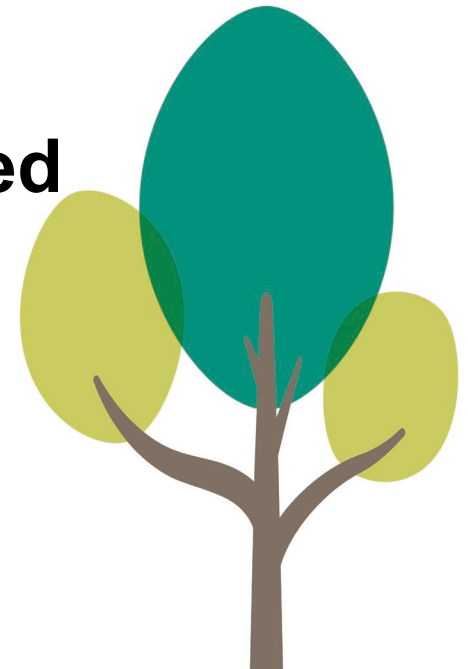


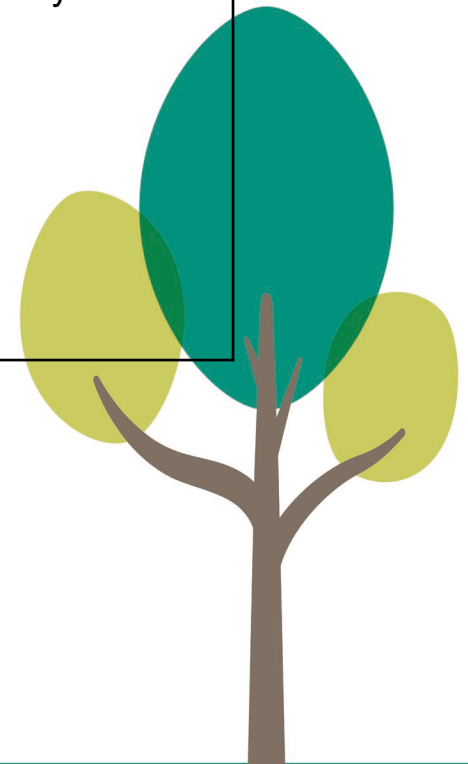
Safer and Active Communities Committee 23rd March 2023

Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2023

Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing 2023



Subject:	Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2023 Policy on Adaptations for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing 2023
Director:	Director of Housing Director Gillian Douglas
Contact Officer:	Housing Services Manager, Nigel Collumbell Nigel_collumbell@sandwell.gov.uk Business Manager – Community Partnerships, Manny Sehmbi Manny_sehmbi@sandwell.gov.uk Stuart Hall – Home Improvement Manager Stuart_hall@sandwell.gov.uk



Background:

Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2023

- The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 is legislation that allows a local housing authority to provide assistance to any person to: -
- Acquire living accommodation
- To adapt or improve living accommodation
- To repair living accommodation
- To demolish living accommodation and construct replacement living accommodation
- Assistance may be provided in any form
- Assistance may be unconditional or conditional

A local housing authority may not exercise the above powers unless they have:-

- Adopted a policy for the provision of assistance
- They have given public notice of the adoption of the policy
- A document which sets out the policy is available for inspection free of charge



Current Situation

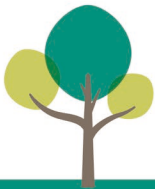
SMBC Policy for the Provision of Assistance – Approved by Council June 2012:

https://www.sandwell.gov.uk/info/200223/housing/4935/home_improvement_agency

The policy has not been updated or revised since that time.

New policy required in order to comply with new priorities, legislation and national guidance.

Separate policy for adaptations to council housing required so council tenants will no longer be required to apply for a grant.



Rationale for Policy Revisions:

To continue to provide housing support services to its most vulnerable residents, offering the most cost effective and best value solutions, targeted at those with the greatest need.

Introduce additional and amend existing grants and assistance to improve independence and wellbeing for vulnerable and disabled residents and reduce/prevent demand on health and social care services and fundamentally improve quality of life.

Introduce a more customer centred approach by offering residents more bespoke and easily accessible service irrespective of tenure

Align the policy with objectives of the Better Care Fund (BCF) to assist with the prevention of admissions to hospital and social care, support hospital discharge and reduce social care interventions

To reflect good practice as discussed within the Adult Social Care Reform White Paper 2021 and the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) delivery: Guidance for Local Authorities in England (2022)



Financial Context

Adaptations are funded through:

Disability Facilities Grant – owner occupiers, private tenants & Housing Associations

Housing Revenue Account (HRA) – Council tenants

Government allocate £4.75m to SMBC

Currently hold reserves of some £11m, due to impact of covid, however a key focus of the policy is to enable further spend with a key focus on increasing benefits to people with disabilities

HRA spend to date £4.5m

DFG spend to date £3.5m



Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy

Headline Proposals

New and improved offer for disabled residents to assist residents to live as independently as possible for as long as possible.

