

Subject:	Disabled Facilities Grant Policy Review		Status:	For Publication	
Report to:	Overview and Scrutiny Committee Cabinet		Date:	13 November 2023 6 December 2023	
Report of:	Housing Renewal Manager		Lead Member:	Housing and Customer Services	
Key Decision:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Forward Plan	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	General Exception	<input type="checkbox"/> Special Urgency <input type="checkbox"/>
Equality Impact Assessment:	Required:	Yes	Attached:	Yes	
Biodiversity Impact Assessment:	Required:	No	Attached:	No	
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1. RECOMMENDATION(S)

That the Overview and Scrutiny Committee make the following recommendation to Cabinet:

- 1.1 To approve the Housing Assistance Policy 2023, replacing the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy 2020-22.**
- 1.2 To delegate authority to the Director of Economic Development, Head of Legal Services and Lead Member to procure a Home Improvement Agency.**
- 1.3 To delegate any future minor amends and changes to the Director of Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Member.**

2. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 2.1 This Housing Assistance Policy is designed to support residents of Rossendale by providing comprehensive housing assistance, ensuring accessibility, safety, and comfort for all. This policy replaces the previous Disabled Facilities Grant Policy, expanding its scope to maximise spend and offer increased support to Rossendale residents.
- 2.2 The aim of our new Housing Assistance Policy is to:
 - improve the lives of people with disabilities by enabling access and movement around their own home with the use of adaptations
 - allow more effective use of the Better Care Fund by contributing to the aims of the fund, in particular, reducing hospital admissions and allowing early hospital discharges
 - reduce the need for domiciliary and residential care by allowing people with disabilities to live more independently in their own homes
 - provide advice, information and support regarding the adaptation of properties to meet accessibility needs, and provide a framework of assistance to vulnerable groups
 - treat individuals fairly regardless of age, sex, gender, disability and sexual orientation and to protect their rights under Data Protection and human rights legislation

3. BACKGROUND

3.1 In June 2023, Rossendale Borough Council launched a Housing Strategy for Rossendale. This Housing Strategy sets out Rossendale Borough Council's vision for housing in Rossendale in the next 5 years:

In the next 5 years, Housing in Rossendale will be accessible, affordable and appropriate.

3.2 A key objective of the Housing Strategy is to make the best use of existing housing in Rossendale and the updated Housing Assistance Policy is a clear effort to keep local people in their own homes.

New government guidance, published by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Department of Health and Social Care (Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Delivery: Guidance for Local Authorities in England) in 2023 has requested changes in the local authority approach to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).

3.3 The current policy is outdated and a full overhaul is required to facilitate greater use of the Better Care Fund.

As evidenced from the table below (full document attached), the Council has had significant underspend for the last 5 years. By increasing our offerings and working with a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) the Council will be able to assist more people that it would otherwise have been unable to help due to policy restrictions.

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I
1	Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24 YTD	ESTIMATED 2023/24
2	Funding Received	£869,409.00	£1,063,527.00	£1,022,385.00	£1,160,178.20	£1,160,053.00	£1,160,053.00	£1,261,279.00	£1,261,279.00
3	Spend inc Fee's	£556,224.74	£889,935.48	£730,683.78	£486,192.08	£796,556.52	£804,126.39	£547,131.42	£937,939.58
4	% of Funding spent	64%	84%	71%	42%	69%	69%	56%	75%
5	Remaining Funding	£313,184.26	£173,591.52	£291,701.22	£673,986.12	£363,496.48	£355,926.61	£714,147.58	£323,339.42
6	Completions	74	103	127	60	86	74	62	106
7	Recs Received	90	164	159	124	117	98	72	123
8	Largest Grant Approved	£30,000	£30,000	£22,038	£36,935	£49,000	£62,356	£70,288	N/A
9				New policy introduced	Covid	Backlog			ESTIMATED, WORKING OFF YTD
10									
11	Total Underspend	£2,171,886.21	NOT INCLUDING THIS YEARS FUNDING RECEIVED						
12	Funding Received 2023/24	£1,261,279.00							
13		£3,433,165.21							

3.4 The Council must approve mandatory DFG applications made under section 23(1) of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. In 2002, the Government provided opportunities for Local Authorities to provide other forms of financial assistance to address particular housing issues. This was the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002, which was further extended in 2008-9 to include use of the DFG money. This enables authorities to use specific DFG funding for wider purposes. The Council has discretionary powers under the legislation to provide assistance in any form for the purpose of improving living conditions.

About the DFG process

3.5 Rossendale Borough Council's mandatory role is to provide disabled facilities grants to Rossendale residents based on a referral from an Occupational Therapist. The Service User is visited upon receipt of the referral and works are discussed and agreed, a brief schedule is noted, the room is sketched and photos are taken (where applicable). All statutory paperwork is signed including: an application form, an owners/tenants certificate and all income details are taken where relevant.

3.6 If a means test is required, this is carried out by Council officers. This ascertains whether firstly, the grant is available or if there is a contribution required from the Service User.

Works under £7000 and people who are on a passported benefit automatically bypass the means test.

- 3.7 The grant covers both equipment purchases and construction related costs. All schemes are developed in line with the Council's procurement processes and where necessary statutory approvals are obtained.

Upon completion of the works, a final quality check is completed and then all associated balances are paid, formalising the completion of the grant.

Approach to the new policy:

- 3.8 The following approach has been taken to developing the new Housing Assistance Policy:
- Research – Officers have reviewed the existing policy with the new guidance published and then have completed an exercise with other local authorities to identify any differences and understand best practice ideas. Officers have looked at their spend and the types of schemes being funded as well as their internal processes and procedures.
 - Officers have engaged with key stakeholders, such as GP's , Social Care, Occupational therapists, charity organisations like Age Concern to gauge their feedback and to understand how the new policy could affect them and what their priorities are.
 - Officers have reviewed the feedback from our customer satisfaction surveys. This highlighted that there is a need to increase the awareness of the DFG opportunity and a campaign around this will be developed, including posters in GP surgeries, social media posts, a press release etc.
 - Officers have participated in briefing sessions with the Lancashire DFG group and relevant Council members.

- 3.9 Following this preliminary work, the policy has been drafted that clearly outlines the goals and objectives.

Further consultation has then taken place including focus groups with key stakeholders, an email to all stakeholders with an opportunity for them to comment on the draft policy as well as a session with Cabinet members.

Their feedback was collated and suggestions incorporated within the policy.

- 3.10 Revising the policy will unlock further opportunities for Rossendale residents allowing them to remain in an accessible home.

4. DETAILS

The new policy is appended to this report.

Key amendments of the new policy include:

- 4.1 Lower the maximum grant allowance from £100,000 to £60,000 to bring this in line with other local authorities in the region. Government guidance states the maximum grant allowable per single application is £30,000, however this can be topped up providing it is set out in our policy.

Previous years highest grant amounts are set out below:

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Financial Year	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23
	£30,000	£30,000	£22,038	£36,935	£49,000	£65,356

- 4.2 Increasing the threshold for bypassing the means test from £7,000 up to £10,000 due to the increasing costs for materials and labour.
- 4.3 Decreasing the threshold for bypassing the means test for one single item, to fall in line with the maximum grant allowance (£60,000).
- 4.4 Increasing the hospital discharge grant allowance from £2,000 to £3,000 to fall in line with other LA's.
- 4.5 Introducing a Home Improvement Agency partner which will increase our offering to complete various grants that are not currently delivered within the current policy.
- 4.6 Grants that will be delivered via Home Improvement Agency are as below:
- Dwelling dementia grants, none means tested, self-referral, upto £2,000.
 - Emergency works grants, means tested, self-referral, upto £15,000.
 - Safe and secure grants, means tested, self-referral, upto £5,000.
 - Handyperson service, none means tested, self-referral, £12/hour (max 2 hours)
 - Affordable warmth grants; The Council already delivers this through other secured funding but we are looking to extend it to the Better Care Fund to boost the amount of people the Council can assist.
- 4.7 A Social Care Capital programme is available to aid the use of previous years underspent of the Better Care Fund. These funds can be used to facilitate schemes within the community in public and commercial spaces. A proposal is presented to LCC whom make a decision and feedback. Officers have already approached LCC with regards to ramping and new disabled WC facilities at Haslingden Market, a Changing Places WC for a family support group and discussions are set in motion regarding funding part of a supported living accommodation development within the Borough. Internal Financial protocols will be followed with regards to the spend.
- 4.8 Continual evaluation in the form of customer satisfaction surveys, spend monitoring and the number of referrals will take place. It is anticipated to continuously review and revise the policy based on feedback, emerging trends and new evidence. It is requested that any future minor amendments be delegated to the Director of Economic Development in consultation with the Lead Member.

