

TELFORD & WREKIN COUNCIL

CABINET - 16 JUNE 2016

HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY

REPORT OF ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: COMMERCIAL SERVICES

LEAD CABINET MEMBER – CLLR RICHARD OVERTON

PART A – SUMMARY REPORT

1 SUMMARY OF MAIN PROPOSALS

1.1 Under Part 1 of the Housing, Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, the Council has a statutory obligation to provide mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants to provide specialist adaptations to meet the care and mobility needs of people with disabilities to enable them to live independently with privacy and dignity. The current policy is from 2008 and this report proposes a new policy which sets out new assistance which enables us to reduce admissions to hospital and care and allows for faster discharge from hospital.

1.2 The care and support reforms and introduction of the Better Care Fund (BCF) in April 2015 places the Disabled Facilities Grant as a key lever in the delivery of integrated health and social care services, contributing to reducing delays in hospital discharges, hospital avoidance and putting in place support and interventions to help older adults and disabled people to remain in their homes.

1.3 In order to meet the Council’s statutory obligations in a fair and transparent manner, an updated draft Housing Assistance Policy has been developed which sets out how the Council will provide Disabled Facilities Grants and other housing assistance within the private housing sector and help meet some of the Public Health, Social Care and NHS Outcomes.

2 RECOMMENDATIONS

- **That Cabinet approve the Housing Assistance Policy**
- **That delegated authority is provided to the Housing Service Delivery Manager to carry out any minor policy amendments which do not materially affect the policy.**
- **That delegated authority is provided to the Assistant Director: Commercial Services in consultation with the Lead Cabinet Member for Housing, Leisure and Health for all other changes to the policy.**

3 SUMMARY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

COMMUNITY IMPACT	Do these proposals contribute to specific Council priorities	
	Yes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Protect and support our vulnerable children and adults • Improve the health and wellbeing of our communities and address health inequalities • Regenerate those neighbourhoods in need and work to ensure that local people have access to suitable housing.
	Will the proposals impact on specific groups of people?	
	Yes	Residents in the borough in need of adaptations to remain living independently in their own homes and helping those in hospital who require assistance or repairs carried out to their home before they can be discharged from hospital or care.

TARGET COMPLETION/ DELIVERY DATE	Scheme in place by June 2016	
FINANCIAL/ VALUE FOR MONEY IMPACT	Yes	<p>Government funding for Disabled Facilities Grants is provided through the Better Care Fund as part of the integration of health, social care and housing with an aim to improve outcomes across these sectors. It is an unringfenced grant but there is a statutory duty to provide DFG to those who qualify. Telford and Wrekin Council have been allocated £1.575million for DFG from the Better Care Fund in 2016/17 to meet this obligation. The proposals in this report will be met from this fund. The funds are part of a Section 75 Pooled budget agreement between the Local Authority and CCG and the associated governance arrangements apply.</p> <p>DR/PH/TS 17.5.2016</p>
LEGAL ISSUES	Yes	<p>The Council, in its role as a local housing authority, is under a statutory duty by virtue of the provisions of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (the Act) to provide Disabled Facilities Grants for private sector residential adaptations where the appropriate legislative conditions are met.</p> <p>Under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 (the Order) local authorities are able to provide financial assistance through the provision of discretionary grants and loan schemes to a specified class of applicants and can attach such conditions or terms that they consider appropriate in the circumstances.</p> <p>Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) now remains the only national mandatory grant, with all other types of assistance being at each Council's discretion. Although the provision of mandatory DFG's is covered by the Act and the Council must comply with the legislation, this Policy also sets out the steps that will be applied in the provision of DFG's with regards to matters not covered by the legislation and other discretionary support.</p> <p>Before the Council can provide any assistance under the Order they must adopt a policy for the provision of assistance, and give public notice of the policy. In addition, the Council must ensure that the policy is freely available to the public. Any assistance must then be provided in accordance with the policy.</p>
OTHER IMPACTS, RISKS & OPPORTUNITIES	Yes	Risks include; Increased housing issues if people cannot remain in their own home, increased pressure on care and hospital if residents can not remain or return home due to unsuitable housing.
IMPACT ON SPECIFIC WARDS	Yes	Impacts will be greatest in those wards where there are a higher number of elderly or disabled clients.