New forms of assistance for vulnerable homeowners living in poor or dangerous homes

A new form of assistance to tackle empty properties

Improved offer to tackle energy inefficient private sector housing and fuel poverty



key proposals		
Current Policy	Proposal	Change / Benefit
<p>Minor Adaptations up to a £1,000 provided universally to assessed residents.</p>	<p>Minor Adaptations up to £1,500 provided universally to assessed residents</p>	<p>Increase in financial threshold to allow rapid delivery of essential adaptations such as grab rails / hand rails / ramps / steps / key safes / over bath showers.</p>
<p>Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant up to £30,000 for eligible applicants – subject to a test of resources.</p>	<p>Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant up to £30,000 for eligible applicants – subject to a test of resources. The first £15,000 of any means tested contribution will be disregarded.</p>	<p>Increase the number of residents who will receive assistance with adaptations. Low cost adaptations such as stair lifts and bathroom adaptations available to all residents without a financial contribution.</p>

Current Policy	Proposal	Rationale for Change
<p>Discretionary Home Improvement Assistance Grants for adaptations over £30,000 subject to a request to the Director of Housing. 100% repayable for a 10 year period.</p>	<p>DFG Top Up Grant available to anyone who is eligible for a DFG for adaptations. Max available £60,000 plus £30,000 DFG. To be approved by operational managers not the Director -maximum to be repaid for 10 years is capped at £10,000.</p> <p>Assistance beyond £90,000 will be subject to Director approval.</p>	<p>Reduce the bureaucracy associated with higher cost adaptations. Speed up delivery of higher cost adaptations. Reduce repayment conditions burden. Increase transparency.</p> <p>Decision matrix / protocol to be developed.</p>

Current Policy	Proposal	Rationale For Change
<p>Hospital to Home Grant – In development</p>	<p>Hospital To Home Grant New grant of up to £6,000 to facilitate hospital discharge.</p> <p>No repayment conditions.</p>	<p>To adapt or alter a home to allow someone to be discharged from hospital. Equipment such as a stair lift could be installed prior to someone leaving hospital.</p>
<p>Assisted Technology Grant –In development</p>	<p>Assisted Technology</p>	<p>To be developed</p>
<p>New Homes Grant</p>	<p>Relocation Grant. £10,000 to assist owner occupiers.</p> <p>£2,000 to assist private tenants.</p> <p>Fully repayable of property sold within 10 years</p>	<p>New homes grant for clearance is obsolete. However, the council recognises the need to provide financial assistance to disabled resident who live in homes that are unadaptable. £10,000 available to cover the costs associated with buying / selling and moving. Smaller amount available for private tenants who are disabled.</p>

Current Policy	Proposal	Rationale for change
<p>Home Improvement Assistance Grant – general grant for disrepair, central heating, emergency repairs and major adaptations for Council tenants. Lifetime repayment condition apply in certain circumstances.</p>	<p>No direct replacement for this grant. Assistance for serious disrepair tackled through Hazard Removal Grant.</p> <p>Council tenants no longer required to apply for grants to fund adaptations. Adaptations will be delivered by the landlord directly.</p>	<p>Hazard Removal Grant - Increase grant value from £5,000 - £10,000 and replace lifetime repayment conditions with 3 year repayment conditions. Assistance targeted at the most vulnerable owner occupiers living in properties that pose a risk to health – Category 1 Hazards</p> <p>New policy for the Provision of Adaptations For Council Tenants to be adopted.</p>

Current Policy	Proposal	Rationale for change
<p>Sustainable Warmth Grant - In development</p>	<p>Sustainable Warmth Grant. Max £10,000 available to fund interventions to energy inefficient Householder may be eligible if all the following apply: The household’s annual income (before tax) is under £31,000. The Energy Performance Certificate (EPC) of the property is E,F or G. You own and occupy your home or rent your property from a private landlord.</p>	<p>Specific grant used to tackle the problem of cold energy inefficient homes.</p> <p>Delivery Modal and specific schemes / interventions to be developed.</p>
<p>Empty Property Loan – In development</p>	<p>Empty Property Loan</p>	<p>Loan based assistance to bring empty properties back into use. A loan will be available to pay for essential repairs to allow empty properties to be</p>

Current Situation	Proposal	Rationale for change
External Improvement Schemes	No change	Financial assistance for repairs and improvements to whole streets of houses.
Advice & Information	No change	Refresh the Information available via the website that support this policy Publication of new information leaflets and guidance documents

Appeals

The current policy has a two stage mechanism for dealing with appeals –

Stage 1 By the Director or Panel of Managers

Stage 2 By the General Purposes and Arbitration Committee

The new Policy has a single stage appeal - All appeals will be considered by the Director of Housing.

Aim – to speed up decisions regarding appeals



Policy for Disabled Tenants in Council Housing

To bring greater parity between the way housing adaptations are managed through the housing revenue account and the Disabled Facilities) regime

A focus on supporting people to consider how their housing needs can be met in the long term.

Financial assistance to support people with the costs of relocating where needed.

Support to meet older people's overall well-being including safety in the home, access to welfare benefits, social inclusion and referrals to sensory services and other healthcare services.

Ensure we maximise the impact of resources and make best use of stock.



Consultation

Engagement sessions and workshops with staff
Foundations have been engaged as a critical friend
Initial targeted consultation with voluntary sector
partners to those providing service to people with
disabilities or mobility issues

Online consultation and will also be promoted to
voluntary sector for further comment

Continued engagement with Foundations



Next Steps

Leadership Meeting 11.04.23

Cabinet – June

Adopt Policy & Implement

HIA Team – support with transition and L&D



Background Papers

The Disabled Facilities Grant: Before and After the Introduction of the Better Care Fund - Foundations, June 2016

Adult Social Care Reform White Paper December 2021 –
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper>

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) delivery: guidance for local authorities in England (2022) -
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-facilities-grant-dfg-delivery-guidance-for-local-authorities-in-england>

Housing Associations and Home Adaptations -
<https://www-foundations.uk.com/library/housing-associations-and-home-adaptations/>