Policy implementation

- 4.9 Although there are no major changes to processes and procedures relating to DFG's, there are some items that will require implementation:

- The existing DFG team will be trained on the new policy and the wider offer for Rossendale residents.
- An awareness and promotional campaign will take place and this will be monitored on engagement with the public.
- A home improvement agency partner will be appointed to deliver this aspect of the policy.

5. RISK

All the issues raised and the recommendation(s) in this report involve risk considerations as set out below:

The policy does not get approval.

Mitigation: the policy has been developed with close consultation with various stakeholders and has been welcomed by and several feedback opportunities have been offered to reduce this risk.

Unable to secure a Home Improvements Agency partner:

Mitigation: An annual amount of £50,000 has been portioned to this element. A market testing exercise has already taken place and there is strong interest from local providers.

No Pipeline of referrals from Occupational Therapists:

Mitigation: A large campaign to raise awareness of the grant funding will take place and this is supported by local GP's and Occupational Therapists.

Our spend is all-dependent on referrals coming through. There is a plan in place regarding advertising, which is supported by local GP's and OT's

6. FINANCE

- 6.1 All the above proposals are eligible expenditure under the Better Care Fund rules and will therefore be funded from the Council's DFG allocation. There is no additional cost to the Council.

7. LEGAL

- 7.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide DFGs and is required by law to adopt and publish a policy detailing any assistance it wishes to offer to improve private residential property prior to offering such assistance.
- 7.2 The proposed Housing Assistance Policy 2023 sets out how the Council will meet these statutory duties and exercise its flexible powers when awarding housing assistance grants.
- 7.3 Once adopted, the power to provide financial assistance must be exercised in accordance with the policy.

8. POLICY AND EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

Policy and consultation implications are included within the body of the report.

A Full Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and it has been identified there are no disproportional impact on any of the protected equality groups, with positive impact on age and disability, any disproportional impact in the implementation of the policy will be given consideration in a relevant and proportionate manner.

9. REASON FOR DECISION

This Housing Assistance Policy is designed to support residents of Rossendale by providing comprehensive housing assistance, ensuring accessibility, safety, and comfort for all. This policy replaces the previous Disabled Facilities Grant Policy, expanding its scope to maximize spend and offer increased support to Rossendale residents.

Background Papers	
Document	Place of Inspection
Policy Comparison and Amendments	Attached
Draft Policy	Attached
Current Policy	Attached
Full EIA	Attached

	Rosendale BC - DFG Policy	Hyndburn - Housing Renewal Policy	Pendle BC - DFG Policy	Burnley - Housing Renewal Assistance Policy	Ribble Valley - Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant Policy
Funding	£1,160,053	£1,095,958	£1,104,815	£2,722,544	£393,008
	No HIA	£24k Capital Grant to Homewise and referrals	No HIA	In house HIA	£5760 Capital Grant to Homewise and referrals
	No means test <£7k	No means test <£7k	No means test <£10k	No means test >£10k	No means test>£10k one single item
	Max Grant £100k	Max Grant £50k	Max Grant £40k	Max Grant £60k	Max Grant £55k
	Relocation grant >£5k	Relocation Assistance	Relocation Grant >£3k	Relocation Grant >£5k	
	Hospital Discharge Grant >£2K	Hospital Discharge Grant >£3K		Hospital Discharge Grant >£2k	
	Home Displacement Grant >£5.5k			Home Displacement Grant >£4.5k	
	Safe Homes Grant >£5k no means test	Home Security Assistance Grant >£3k		Safe and Secure Grant >£4k	
				Dementia Grant >£1k	Dementia Grant>£2k
				Handyperson service	
		Emergency Works Grant >£7k		Emergency Works Grant >£15k	
				Decluttering and Cleaning Grant >£5k	
				Energy Efficiency Measures >£1k	Home Safety and Energy Efficiency>£4k
				Empty home loans (not through BCF)	
	No means test for one single item or LAS				
	Warm Homes Grant >£3k no means test				

Type of Grant	Max Amount	Means Test	Application Type
Discretionary DFG	Decrease £60K	Yes	OT referral
Discretionary DFG >£10K	£10,000	No	OT referral
Discretionary DFG single item	£60,000	No	OT referral
DFG Fee's Grant	£2,000	part of grant	part of grant
Disability Relocation Assistance	£5,000	No	OT referral
Hospital Discharge Grant	£3,000	No	OT referral
The Home Displacement Grant	£5,500	No	Self referral
Dwelling Dementia Grant	£2,000	No	Self referral
Handyperson Services	£10/hour	No	Self referral
Emergency Works Grant	£15,000	Yes	Self referral
Safe and Secure Grant	£5,000	Yes	Self referral



Housing Assistance Policy

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)
(England and Wales) Order 2002

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1.0 Introduction

This document sets out Rossendale Borough Council's policies in relation to home improvements and focusses specifically on the provision of financial assistance and other forms of assistance that the Council can offer to improve the standards of housing and the quality of life for qualifying residents.

The Council must approve mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) applications made under section 23(1) of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. In 2002 the Government provided opportunities for Local Authorities to provide other forms of financial assistance to address particular housing issues. This was the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002, which was further extended in 2008-9 to include use of the DFG money. This enables authorities to use specific DFG funding for wider purposes. The Council has discretionary powers under the legislation to provide assistance in any form for the purpose of improving living conditions and specifically for:

- I. The acquisition of living accommodation, where the Council wish to purchase a person's home as an alternative to adapting, improving or repairing it
- II. The adaptation or improvement of living accommodation (including by alteration, conversion or enlargement)
- III. The repair of living accommodation
- IV. The demolition of buildings comprising or including living accommodation
- V. The construction or replacement of living accommodation to replace living accommodation that has been demolished

In 2016-17, the Better Care Fund (BCF) was introduced to be used locally on health and social care through pooled budget arrangements between Local Authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs). Part of the fund must be allocated for DFGs, which is paid to the Local Authorities. As DFGs are now a component within the Better Care Fund there is greater flexibilities to maximise the benefits for service users.

In order for the Council to use its discretionary powers under The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 to tailor local delivery, it must have this policy. This policy sets out the new flexibilities the Council is adopting in respect of DFGs, including, but not restricted to, changes to bypassing the means testing, supporting Rossendale Borough Council to meet its responsibilities and legal duties to support local communities and the individual needs of residents.

This policy will remain in force until such time as it is amended. It is intended that there will be a review of this policy biennially.

Policy Priorities:

- I. To improve the lives of people with disabilities by enabling access and movement around their own home with the use of adaptations
- II. To allow more effective use of the Better Care Fund by contributing to the aims of the fund, in particular, reducing hospital admissions and allowing early hospital discharges

- III. To reduce the need for domiciliary and residential care by allowing people with disabilities to live more independently in their own homes
- IV. To provide advice, information and support regarding the adaptation of properties to meet accessibility needs, and provide a framework of assistance to vulnerable groups
- V. To treat individuals fairly regardless of age, sex, gender, disability and sexual orientation and to protect their rights under Data Protection and human rights legislation

Strategic context for the Policy

The Councils Corporate Plan 2021-2025 details the vision for the Borough and how that vision can become a reality.

“Our vision is to have a thriving economy, built around our changing town centres, creating a quality environment for all and improving the life chances of all those living and working in our Borough”.

Our place, Our plan – Healthy and proud communities

“Enable residents to remain in their own homes and live independent lives through a comprehensive adaptations programme and working closely with health partners”.

The Councils Housing Strategy 2023-2027

Our vision “In the next 5 years, housing in Rossendale will be accessible, affordable and appropriate”.

Objective two: Introduce new policies that enable people to remain in their own homes in suitable and sustainable properties.



2.0 The Rossendale Home Improvement Agency (HIA)

The Rossendale Home Improvements Agency is dedicated to helping vulnerable older and disabled residents live safely and with dignity in their own homes.

The agency service is available to people who are vulnerable and need help repairing, maintaining, or adapting their home. The HIA deliver a range of financial assistance as well as having trained advisers offering help and advice on a wide range of problems that might affect resident's homes. Services include

- Visiting clients at home
- Setting out housing options to help clients decide what type of housing is best suited to their changing needs
- Delivering a wide range of disabled adaptations within residents homes
- Assistance with repair work around the home
- Provision of a handyperson service, to carry out small jobs around the home
- Helping to make homes more energy efficient

Rossendale Borough Council's HIA strives to extend the healthy life expectancy of older people, by reducing the need for intensive emergency services, maximising income by offering advice on benefits. The HIA provides quick and flexible responses to local needs, improving resident's health and wellbeing and make a real difference to the lives of vulnerable residents.