PART B – ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

4. Information

4.1. Demand

4.1.1 On average there are circ 300 adaptations carried out each year with an average cost of £7,000 an application.

4.1.2 However future demand is likely to be even higher due to an ageing population in Telford & Wrekin Council and the 2011 Census reveals that 8,660,529 older people lived in England, including 4,019,419 older people living in their own home with limited day-to-day activities owing to a longstanding health condition or disability. In 2011 the age structure of Telford & Wrekin shows an ageing population and consists of:

Age	No of people	Percentage
45 – 64	43,031	25.8%
65 – 84	21,409	12.8%
85+	2,680	1.6%

Telford and Wrekin has around twenty seven thousand two hundred people who are sixty-five years or more. This is projected to rise to over forty thousand by 2030 (see Table 1 below).

Table 1. Population aged 65 and over and the projected data to 2030 Telford and Wrekin – Total

	2014	2015	2020	2025	2030
Total Population	169,000	169,600	173,000	175,800	178,100
People aged 65-69	9,200	9,400 (2%)	9,000 (12%)	9,300 (1%)	10,900 (18%)
People aged 70-74	6,900	7,100 (3%)	8,800 (28%)	8,400 (22%)	8,700 (26%)
People aged 75-79	5,000	5,100 (2%)	6,300 (26%)	7,900 (58%)	7,600 (52%)
People aged 80-84	3,300	3,500 (6%)	4,200 (27%)	5,200 (58%)	6,600 (100%)
People aged 85-89	1,800	1,900 (6%)	2,400 (33%)	3,000 (67%)	3,800 (111%)
People aged 90 up	1,000	1,100 (10%)	1,400 (40%)	1,800 (80%)	2,500 (150%)
Total population 65 and over	27,200	28,100 (3%)	32,100 (18%)	35,600 (31%)	40,100 (47%)

Source: ONS 2012-based Sub-national population projections

- The rates of increase are greatest in those in the older cohorts, the numbers of those ninety years and over projected to rise by more than 150% by 2030 (Table 2).
- The population of those sixty five years of age and over in 2014, represents a relatively modest proportion of the population at 16.1% (Table 3) - below the level for England as a whole and for some surrounding areas. For reasons directly connected to the development of Telford, this is a relatively young population. The same effect is to be seen in those in the oldest cohorts where those eighty-five years of age and over make up less than 2% of the population.
- The rate of change to 2030 is dramatic – by this date the proportion of those sixty-five years of age and over will have increased to 22.52%, slightly exceeding the average for England. Among those eighty-five years of age and over the rate of increase means that, as a proportion of the total population those in this age group will be marginally below

the national average. Whilst bringing Telford and Wrekin in line with national averages this will represent a substantial shift for the area.

- Ageing and levels of dependency/the need for service are linked closely - this increase in the ageing of the population will have a direct impact on the need for care and support services and appropriate accommodation.

4.1.3 The vast majority of older and disabled people live in mainstream housing, with only a small percentage (c6%) living in properties that have been specially built for older or disabled people. Two thirds of people with dementia live in the community.

4.2 Current Arrangements

4.2.1 Under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, local authorities must provide mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG). The purposes for which mandatory DFG may be given are set out in section 23 (1) of the 1996 Act and fall into a number of categories, including;

- facilitating access to and from the dwelling
- facilitating access to gardens where reasonable and practicable
- facilitating access to a room used or usable as the principal family room
- facilitating access to a room used or usable for sleeping
- Facilitating access to a room in which there is a lavatory, a bath or shower and a wash basin.
- Facilitating access for the preparation of food
- Improving the heating system or providing heating system usable for the use of the disabled applicant
- Facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heating
- Facilitating access by the disabled occupant around the dwelling to enable him or her to care for a person who is normally resident and in need of such care

4.2.2 All adaptations must be “reasonable, practicable, necessary and appropriate”. All tenures can apply for a DFG but applicants must have a financial means test carried out to determine, what if any contributions the disabled person must make towards the cost of the work. Where the child is the disabled applicant, they are eligible for the grant and there is no means test. The maximum grant limit is £30,000.

