and other appropriate communications.

9.2 Review

This policy will be reviewed in 3 years or sooner if there is a change to legal or regulatory requirements, in accordance with our procedures.

9.3 Monitoring and Reporting Requirements

Service delivery and performance is measured against the Housing and Landlord Services Performance Framework.

BCC uses performance management to enhance service delivery standards and improve tenant experience.

Services need to meet the KPI's set and other reporting responsibilities to the regulator. BCC monitor satisfaction, using data and insight from, as a minimum reporting in relation to:

- Complaints
- Tenant Satisfaction Measures

Appendices

Appendix A – Associated Documents

- Home Adaptations Policy
- Reasonable Adjustments Policy
- Voids and Relets Policy
- HomeChoice Bristol Policy
- Tenancy Changes Policy
- Rent Setting Policy
- Sensitive Allocations Policy
- Domestic Abuse Policy
- Tenancy Audit Policy

- Repairs and Maintenance Policy
- Lifts Maintenance and Repairs Policy
- Tenancy Sustainment Policy

Appendix B – Roles and responsibilities

Head of Service

- Approve cases within delegated financial limits.
- Ensure the policy is implemented in line with legal duties and council priorities.

Lettings Service Manager / Accessible Homes Service Manager

- Attend MBUS panels as a key decision-maker.
- Provide strategic oversight and leadership to operational teams.
- Ensure compliance with the policy and alignment with housing goals.
- Review adaptation requests costing £1,000 to £25,000 or more, and approve or escalate them as needed.

Occupational Therapist

- Conduct medical and functional assessments of tenants.
- Visit properties to assess their suitability for adaptations.
- Present cases at MBUS panels and liaise with MBUS Officers and Surveyors.
- Lead communication with tenants after panel decisions, particularly in complex cases.
- Maintain contact with tenants during adaptation or relocation processes.
- Determine whether a tenant can move into a property before adaptations are completed.

Accessible Homes Surveyor

- Assess whether properties are suitable for proposed adaptations.
- Conduct feasibility studies and provide technical advice at MBUS panels.
- Provide estimated timescales and completion dates for adaptation works.
- Inspect properties in advance when a move is being considered.
- Cancel adaptation orders if a suitable property is identified before work begins.

Housing Officer

- Support tenancy audits, including identity verification, occupancy checks and rent arrears reviews.

- Take action on tenancy breaches where required, including enforcement or support measures.
- Communicate with tenants about adaptation decisions and rehousing options.

Lettings Officer

- Identify void properties suitable for MBUS cases or adapted housing.
- Work with MBUS Officers to match tenants to available properties.
- Coordinate tenancy arrangements and documentation when a move is agreed.
- Monitor void properties and support the prompt reallocation of homes.

MBUS Officer

- Administer MBUS panels, including arranging meetings, preparing agendas, issuing invitations and taking minutes.
- Maintain the MBUS spreadsheet and track cases.
- Conduct tenancy audits and tenancy breach checks.
- Inform tenants of panel decisions and manage appeals.
- Monitor available void properties and coordinate with Occupational Therapists and Surveyors to identify suitable homes.
- Support actions following panel decisions, including tenant communications and property searches.

Repairs Team

- Carry out approved adaptation works to the required standard.
- Liaise with Surveyors and Contractors to ensure work is completed on time and to a high standard.
- Report issues that may affect tenant outcomes or project delivery timescales.

Contractor

- Deliver adaptation and extension works as commissioned.
- Ensure compliance with specifications, building regulations and agreed timescales.
- Work collaboratively with the Repairs Team and Surveyors to complete projects.

Voids Team

- Identify and flag empty properties that may be suitable for tenants on the MBUS list, particularly those requiring adapted or adaptable homes.
- Work with Lettings Officers and MBUS Officers to ensure timely allocation of suitable properties.

- Support the efficient turnaround of void properties by ensuring homes are ready for occupation as quickly as possible, helping to reduce delays in rehousing and adaptation processes.

Appendix C – Legal context

- Equality Act 2010: requires landlords to make reasonable adjustments for disabled tenants to prevent disadvantage.
- Care Act 2014: places a duty on local authorities to promote wellbeing and independence, influencing decisions about adaptations or rehousing.
- Housing Act 1996 (Section 166A): governs housing allocation schemes and supports fair access to social housing.
- Social Housing (Regulation) Act 2023: strengthens the Regulator of Social Housing's powers, removes the "serious detriment" test, and enforces proactive compliance with consumer standards.
- Consumer Standards (2024): includes the Tenancy Standard and Safety & Quality Standard, which guide fair allocation, safe homes, and appropriate use of stock.
- Procurement Act 2023: introduces new rules for public sector procurement, affecting how adaptation works and contracts are commissioned.
- Human Rights Act 1998: ensures that housing decisions respect tenants' rights to privacy, family life, and non-discrimination.
- Building Regulations and Planning Law: applies to structural adaptations, extensions, and accessibility modifications.