Summary of the types of assistance available

In brief, assistance will be provided for the following purposes, details of which are provided later in this document

Adaptations to the home

- Disabled Facilities Grants (Mandatory)
- Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants
- Relocation Grants
- The Hospital Discharge Grant
- The Homes Displacement Grant
- Minor Adaptations
- Dwelling Dementia Grants

Improvements to the home

- Handyperson Services
- Emergency Works Grants
- Safe and Secure Grants

3.0 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant

Introduction

The Council has a statutory obligation to administer mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to provide adaptations to enable disabled residents to live independently within their own homes.

The provisions governing mandatory disabled grants are contained in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 as amended by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. Advice on delivery of DFG's and the role and responsibility of the Council and Social Services is contained in the Department for Education and Skills/Department of Health good practice guides "Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People" and "Home Adaptations for Disabled People, A detailed guide to related legislation, guidance and good practice (Home Adaptations Consortium 2015)".

Purpose

This grant is intended to help people with disabilities to live more independently in their home. It includes essential adaptations to enable a disabled person to gain access into their dwelling, to move around it and to access kitchen and bathroom facilities.

Where it is not reasonable and practical to carry out the works, the applicant may be eligible for assistance to relocate to a more suitable property.

Eligibility Criteria

All owner-occupiers, tenants, licensees, or occupiers who can satisfy the criteria in sections 19-22 of the 1996 Act are eligible. Private tenants may apply following approval by the landlord to the adaptation work. Housing Association tenants are also eligible and are assessed for need and means tested on the same basis as private owners and tenants. The eligible works are set out in section 23(1) of the 1996 Act.

The property must be the person with a disability's main or only residence to be eligible to be adapted, and if that is not currently the case, then the person with a disability must intend to occupy it as their main or only residence, once the work has been completed, for the grant condition period.

The grant condition period is for 5 years and starts when the works have been completed to the satisfaction of both the Council and applicant. If an applicant is proposing to buy a new home, then a DFG can only be awarded once the purchase has been completed and this can be proven. If an applicant is looking to buy a new property, then they will be encouraged to liaise with the OT service and the Council regarding the suitability of the dwelling, to meet the needs of the person with a disability, whether it is possible to adapt the property, and the likely timescales, cost and contribution expected to do so.

If an applicant is eligible then the Council has a maximum of six months to 'determine' the application, which means approve or otherwise, however the determination should be carried out as soon as is reasonably practicable.

Works covered under Disabled Facilities Grant include:

- Facilitating access to the dwelling and garden, to overcome or remove any obstacles, and allow free movement around the property
- Making the dwelling or building safe, e.g. lighting or provision of a safe space
- Facilitating access to a living or family room
- Access to, or the provision of, a W/C, bath or shower (or both) and wash hand basin facilities
- Facilitating accessible food preparation/cooking amenities
- Improving or providing a suitable heating system where necessary
- Providing accessible sockets, switches and controls for power, light and heat
- Allowing better access to care for a dependant resident in the dwelling
- To allow access to the dwelling through common-parts of a building
- Fixed hoists, stair-lifts, through floor lifts, external step lifts
- Windows openers
- Facilitating wheelchair access internally

Where additional facilities are provided, the Council will generally expect adaptation of the living or dining room rather than the use of a bedroom.

Wherever possible adaptations will be provided within the existing curtilage of the building, with extensions only being considered where the adaptation could not fit within the property.

The Council will look at the total occupation and use of the property when making the assessment.

The grant will not be given towards alternative works and cannot be granted retrospectively if works had already started.

Amount and Application

The maximum mandatory DFG in England is £30,000 and this amount would be reduced by any contribution determined as payable under the means test.

The grant is means-tested, except if the application is on behalf of a child or young person aged 19 or below. Therefore, the applicants income and savings are required to be assessed to determine if the applicant has a contribution to make or even pay the whole cost. Applicants who receive certain specified “passport” benefits are exempt from the means-test, however the means-test is set by law and the Council does not have any discretion when applying it.

Referrals for DFGs are received from Lancashire County Council (LCC) who have the social care responsibility for Lancashire, to undertake assessments to determine the needs of disabled adults and children who live in Lancashire. The assessment is normally carried out by LCC’s Occupational Therapist (OT) service prior to an application for DFG funding. In some cases, the customer may come direct to the Council, who can employ a private OT to carry out the assessment of need if required.

Referrals can also be made by Trusted Assessor (Level 4) for similar adaptations including level access showers, stair-lifts and ramps.

On receipt of a referral from LCC, the Council will deal with each case on a priority basis, regardless of their tenure. Each case will be classified, by the recommendation of the OT, into one of the following categories:

- Urgent Priority
- Non Urgent Priority

Urgent priority cases will be dealt with first by the Council in periods of high demand, the date a referral is received is also taken into account when determining priorities.

An applicant must be 18 years or older. Parents or guardians are able to apply on behalf of children. Landlords are able to apply on behalf of their tenants.

If the applicant is an owner occupier then an Owners Certificate must be obtained certifying that the person with a disability intends to live in the property, as their main or only residence for at least 5 years from the date the work was finished.

If the applicant is a tenant, then a Tenants Certificate must be obtained certifying that the tenant (or the person with the disability), intends to live in the property as their main residence for at least 5 years from the date the work was finished.

As detailed legislation requires a decision from the Council to approve the grant or not within 6 months of receiving the full application (this includes all necessary information e.g. proof of home ownership or landlord consent and received estimates/tenders for the required work). The Council will also aim to complete the installation of all disabled adaptations within 12 months from the date of grant approval.

While the applicant can choose any contractor of their choice, the Council can support the applicant with the appointment of contractors through an 'Advisory List of Building Contractors' who are willing to undertake grant work to the legislative standards and specification required by the Council.

This is not an 'approved' list in that the Council does not act as a guarantor for the quality and standard of work achieved by these building contractors. However, the list does include contractors who have, in the opinion of the Council, generally carried out satisfactory work in the past, and who are prepared to provide estimates in connection with grant applications.

In most cases three estimates/tenders will be required for the proposed grant work, the successful contractor will be based upon price, availability and customer satisfaction. There are exceptions to the tendering process as stair lifts, through floor lifts, step lifts, ceiling track hoists and automatic wash-dry WCs and rise and fall baths form part of a scheme for the provision of equipment with LCC. The stated items are recommended by LCC, Rossendale then take ownership of the item, other than hoisting equipment who are then responsible for maintaining once the manufacturers warranty has expired. When the item is no longer needed the Council will remove the item so that it can be utilised by another customer.

4.0 Legal Charge and Repayment of Grant

In accordance with the legislation set out in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008, where the adaptation is carried out to a property which is privately owned and the cost of work is £10,000, or more, the Council may place a legal charge on the property through the Local Land Charges Register. The legal charge will last for 10 years. If the property is sold or otherwise changes ownership within 10 years of the completion date, the Council will normally require repayment of the grant, however each case will be judged on its own merits as detailed on the Repayment Conditions form the owner is required to sign. The maximum repayable amount at the change of ownership is £10,000 for a mandatory DFG up to £30,000, however in some cases where discretion is shown, and a grant is paid by the Council in excess of £30,000 then a legal charge may be placed on the property for the additional amount for a period of 10 years.

5.0 Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant

The Council has approved the discretionary element of the DFG allowing maximum assistance of £60,000 to account for the demand for more complex adaptations with the requirement for more specialist equipment and the increased in building and material costs.

The Council has removed the financial assessment (means test) for DFGs where the approved grant does not exceed £10,000, again, due to increased building and material costs.

The council has also removed the need for a financial assessment for DFGs where the cost exceeds £10,000 for the following types of adaptation requests, submitted by the Occupational Therapy service, providing the request contains only one of the following items:

- Level access shower
- Stairlifts
- Through floor lifts
- External step lifts
- Ceiling track hoists
- Wash-dry toilets

6.0 DFG Fees Grant

The Council, at its discretion, may pay professional fees and associated charges required for preliminary DFG work to see if the project is feasible. The fees must be reasonable, and are limited to £2,000, and cover, but are not limited to, Surveyors fees, structural engineer and private OT fees. All fees must be agreed with the Council before any work takes place.

7.0 Disability Relocation Assistance

Purpose

Where a disabled person needs their home to be adapted to allow them to live independently or to be cared for and the costs of the adaptation are unreasonable, not reasonable and practicable and not cost effective, the Council will consider assistance towards the purchase of an alternative dwelling that is either adapted or has greater potential for suitable adaptation. This will be in the form of Disability Relocation Assistance.