4.2.3 The current mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant has not changed for many years since 2008 when the increase of grant went from £25,000 to £30,000. Over this time the financial means test has not changed but with the introduction of the Welfare Reform and Localism Act some of the benefits have changed. This means that some residents who may have been eligible previously as part of the financial means test no longer qualify. Also the cost of carrying out the adaptations have increased and with more complex adaptations required, many adaptations costs are above the £30,000 maximum grant, meaning the client would have to pay any additional costs above the grant limit which many either struggle to pay or cannot pay at all.

4.3 Proposed New Arrangements

4.3.1 The removal of the restrictive ring- fence on the funding will allow the Council to deliver a more flexible Assistance Policy. The policy will help improve delivery and reduce the bureaucracy involved in the DFG application process, helping to speed up the process and

enable local authorities to develop a simplified system which can deliver small-scale adaptations quicker and offer a service which rapidly deals with inaccessible housing or the need for a discharge of people from hospital. The policy still has the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant, however key additions proposed in the new policy are:

* Wellbeing Assistance: This will provide assistance to help with home repairs or equipment to reduce hospital or care admissions and speed up hospital discharge.

* Discretionary Disabled Facilities Top Up Grant: This will provide assistance for adaptation works that are above the maximum DFG grant level of £30,000.

* Disabled Facilities Investigation Grant: This will provide assistance prior to a full DFG to allow for investigation works to be carried out on the house to ensure the property can be adapted where necessary.

4.3.2 The provision of adaptations and equipment is a key component in enabling people with dementia to live independently for longer, and also to support carers. There are also a growing number of disabled children and younger adults whose health and lives are significantly improved through home adaptations.

4.3.3 Home adaptations contribute to meeting a range of Public Health, NHS and Social Care Outcomes. The vast majority of disabled people (all ages) live in general housing and so home adaptations play a key role in enabling safe, healthy and independent living at home. Home adaptations can reduce health and social care costs, help to reduce risk of injury, enable faster hospital discharge, delay onset of admission to residential care and reduce care costs. Studies in a range of disciplines confirm that the home environment is a quantifiable determinant of health, quality of life and well-being. This new policy will enable us to deliver some of these health, wellbeing and financial benefits by enabling quicker and more flexible home adaptations to be delivered.

4.3.4 Further details of who is eligible for the assistance is set out in the attached policy. Whilst not everyone will be financially eligible for this assistance we do already offer a service to self funders to oversee and manage adaptations. We will seek to promote this service more widely and we will explore future options to increase the take up of this service, for example a business case to look at a loan scheme for those who do not meet the financial eligibility criteria.

4.4. Funding

4.4.1 DFG funding was provided from DCLG and as a local authority we have historically topped up the grant to be able to carry out the required adaptations in the Borough. The grant from DCLG in 2014/2015 was circ £700,000.

4.4.2 From 1st April 2015 there was a significant change in the way that national government provided funding for Disabled Facilities Grant. The funding for DFGs is now allocated through the Better Care Fund. This gives an opportunity to consider how to integrate provision of help with home adaptations across housing, health and social care systems.

4.4.3 For Telford & Wrekin we have £1.5 million allocated for DFG under the Better Care Fund for 2016 - 2017. The new policy meets the objectives set out in the Better Care Plan and assistance will be provided from this funding.

5. PREVIOUS MINUTES

None

6. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Housing Assistance Policy

***Report prepared by Toni Guest (Housing Service Delivery Manager),
toni.guest@telford.gov.uk, 01952 381860***