Eligibility Criteria

The approval of assistance is subject to an option appraisal looking at financial, social and technical aspects to ascertain the best course of action in relation to the disabled person's needs. Persons eligible include:

- Owner-occupiers, their dependants, mother, father, grandparents regardless of age, who are disabled or registerable as disabled
- Persons who are eligible and have applied for a mandatory DFG, where it is considered that the proposed adaptation is not reasonable or practicable
- The applicant lives at the existing property as their sole or main residence

Owner-occupiers may be assisted to move to a more suitable property (in the following circumstances):

- Where it is more appropriate to assist in the purchase of a fully adapted dwelling or flat that suits the individual's medical needs. The suitability of the new property for adaptation would need to be agreed with both the Occupational Therapist and the Housing Renewal Team
- Where it is more appropriate to assist in the purchase of a dwelling or flat that has greater potential for adaptation
- Where it is more appropriate to assist in the rehousing of the individual or family into a privately rented property, RSL property, sheltered housing scheme, care home

Amount and Application

The maximum amount of assistance will be £5,000 and can be made up of a number of elements including legal fees, surveyors and estate agents fees and removal costs. The cost of assistance will be taken out of the £60,000 maximum individual entitlement for DFG. This amount will be in addition to the grant awarded for the adaptation works to the applicant's new property.

The Relocation Assistance will not be means tested. The applicant's contribution to the DFG, if any, will not affect the amount of assistance available. Where the applicant is transferring from home ownership into a tenancy, there will be similarly be no means test. Where the disabled person is a child, the assistance will not be subject to a test of resources (in line with current legislation for DFGs).

An application for assistance must:

- Be in writing specifying the dwelling the applicant is proposing to move to

- Be accompanied by a report from the Occupational Therapist confirming the new qualifying dwelling is suitable for the medical needs of the disabled person
- Be accompanied by a report confirming the new qualifying dwelling to be free from serious Category 1 Hazards under the HHSRS and will be suitable for the applicant and family to occupy. If requested, the Council can undertake this inspection. The Council retains the discretion to award an Emergency Work Grant in circumstances where it considers appropriate to do so in order to facilitate the relocation and adaptation works
- Be accompanied by an undertaking by the applicant where Category 1 Hazards exist, that the dwelling will be repaired prior to occupation and that assistance will not be released until it is. As indicated above, an Emergency Works Grant may be available for this purpose for persons who are eligible under the criteria
- Be accompanied by an owners certificate that it is intended that the house be occupied as the applicants main or sole residence throughout a 5-year grant condition period or shorter if health or other relevant circumstances dictate. If the applicant is required to move to another property, it is at the councils discretion whether further relocation assistance is reclaimed if the property is sold within the 5-year condition period
- An application will only be approved if accompanied by a proof of title from the applicant or their solicitor, showing the owns legal interest in the new property

8.0 The Hospital Discharge Grant

Purpose

The council will help facilitate hospital discharges by supporting people with disabilities or vulnerabilities to return to a home which is suitable, safe and clean.

Eligibility Criteria

Residents of Rossendale living in their own home either in the private rented sector, social rented sector or owner occupiers who are disabled or vulnerable. Eligible works are not restricted to but can include:

- Small emergency repairs
- Removal of trip/falling hazards
- Clearing properties
- Cleaning properties

Amount and Application

The grants are not means tested and can fund works up to the cost of £3000. The funding will be available where there is no other relevant health or social care funding obtainable, and following a referral from an Occupational Therapist, Clinical Health Practitioner from the Integrated Neighbourhood Team or other health care professional. The grant does not cover packages of care or resettlement funded by the NHS or Social Care.

An application for assistance will be in writing and include either a tenant or owners certificate.

9.0 The Home Displacement Grant

Purpose

In extreme and rare circumstances residents and in some cases their household may have to move to temporary accommodation whilst major adaptation work through a disabled facilities grant is undertaken. This grant is to support the residents to move temporarily, it is not to cover the social care costs or residents staying in residential care temporarily.

Eligibility Criteria

A disabled facilities grant has been approved for major adaptation work, it has been agreed in writing by the Council that temporary accommodation is required during the grant work being undertaken and residential care is not a suitable form of temporary accommodation for that resident.

Amount and Application

The grants are not means tested and can fund alternative accommodation up to £5,500 or £55 per night of temporary accommodation, whichever amount is the lowest. While the Council will support the resident, they are responsible for finding suitable alternative accommodation and providing evidence such as an invoice of the cost. The Council will not pay more than the actual cost of the temporary accommodation.

An application will be made in writing.

10.0 Minor Adaptations

Purpose

If an adaptation is expected to cost below £1,000 then it will be considered to be a minor adaptation and Lancashire County Council will arrange for those works to be completed without the need for a referral to the Council.

11.0 Dwelling Dementia Grants

Purpose

Home improvement dementia grants are available for people with dementia or memory loss to help fund a range of adaptations to their home or to provide equipment which may help people to live well at home. This could include buying bespoke products or the use of colour and contrast to aid orientation in the home.

Eligibility Criteria

Residents of Rossendale living in their own home either in the private rented sector, social rented sector or owner occupiers and who have received a clinical diagnosis of dementia or who are experiencing memory loss. Eligible works are not restricted to but can include:

- High lumens light bulbs
- Coloured sticky covers for light switch plates
- Coloured strips to indicate edges of stairs
- Key locators
- Memo minder
- Coloured key fobs
- Key safe
- Signage
- Notice board/white board
- Big button telephone
- Dementia clock
- Magiplug (for all sinks)
- Large or small locks for cupboard doors
- Additional shelving
- Touch bedside light
- Day/night clock
- Bathroom slip mat
- Coloured toilet seat
- Coloured towel rail
- Grab/handrails
- Wet rooms/bathroom adaptations

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Amount and Application

The grants are not means tested and can fund aids/equipment up to the cost of £2000. The grants will take the form of adaptations and equipment to the home rather than a monetary award.

Referrals can be made in writing from a range of agencies including Age Concern, GP's, early intervention dementia service, integrated neighbourhood team, Cross Roads Care, social prescribing workers, occupational therapists, social services, carers link and via self-referral and through family members.

12.0 Improvements to the Home

Handyperson Services

Purpose

To assist older, disabled and vulnerable people to live independently in their own homes for longer in greater levels of comfort and security by undertaking small jobs that will:

- Prevent falls and accidents
- Prevent delayed discharges from hospital
- Improve home security
- Improve energy efficiency
- Prevent fire and detection of carbon monoxide

To give residents support from somebody they can trust to provide a wide range of affordable small jobs where it is difficult to find “ordinary” trades people who would be prepared to undertake such work.

Eligibility Criteria

Residents of Rossendale living in their own home either in the private rented sector, social rented sector or owner occupiers who are aged 65 or over, disabled or vulnerable. Eligible works and services will include:

- Small building repairs
- Minor adaptations (such as installation of grab rails or temporary ramps)
- “Odd” jobs (for example, putting up curtain rails and shelves, moving furniture, installing smoke and carbon monoxide alarms, changing light bulbs)
- General home safety checks with remedial action (for example safety checking or repairing/replacing appliances)
- Falls/accident prevention checks with remedial action (for example, securing loose carpets or putting up grab rails)
- Security checks with remedial action (for example, checking and replacing window and door locks)
- Energy efficiency (for example installing low energy light bulbs, draft proofing)
- Signposting clients for other services

Jobs in private or social rented properties will only be undertaken providing the works are not the responsibility of the landlord and the tenant has the permission of the landlord to carry out the work.

Handyperson jobs will not normally take more than 2 hours to complete. It will sometimes, however, be efficient to combine numerous smaller jobs in one visit.

Amount and Application

This assistance is not means tested and the hourly labour rate is subsidised by the Home Improvement Agency to cost £12. Residents are required to pay for any materials that are needed to carry out the requested work.

Enquiries for the handyperson service will be made by telephone. Proof of landlord permission for private and social tenants will be required. The Home Improvement Agency can support tenants to obtain this.

13.0 Emergency Works Grant

Purpose

The grant is available to remedy urgent disrepair where there is a danger to the occupants health, safety or welfare. The grant is available where works or repair have been identified as being Category 1 hazards (A to C) or high Category 2 hazards (D to F) under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System that pose a risk to the occupants of a property. The grant is not for larger scale home improvements but to help remove significant hazards to help the resident stay in their own home.

Eligibility Criteria

To qualify a person must be an owner-occupier (including a Park Home owner) in receipt of income related benefits and aged 65 or over or must be a disabled person in receipt of income related benefits.

For the Council to consider applications for Emergency Works Grant the applicant must occupy the property as their only residence or care for an elderly, disabled or infirm person.

In most cases, private tenants will not be eligible as usually the landlord would be expected to carry out such works as part of their repairing obligations for the property. Housing Association tenants are not eligible as there are systems in place to report and deal with emergency repairs.

All applicants will be asked whether they have an emergency response service contained within an insurance policy. If so, they should approach their insurance company in the first instance.

Eligible works include but are not restricted to:

- Essential repairs to electrical wiring where this has been assessed as dangerous
- Dry and wet rot
- Extensive raining in, damp and mould growth
- Essential repairs to heating or hot water systems
- Rotted windows and or doors that are causing excess cold

Amount and Application

The maximum amount of grant is £10,000 and it is means tested. In cases of Emergency Works Grants here the amount of assistance required to remove a Category 1 hazard or high Category 2 hazard or to deal with unforeseen works exceed £10,000, the grant limit can be raised to a maximum of £15,000. The additional amount will be reserved for essential major works where imminent risk exists such as re-roofing, structural works and other works considered essential by the Council.

The application will be made in writing and will require an owners certificate.

On completion and payment of the works, further terms and conditions will apply. There will be a condition period, which means the period of 5 years beginning with the certified date in the case of any grant assistance. The certified date is the date the eligible works were completed to the satisfaction of the Council.

Within a period of 5 years from the certified date, the property must be occupied by the applicant(s) and/or members of his/her immediate family. This means the property must be occupied by one of the following as their only or main residence:

- The applicant
- The applicants spouse or partner
- The applicants son/daughter (including stepson/daughter)
- The applicants mother/father (including stepfather/mother)

If the property is sold or other relevant disposal made or the Council has reason to demand repayment of the financial assistance within the condition period, the Emergency Works Grant must be repaid in full.

The Council may waive its demand for immediate repayment of Emergency Works Grant and allow the transfer of conditions to a new or additional owner(s) if there has been an exempt disposal.

In most circumstances, one grant only will be permitted to the property in a period of 5 years. The Council will only permit a successive grant application on the same property within the 5 year period if the application is to remedy a new Category 1 hazard, which has arisen in the property and which poses a serious risk of injury to the occupier. After the 5 year period, a successive grant application will only be permitted for items of work, which are different to the previous grant or require the same type of work to a different part of the property.

All eligible grant works shall be carried out within 12 months from the date of approval of the application. The Council may extend this period if it is satisfied that the eligible works cannot be carried out without carrying out other works, which could not have reasonably been foreseen when the application was made.

If the eligible works are not completed within 12 months from the date of approval and there is deemed to be unnecessary delay, or the Council has reason to believe that the grant will not be completed, the Council may pay grant on the completed works undertaken then cancel the grant on the remaining works.

14.0 Safe and Secure Grant

Purpose

The grant is to help older, disabled or vulnerable residents to feel safe and secure in their own home.

Eligibility Criteria

Residents of Rossendale living in their own home either in the private rented sector, social rented sector or owner occupiers who are aged 65 or over, disabled or vulnerable.

Eligible works can include but are not restricted to:

- New window and door locks

- New front and rear doors if they are insecure
- Secure gates
- Fencing
- Security lighting
- Home security kits

Amount and Application

The maximum amount of grant is £5,000 and it is means tested.

The application will be made in writing and will require an owner or tenant certificate.

In most circumstances, one grant only will be permitted to the property in a period of 5 years.

15.0 Affordable Warmth Assistance

The Affordable Warmth Scheme is a Government initiative designed to help householders who receive certain state benefits, to replace their faulty electric storage heaters or faulty central heating boilers.

Affordable Warmth Scheme Qualifying Criteria regarding your home.

You live in your own home, or if you rent your home from a private landlord it must have an EPC rating of E or above.

Affordable Warmth Scheme Qualifying Criteria regarding your State Benefits.

You receive at least one of the following state benefits or qualify under eco flex rules:

Pension Credit – Guarantee Credit

Pension Credit – Savings Credit

Universal Credit

Child Tax Credit

Working Tax Credit

Income-Related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)

Income-Based Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA)

Income Support

Child Benefit (subject to maximum household income thresholds)

Housing Benefit

ECO Flex Rules allow local councils to recommend that a householder qualifies for the gas central heating grants for pensioners scheme without the need to receive one of the qualifying benefits above.

To satisfy Affordable Warmth Scheme Qualifying Criteria for a Storage Heater Grant:

You must have at least one existing electric night storage heater installed in your home which is faulty or inefficient, OR you have electric panel heaters in your home.

To satisfy Affordable Warmth Scheme Qualifying Criteria for a Boiler Grant:

You must have a boiler installed in your home which is either:

Less than 86% efficient (C rated or below) AND broken.

(In most cases you must also have insulation installed under the ECO Scheme)

16.0 Review of the Policy

Where it is considered that there are exceptional circumstances, which warrant consideration outside of this policy, an application may be made to the Head of Housing and Regeneration in conjunction with the Lead Member for an appropriate decision and each case will be considered with regard given to the Council's statutory responsibilities, overall priorities, and the financial resources available.

This policy will be kept under review and will be subject to progressive amendment. The development of further measures and options for intervention and assistance will continue in line with the Council's priorities and resources.

17.0 Compliments, Complaints and Appeals

The Council is keen to receive feedback from all applicants for assistance on how it performed. Applicants may include comments on the customer satisfaction questionnaires, which will be sent out following the completion of the individual casework.

All applicants for Council assistance who are dissatisfied with the way the Council performed have the right to make comment to the Council using the formal complaints procedure about any aspect of the service received. A detailed response will be given in all cases.

Any applicant wishing to appeal against a decision on the provision of financial or other assistance may appeal in writing to the Head of Housing and Regeneration, setting out the grounds for appeal.

Disabled Facilities Grant Policy 2020-22

Other formats are available.
Please call 01706 217777 or
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1. Introduction

Under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (the Act), Rossendale Borough Council (the Council), in its capacity of a housing authority, has a statutory duty to provide Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) to applicants who qualify. The primary aim of DFGs is to provide aids and adaptations to enable people with disabilities to live independently and safely in their own homes. This policy sets out the mandatory legal framework for DFGs, and how the Council intends to use its powers under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) to provide discretionary interventions to promote independent living and well-being.

In order for the Council to use its discretionary powers under the RRO it must have a policy. This policy sets out the new flexibilities the Council is adopting in respect of DFGs, including, but not restricted to, changes to the maximum award and as ceiling for means testing.

2. Aims of the Policy

- To improve the lives of people with disabilities by enabling access and movement around their own home with the use of adaptations
- To allow more effective use of the Better Care Fund, cutting out bureaucracy and contributing to the aims of the fund, in particular, reducing hospital admissions and allowing early hospital discharges.
- To reduce the need for domiciliary and residential care by allowing people with disabilities to live more independently in their own homes.
- To provide advice, information and support regarding the adaptation of properties to meet accessibility needs, and provide a framework of assistance to vulnerable groups
- To treat individuals fairly regardless of age, sex, gender, disability and sexual orientation and to protect their rights under Data Protection and human rights legislation.

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3. Links with the Council’s Corporate Strategy 2017-21

The policy works towards Priority 3 of the Council’s Corporate Strategy, which is **a proud, healthy and vibrant Rossendale**, in particular the Key Action of Healthy and the following objectives:

- Work with partners to improve the health and wellbeing of our residents, particularly through sport, leisure and our well used parks and open spaces
- Protect the most vulnerable in our communities

4. Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant

4.1 Legal Framework and Eligibility

Although DFGs were introduced in 1990 the principal legal provisions are contained in the Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996 (the Act) and subsequent associated regulations. The following is a summary of main legal provisions that apply to mandatory DFGs:

- A customer, who defined by the Act as a person with a disability, is eligible for assistance.
- DFGs are mandatory grants which are available to people with disabilities for works which are necessary and appropriate to meet their needs, and when it is considered reasonable and practicable to carry out the works when having regard to the age or condition of the dwelling or building.
- DFGs are means-tested, except if the application is on behalf of a child or young person aged 19 or below. Therefore, the applicant’s income and savings are required to be assessed to determine if the applicant has a contribution to make or even pay the whole cost. Applicants who receive certain specified “passport” benefits are exempt for the means-test, however the means-test is set by law and the Council does not have any discretion when applying it.
- If an applicant is eligible then the Council has a maximum of six months to ‘determine’ the application, which means approve or otherwise, however the determination should be carried out as soon as is reasonably practicable.

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- The maximum mandatory DFG in England is currently £30,000, and this amount would be reduced by any contribution determined as payable under the means-test.
- The Council has the power to recover grants if the dwelling is sold within 10 years, with a maximum recoverable amount of £10,000. Grants below £5,000 are excluded from the recovery powers, and it must be 'reasonable' for the Council to require the repayment given the circumstances.
- The duty to provide DFGs is 'tenure blind', and therefore applications from home owners or those renting in the private or social sector are treated equally depending on their needs.
- An applicant must be 18 years of age or older.
- Parents or guardians are able to apply on behalf of children;
- Landlords are able to apply on behalf of their tenants;
- The property to be adapted must be a legal residence, and this can include dwellings, houseboats, caravans and mobile homes as well as buildings which contain dwellings.

4.2 Eligible works for Disabled Facilities Grants

The Act sets out for what purpose DFGs can be used and applies to all legal residences. Eligible works under the Act in respect to assisting the person with a disability are summarised below:

- Facilitating access to the dwelling and garden, to overcome or remove any obstacles, and allow free movement around the property.
- Making the dwelling or building safe, e.g. lighting or provision of a safe space.
- Facilitating access to a living or family room
- Access to, or the provision of, a W/C, bath or shower (or both) and washhand basin facilities.
- Facilitating accessible food preparation/cooking amenities.

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- Improving or providing a suitable heating system where necessary.
- Providing accessible sockets, switches and controls for power, light and heat.
- Allowing better access to care for a dependant resident in the dwelling.
- To allow access to the dwelling through common-parts of a building.

4.3 Referrals for Disabled Facilities Grants

Lancashire County Council (LCC) has the social care responsibility for 12 districts in Lancashire including Rossendale, whilst Rossendale Borough Council (the Council) and the districts are responsible for statutory housing functions. Therefore LCC has a duty to assess of the needs of disabled adults and children who live in Lancashire, and the assessment is normally carried out by LCC's Occupational Therapist (OT) service prior to an application for DFG funding. In some cases the customer may not come through LCC and customer makes an application direct to RBC, and in these cases RBC reserve the right to employ a private OT to carry out the assessment of need required.

4.4 Prioritisation of DFG Applications

On receipt of a referral from an OT, the Council will deal with each case on a priority basis, regardless of their tenure. Each case will be classified, by recommendation of the OT, into one of the following categories:

- High Priority
- Standard Priority

High Priority cases will be dealt with first by the Council in periods of high demand, and the date a referral is received is also taken into account when distinguishing between referrals.

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4.5 Lancashire County Council Financial Threshold

If an adaptation is expected to cost below £1,000 then it will be considered to be a Minor Adaptation and LCC will arrange for the works to be completed and a referral will not be made to the Council.

4.6 Residence and Ownership

The property must be the person with a disability's main or only residence to be eligible to be adapted, and if that is not currently the case, then the person with a disability must intend to occupy it as their main or only residence, once the work has been completed, for the grant condition period. The grant condition period is for 5 years, and starts when the works have been complete to the satisfaction of both the Council and applicant.

If an applicant is proposing to buy a new home, then a DFG can only be awarded once the purchase has been completed and this can be proven. If an applicant is looking to buy a new property, then they will be encouraged to liaise with the OT service and the Council regarding the suitability of the dwelling to meet the needs of the person with a disability, whether it is possible to adapt the property, and the likely timescales, cost and contribution expected to do so.

If the applicant is an owner occupier then an **Owner's Certificate** must be obtained. The Owner's Certificate needs to certify that the applicant has or proposes to acquire an owning interest in the property, and that the person with a disability intends to live in the property, as their main or only residence, during the course of the grant condition period.

If the applicant is a tenant then a **Tenant's Certificate** must be obtained. The Tenant's Certificate needs to certify that the application is a tenant's application, and that the tenant (or the person with a disability), intends to live in the property, as their main or only residence, during the course of the grant condition period (providing it is possible due to health and other factors). For rented properties an Owner's Certificate is also needed to be provided by the owner.

If the applicant lives in a **house boat, caravan or mobile home** then an **Owner-Occupation Certificate** must be obtained. The **Owner-Occupation** Certificate needs to certify that the application is an occupier's application, and that the occupier, (or the person with a disability, intends to live in a house boat, caravan or mobile home, as their main or only residence, during the course of the grant

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condition period (providing it is possible due to health and other factors). For rented properties an Owner’s Certificate also needs to be provided by the owner. A consent certificate , consenting to the work being carried out, is also required from each person, apart from the applicant, who is entitled to possession of the premises where the houseboat is moored, or caravan or mobile home are pitched.

4.7 Legal Charges

In accordance with the legislation set out in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008, where the adaptation is carried out to a property which is privately owned and the cost of the work is £10,000, or more, the Council may place a legal charge on the property through the Land Registry.

The legal charge will last for ten years. If the property is sold or otherwise changes ownership within ten years of the completion date, the Council will normally require repayment of the grant, however each case will be judged on its own merits as detailed on the Repayment Conditions form the owner is required to sign.

The maximum repayable amount at the change of ownership is £10,000 for a mandatory DFG up to £30,000, however in some cases where discretion is shown and a grant is paid by the Council is in excess of £30,000 then then a legal charge may be placed on the property for the additional amount for a period of 10 years.

4.8 The DFG application process: considering alternative options

During the period that the Council is considering the application a number of options will be explored with the applicant as follows:

- Alternative options such as a possible move to a property owned by a Registered Provider or a private sector property.
- If the customer is a Registered Provider tenant, the Council will liaise with the Registered Providers to determine whether it is more cost effective for the applicant to transfer to another property rather than adapt the existing property.
- Complete a financial assessment to determine eligibility for assistance and if a financial contribution will need to be made by the applicant.
- Explore options to assist the applicant in funding any contribution required by them.

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5. Tendering of DFGs

In accordance with the Council's procurement policy, if the anticipated cost of work is lower than £10,000 two quotations are required. If the anticipated cost of work exceeds £10,000 three quotations are required from the Council's list of contractors who have expressed interest in tendering for such work.

The lowest quotation that meets the specification usually wins the tender, however the customer may select a higher value tender provided they are willing to pay the difference between their preferred contractor's quotation and the lowest. To ensure value for money, the Council will estimate the cost of job using a schedule of works as a benchmark for comparing the value of tenders.

There are exceptions to the tendering process as stair lifts, through floor lifts, step lifts, ceiling track hoists and automatic wash-dry WCs and rise & fall baths form part of a scheme for the provision of equipment with LCC. The stated items are recommended by LCC, who take ownership of the item as well as the responsibility to maintain it once the manufacturer's warranty has expired. When the item is no longer needed LCC will remove the item so that it can be utilised by another customer.

6. Service standards

Legislation requires a decision from the Council to approve the grant or not within 6 months of receiving the full application (this includes all necessary information e.g. proof of home ownership or landlord consent); the Council will aim to achieve this within 4 weeks. In addition the Council will use reasonable endeavours to meet the following standards:

- After receiving a recommendation from the LCC OT service we will write to the applicant within 5 working days to acknowledge the DFG request has been received and a 'Preliminary Test of Resources from' will be sent.
- Urgent cases will be visited within 4 weeks, and non-urgent cases will be visited in order of recommendation received.
- In accordance with legislation, the Council will aim to complete the installation of all disabled adaptations within 12 months from the date of grant approval.
- The Council aims to process applications fairly, efficiently, courteously and promptly.

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- The Council aims to pay grant money due within 30 days of a valid claim on certified work.

7. Other Options

Registered Providers have the discretion to offer a tenant living in an adapted property, where the adaptations are no longer needed, a disturbance grant to help them move into a non-adapted property and for a DFG applicant to move into the existing adapted property. The discretionary move requires the agreement of both the tenant living in the adapted property and the DFG applicant.

There are benefits to the arrangement as it ensures resources within the borough are effectively utilised and may enable needs to be met more quickly. Registered Providers will seek to optimise the use of their stock by facilitating the transfer of an existing tenant whose needs may be better met by a move to more suitable accommodation such as a ground floor flat or bungalow, rather than adapting their existing home.

Applicants should refer to the Registered Provider's policies for further details on this option. The Council will expect the applicant to accept a reasonable offer of suitable alternative accommodation rather than progress a DFG application.

8. Better Care Fund

From 2015/16 the grant paid from Central Government to Local Housing Authorities to help pay for DFGs has been a named part of the Department of Health's 'Better Care Fund'.

The Better Care Fund is described as a *“single pooled budget for health and social care services to work more closely together in local areas based on a plan agreed between the NHS & local authorities”*.

The Better Care Fund 2016/17 Policy Framework refers to the Better Care Fund as *“the biggest ever financial incentive for the integration of health and social care...it requires Clinical Commissioning Groups and Local Authorities to pool budgets and to agree an integrated spending plan for how they will use their Better Care Fund allocation”*.

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The policy framework confirmed that “*the statutory duty on local housing authorities to provide DFG to those who qualify for it will remain. Therefore each area will have to allocate this funding to its respective housing authorities (district councils in two-tier areas) from the pooled budget to enable them to continue to meet their statutory duty to provide adaptations to the homes of disabled people, including in relation to young people*”.

The current Better Care Fund policy framework 2017 to 2019 can be accessed below:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/integration-and-better-care-fund-policy-framework-2017-to-2019>

In Lancashire the custodian of the Better Care Fund is the Health and Wellbeing Board:

<http://www3.lancashire.gov.uk/corporate/web/?siteid=6715&pageid=40271&e=e>

The Health and Wellbeing Board is administered by LCC, and thus it is ultimately via LCC that the Council now receives its funding allocation to provide DFGs for residents of Rossendale.

The Council intends to use the funding that it receives via the Better Care Fund to help to address the stated Better Care Fund priorities, namely:

- Reducing delayed transfers of care
- Minimising avoidable hospital admissions
- Facilitating early discharge from hospital

9. Maximum DFG entitlement

The mandatory maximum grant that an applicant can be awarded (per application) under the DFG legislation is £30,000.

The Council recognise that extremely complex adaptation cases, mainly for children, involve ground floor extensions plus specialist equipment, resulting in tenders which exceed £30,000.

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The ability to award grants above the mandatory maximum will help the customers to receive adaptations more quickly, rather than seeking alternative sources of funding which is a lengthy process. In exceptional circumstances, at the discretion of the Council and consultation with health and/or social care professionals, the Council may award grants exceeding £30,000 up to a limit of £100,000 from 1st January 2020, which is an increase on the £60,000 maximum award introduced on 1st October 2018. DFG awards above £30,000 will be required to be signed off by the relevant Director after formal consultation with the Portfolio Holder.

10. Flexible DFG Arrangements

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (“the RRO”) removed most of the prescriptive housing renewal grant legislation contained in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

Article 3 of the RRO introduced wide ranging discretionary powers to allow Councils to develop different forms of assistance to meet local needs.

The Council made use of the RRO provisions to enable it to use funds received from the Better Care Fund more flexibly, responsively and effectively from 1st October 2018, and subject to available funding, the Council will use its powers to offer discretionary assistance as detailed in this section. However the Home Displacement Grant (see 10.8) is additional to the previous version of the policy and will be introduced from 1st January 2020.

10.1 Threshold for Financial Assessment

The Council has removed the financial assessment for DFGs in the following instances:

- All works where the cost of the approved grant does not exceed £7,000.
- Hospital discharge in urgent/extreme circumstances, cases identified by health and/or social care professionals, including where the costs exceed £7,000.
- At the discretion of the Council in consultation with health and/or social care professionals, including where the costs exceed £7,000.
- If the costs exceed £7,000 for the following types of adaptation requests, submitted by the Occupational Therapy service, providing the request contains only one of the following items:

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- Level Access Shower
- Stairlifts (via LCC Equipment Scheme)
- Through Floor Lifts (via LCC Equipment Scheme)
- Ceiling Track Hoists (via LCC Equipment Scheme)
- Wash-dry toilets (via LCC Equipment Scheme)

If additional works are required after approval of the grant that would increase the amended approval cost above £7,000 there will be no retrospective means test carried out.

10.2 Assistance with Assessed Contribution following a Means Test

The Council is aware that in some cases there may be difficulty for the applicant paying the assessed contribution. In such cases applicants will be able to complete a financial statement detailing their income and outgoings, and at the discretion of the Council the contribution may be reduced or rescinded if appropriate. Assistance will be awarded on a case by case basis, and is aimed at stopping applicants facing hardship in order to receive appropriate adaptations to their home.

10.3 Relocation Grant

In cases where the Council deem it not reasonable and practicable to adapt an applicant's current home to meet their needs, then a grant of up to £5000 may be awarded at the Council's discretion to assist the applicant to move to a more suitable home in addition to any adaptations required. The assessment of the suitability for adaptation of the existing and new property will be carried out by the Council in close liaison with a LCC OT. The OT will assess that the new property is suitable to meet the needs of the person with a disability. If the value of the grant for the adaptations in the new property is expected to be under the threshold (£7,000) for means testing according with section 10.1, then the relocation grant will not be subject to means testing. Any legal charge on the property in accordance with section 4.7 will not take into account the amount of the relocation grant. To be eligible for the Relocation Grant an owner occupier must commit to remain in the property for the grant condition period of 5 years.

10.4 Hospital Discharge Grants

The Council at its discretion may pay up to £2,000 to support people with disabilities or vulnerabilities being discharged from hospital. The funding will be available if

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there is no other relevant health or social care funding obtainable, and following a referral from an OT or relevant healthcare professional. The Hospital Discharge grant excludes packages of care funded by NHS continuing healthcare. Work which may be carried out include, but are not restricted to; deep cleaning, clearing properties, repairs needed to free a property of Category 1 Hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, other urgent repairs, repair of heating systems and the provision of emergency heating. The Hospital Discharge Grant will not be means tested.

10.5 DFG Fees Grant

The Council at its discretion may pay professional fees and associated charges required for preliminary DFG work to see if the project is feasible for cases where the DFG does not proceed. The fees must be reasonable, and are limited to £2,000, and cover, but are not limited to, surveyors' fees, structural engineer and private OT fees. All fees must be agreed with the Council before any work takes place, in order to be eligible, and this will be done on case by case basis.

10.6 Safe Homes Grant

The discretionary Safe Homes Grant is aimed at keeping people who are disabled or vulnerable, including those who suffer from dementia or have visual impairments, safe in their homes by providing repairs to disability related equipment. Referrals are accepted from LCC or hospital based OTs, the maximum payment is £5,000, and it is not means tested. The works exclude and equipment under warranty or maintained by LCC or where LCC can provide assistance.

10.7 Warm Homes Grant

The discretionary Warm Homes Grant is aimed at keeping people who are disabled or vulnerable, including those who suffer from dementia or have visual impairments, safe and warm in their homes by providing repairs to boilers and heating systems. Referrals are accepted from LCC or hospital based OTs. The maximum Warm Homes Grant payment is £3,000, and it is not means tested. The works exclude any equipment under warranty, or where other LCC, Council or similar funding/schemes are readily accessible and the applicant qualifies.

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10.8 Home Displacement Grant

The Home Displacement Grant is for those rare occasions when it is not possible for the applicant's households to remain in their home whilst the adaptation is being carried out. The maximum Home Displacement Grant payment is £5,500, or £55 per night of displacement, whichever is lowest, and it is not means tested. The Council will not pay more than the actual cost of the alternative accommodation, and the applicant will be responsible for finding suitable alternative accommodation and providing evidence such as invoices, bill or statements, before any grant is paid. Any Home Displacement Grants will need agreement in writing from the Council, and are only for extreme circumstances. Any legal charge on the property in accordance with section 4.7 will not take into account the amount of the relocation grant.

10.9 Review and Cessation of Flexible DFG Works

The policy will be reviewed within two years of its adoption to consider which flexible DFG works arrangements will continue. All flexible DFG works are discretionary and may be withdrawn by the Council at any time. The decision to award any flexible DFG work or services is completely at the discretion of the Council.

11. Compliments and Complaints

You can help us to improve our services by providing your feedback.

We would like to hear from you if:

- You have an idea that will help the council to do things better
- We have done a good job
- We have done something wrong or you want to complain

How to get in touch:

Online form or feedback form via www.rossendale.gov.uk

By email to: complaints@rossendalebc.gov.uk

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In writing: Committee and Member Services Team, Rossendale Borough Council, Futures Park, Bacup, Rossendale, OL13 0BB.

We aim to:

Write to you within 24 hours to tell you that your complaint /feedback is being dealt with and who is dealing with it.

Send you a full reply within a further 10 working days, or keep you informed of the progress of your complaint/feedback should it take longer than 2 weeks to resolve.

This is stage 1 of the process.

Provide you with a right to have your case reviewed by a senior manager if you are dissatisfied with the reply you receive or the action taken. This is stage 2 of the process.

The full complaints can also be found on the Council's website.

View the full complaints procedure in this section to find out more about how we will deal with your complaint

Local Government Ombudsmen

The Ombudsman will only normally investigate complaints where they have been dealt with by the Council's own complaints procedure:

Contact Details:

Local Government Ombudsman

PO Box 4771

Coventry

CV4 0EH

Tel No 0845 602 1983

Website www.lgo.org.uk

Email advice@lgo.org.uk

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12. Monitoring and Review

The Director covering Strategic Housing is responsible for ensuring that Council Officers adhere to this policy and that the policy is effective.

This policy will be reviewed after 2 years. It may be reviewed earlier if there are significant changes in legislation, statutory guidance, local priorities or capital funding.

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FULL EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Name of Policy, Decision, Strategy, Service or Function, Other: (please indicate)	Housing Assistance Policy	
Lead Officer Name(s) & Job Title(s) :	Kelly Jenkinson Housing Renewal Manager	
Department/Service Area:	Strategic Housing	
Telephone & E-mail Contact:	01706 252533 kellyjenkinson@rossendalebc.gov.uk	
Date Assessment:	Commenced: 18/07/2023	Completed: 20/10/2023

We carry out Equality Impact Assessments (EIA) to analyse the effects of our decisions, policies or practices. The EIA should be undertaken/started at the beginning of the policy development process – before any decisions are made.

1. OVERVIEW

The main aims/objectives of this policy¹ are:
<p>This Housing Assistance Policy is designed to support residents of Rossendale by providing comprehensive housing assistance, ensuring accessibility, safety, and comfort for all. This policy replaces the previous Disabled Facilities Grant Policy, expanding its scope to maximise spend and offer increased support to Rossendale residents.</p> <p>The aim of our new Housing Assistance Policy is to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • improve the lives of people with disabilities by enabling access and movement around their own home with the use of adaptations • allow more effective use of the Better Care Fund by contributing to the aims of the fund, in particular, reducing hospital admissions and allowing early hospital discharges • reduce the need for domiciliary and residential care by allowing people with disabilities to live more independently in their own homes • provide advice, information and support regarding the adaptation of properties to meet accessibility needs, and provide a framework of assistance to vulnerable groups • treat individuals fairly regardless of age, sex, gender, disability and sexual orientation and to protect their rights under Data Protection and human rights legislation <p>This policy has been specifically designed to support those with protected characteristics, particularly protecting age and disability.</p>

(Refer to "[EIA Guidance](#)" for details)

Is the policy or decision under review (please tick)

New/proposed

Modified/adapted

Existing

The main intended people or groups that will be most affected by this policy are:
The elderly, disabled and vulnerable.

(Refer to "[EIA Guidance](#)" for details)

¹ Policy refers to any policy, strategy, project, procedure, function, decision or delivery of service.

2. FINDINGS / EVIDENCE

FINDINGS/EVIDENCE: The following information/data has been considered in developing this policy/decision (including any consultation or engagement):	
Information/data obtained and/or Consultation/engagement carried out (please state who with)	What does this tell us? / What does it say?
Research – we've reviewed our existing policy with the new guidance published and then have completed an exercise with other local authorities to identify any differences and understand best practice ideas. We look at their spend and the types of schemes being funded as well as their internal processes and procedures.	This tells us what we are able to implement and what our current policy restrictions are in order to serve a wider audience and assist more people with staying in their own homes and funding community projects.
We've engaged with key stakeholders, such as GP's , Social Care, Occupational therapists, charity organisations like Age Concern to gauge their feedback and to understand how the new policy could affect them and what their priorities are.	All feedback was positive and we have agreed to arrange sessions with GP's and Dementia nurses within surgeries to raise awareness.
We've reviewed the feedback from our customer satisfaction surveys.	This highlighted that there is a need to increase the awareness of the DFG opportunity and a campaign around this will be developed. Including posters in GP surgeries, social media posts, a press release etc
We've participated in briefing sessions with the Lancashire DFG group and relevant Council members.	LCC were very supportive of the HIA which will assist us with widening our scope and spend.

Add more/delete rows as required - See EIA Guidance

3. EQUALITY IMPACT

Using the table below please indicate whether the policy/strategy/decision has a positive, negative or no impact from an equalities perspective on any of the protected equality groups listed below. Please also give consideration to wider equality of opportunity and community cohesion impacts within and between the groups identified. See EIA Guidance

Equality	Positive Impact (It could benefit)	Negative Impact (It could disadvantage)	Reason and any mitigating actions already in place (to reduce any adverse /negative impacts or reasons why it will be of positive benefit or contribution)	No Impact
Age	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The implementation of the policy will mean we can assist more residents. The policy will support people with a range of needs, particularly those that may have decreased mobility.	<input type="checkbox"/>
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The implementation of the policy will mean we can assist more residents. Referrals will be made from occupational therapists, including specific children specialists and will support and enrich younger people and children's lives.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Disability	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	The implementation of the policy will mean we can assist more residents. People with a range of disabilities will access the support and the schemes will be fully compliant and in line with recommendations from specialists to support their needs.	<input type="checkbox"/>
Gender	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Reassignment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Pregnancy and Maternity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Race (Ethnicity or Nationality)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Belief or Religion	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

Equality	Positive Impact (it could benefit)	Negative Impact (it could disadvantage)	Reason and any mitigating actions already in place (to reduce any adverse /negative impacts or reasons why it will be of positive benefit or contribution)	No Impact
Sex	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Women	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Men	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Sexual Orientation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
gay men, gay women / lesbians, and bisexual people	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Marriage and Civil Partnership (employment only)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Contribution to equality of opportunity	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Contribution to fostering good relations between different groups (people getting on well together – valuing one another, respect and understanding)	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Human Rights	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
http://intranet/site/scripts/documents/info.php?categoryID=86&documentID=251	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	N/A	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>

4. OUTCOME OF EIA – COURSE OF ACTION TO BE TAKEN

What course of action does this EIA suggest you take? More than one of the following may apply	Please indicate
<p>Outcome 1: No major change required. The EIA has not identified any potential for discrimination or adverse impact and all opportunities to promote equality have been taken.</p>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
<p>Outcome 2: Adjust the policy to remove barriers identified by the EIA or better promote equality. Are you satisfied that the proposed adjustments will remove the barriers identified? If there is a negative impact identified, you must consider (and evidence/record) what mitigating actions you have or will put in place to reduce the negative impact where/if possible, and to enhance the positive impact. This might include any partnership discussions/working that needs to be undertaken. Complete EIA Action Plan as appropriate.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Outcome 3: Continue the policy despite potential for negative impact or missed opportunities to promote equality identified. You will need to ensure that the EIA clearly sets out the justifications for continuing with it. You should consider whether there are sufficient plans to reduce the negative impact and/or plans to monitor the actual impact. This might include any partnership discussions/working that needs to be undertaken. Complete EIA Action Plan as appropriate.</p>	<input type="checkbox"/>
<p>Outcome 4: Stop and rethink the policy when the EIA shows actual or potential unlawful discrimination or significant negative impact that can not be justified or mitigated against. <u>You must speak to the People and Policy Team immediately.</u></p>	<input type="checkbox"/>

If a negative impact as been identified and there are no sufficient mitigating actions in place or planned. Please see the guidance and you must speak to/ see advice from your Head of Service or the People and Policy Team.

5. EIA ACTION PLAN & REVIEW

Based on the impact assessment, findings/evidence and outcomes identified above, please complete the Action Plan below – these should be actions arising as a result of undertaking the EIA.

The Action Plan should address (not exhaustively):-

- Any gaps in findings/evidence research including any consultation or engagement regarding the policy and its actual/potential affects.
- How you will address any gaps.
- What practical changes/action will help reduce any negative impacts that you have identified.
- What practical changes/action will help enhance any positive contributions to equality?

Further Actions Required: Yes No

EIA Action Plan

Issue	Action required	Lead officer	Timescale

Please add more rows if required.

Actions arising from the Impact assessment should form part of the business planning process for service areas.

Monitoring & Reviewing the Effect of the Policy

Please state how you will monitor the impact and effect of this policy and where this will be reported:

The policy will be monitored on the number of adaptations delivered vs the number of referrals made to the service area. Residents will be asked to complete a short survey following the completion of any adaptations. It is intended to report to O and S on an annual basis and make any tweaks to the policy that arise post implementation.

INTERNAL ONLY

MANAGEMENT ACTION REQUIRED (to be completed by the relevant Head of Service following Management Team / Programme Board review)

- Outcome of EIA agreed/approved by Management Team / Programme Board :
Yes No
- Referred back to Assessor/Author for amendment : (date)
- Published/made publicly available on: (date)

Signed: *CEH* (Head of Service / Director) Date: 31.10.23

Date of Review²:

[To be completed by the lead officer]

² This date will be set on an annual basis as default for review unless otherwise specified by you.