

# Housing Assistance and Disabled Facilities Grants Policy

## 1. Introduction

- 1.1 North Yorkshire Council is committed to ensuring the housing stock across the County meets the needs of our residents. Our aim is to improve housing conditions throughout North Yorkshire and to ensure that our residents live in safe and healthy homes. We try and achieve this in a number of ways, including through partnership with property owners, landlords, letting agents and tenants, through the use of regulatory powers where needed and through the use of grant funding support.
- 1.2 The policy aims to provide equitable access to services, consistent decision making & service delivery irrespective of tenure. Aims to ensure that disabled adults, young people and children can access the help they need to promote independence and social inclusion within the home environment.
- 1.3 Adapting North Yorkshire's current housing stock is a key priority for the Housing Service. There is rising demand for accessible & adaptable homes as people live for longer and increasing numbers of children and adults live with multiple long-term health conditions or experience reductions in mobility. Most older and disabled people live and will continue to live in existing housing, rather than new build. It is, therefore, important to make the best use of existing housing stock in all tenures and types, both mainstream and specialist, and to invest in adaptations where necessary.
- 1.4 Major adaptations are funded either from the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) or Housing Revenue Account (HRA). Some Registered Providers (RPs) also contribute towards the cost of adaptation works costing more than £1,000, however most adaptations in this sector are funded from the DFG. The table below shows the current funding arrangements.

|                         | <b>Tenant of a private rented landlord</b>                           | <b>Owner-occupier</b>  | <b>Tenant of the Local Authority</b> | <b>Tenant of Housing Association/ Registered Provider</b>            |
|-------------------------|--|--|--------------------------------------|--|
| <b>Funding Source</b>   | DFG<br>Or<br>individual tenant/<br>landlord                          | DFG<br>Or<br>individual owner  | HRA                                  | DFG<br>Or<br>Landlord use of own resources                           |
| <b>Level of Funding</b> | No means test for works costing less than £7k<br>Maximum DFG of £30K | No means test for works costing less than £7k<br>Maximum DFG of £30K | 100%<br>No means test.               | No means test for works costing less than £7k<br>Maximum DFG of £30K |

1.6 The policy includes:

- **Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).** This is a mandatory grant, provided under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. It can be used to support people of all ages and tenures (adaptions to council owned housing are provided via a different funding stream) to live independently and safely in their own homes. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide DFGs to applicants who qualify.
- **Discretionary DFGs.** This includes discretionary interventions to promote independent living and wellbeing. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) and latterly the Better Care Fund enable Councils to support the wider prevention agenda of housing, social care and health authorities.
- **Minor Adaptations (typically under £1000).** These include simple solutions to assist a person to live independently with or without additional carer support. They can be installed swiftly, promote wellbeing, and reduce the risk of accidents; averting additional costs associated with hospital admissions, or residential care and support. Minor adaptations include items such as grab and stair rails, external handrails, half steps, small low-level ramps and adaptations for people who are visually impaired, hearing impaired or have a dual sensory loss.

- **Discretionary Housing Assistance Grants/loans.** These include other grants and loans to improve housing conditions. These could include grants directly awarded by the Council or other grants (such as energy efficiency grants) that we work with partner organisations to help facilitate.

1.7 The purpose of this policy is to assist officers of the Council in the interpretation and implementation of the relevant legislation; to ensure fair, equitable and consistent treatment for all disabled people who require the Council's assistance in adapting their home and to help us work with our communities to improve to improve housing conditions across North Yorkshire. Different processes may be adopted, however the outcomes for service users should be equitable.

1.8 The Policy should be read in conjunction with the following documents: -

- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (The Act).
- Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (The Order)
- Disabled facilities Grant (DFG) Delivery: Guidance for Local Authorities in England
- Housing Act 1985 (section 8)
- Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (Section 3)
- Care Act 2014
- The Housing Act 2004

## 2. Disabled Facilities Grants/Housing Revenue Account

### 2.1 Strategic Context

2.1.1 Our priority is to give more people the choice to live independently and healthily in their own homes for longer, with fewer people staying in hospital unnecessarily or moving to residential care prematurely when that is not where they want to live. Adaptations can reduce the amount of formal care and support an individual may require, as well as often making the difference between being able to continue living in their current home or not.

2.1.2 Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities have new functions. This is to make sure that people who live in their areas:

- receive services that prevent their care needs from becoming more serious, or delay the impact of their needs
- can get the information and advice they need to make good decisions about care and support
- have a range of provision of high quality, appropriate services to choose from

- 2.1.3 Housing authorities are under a statutory duty to provide Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to disabled people for a range of adaptations to their homes in accordance with the Housing Grants Construction & Regeneration Act 1996 (HGCR Act).
- 2.1.4 Government provides ring-fenced DFG funding through the Better Care Fund (BCF) in recognition of the importance of ensuring adaptations are part of an integrated approach to housing, health and social care locally. Funding must be spent in accordance with Better Care Fund plans which are agreed between local government and local health commissioners and owned by the Health and Wellbeing Board. Adaptations within North Yorkshire Housing stock are funded from rental income through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA).
- 2.1.5 The BCF is a programme spanning both the NHS and local government. It has been created to improve the lives of some of the most vulnerable people in our society, placing them at the centre of their care and support, and providing them with 'wraparound' fully integrated health and social care, resulting in an improved experience and better quality of life. The BCF is a crucial part of delivering the aims of the Care Act and prevention agenda.
- 2.1.6 The **Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO)** provides general powers for local housing authorities to provide assistance for housing renewal, including home adaptations. It provides additional flexibility in the way adaptations can be provided and therefore very much compliments our aspirations to provide flexible and integrated services to meet the needs of our communities.
- 2.1.7 By publishing a Housing Assistance Policy under the RRO, we are able to use government funding for the DFG more flexibly. This funding is primarily for the provision of home adaptations to help people to live independently, so it is important for any local Housing Assistance Policy to clearly set out what additional adaptations assistance is to be provided. However, the wide powers enable us to offer other forms assistance such as repairs, or assistance to move, if an applicant's home is unsuitable for adaptation.
- 2.1.8 The Council accepts that there may be circumstances that warrant exceptions to this Policy. The Head of Housing Renewal, Head of Homes and Places and the Assistant Director of Housing are authorised to assess individual cases and will consult and decide whether an exception can be made to this Policy.

## 2.2 Mandatory DFG/HRA Funded Adaptations

2.2.1 Mandatory DFG is the most common funding route for major adaptations to the homes of owner occupiers, private tenants and tenants of Registered Providers (RPs). NYC fund major adaptations to its housing stock from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA). The maximum grant/HRA allowance is £30,000 per scheme. The same eligibility criteria will be adopted for both DFG and HRA funded adaptations and is available for people who meet the criteria set out in s100 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 Act, eligible works include:

- Facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, from and within the dwelling (for the purpose of this grant a dwelling includes mobile homes and houseboats);
- Providing essential facilities and amenities within the dwelling; and
- Facilitating access to and from a garden by a disabled occupant or making access to a garden safe for a disabled occupant.

Further information regarding the different types of eligible grant works can be found in Appendix A.

2.2.2 All owner-occupiers and tenants, licensees or occupiers meeting the statutory criteria & financial assessment set out in the legislation are eligible for DFGs. In all instances applications must be supported by North Yorkshire Council Social Services.

2.2.3 The maximum amount of grant set out in Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 Act is £30,000. We may at our discretion award further discretionary funding where works are in excess of the maximum grant. All “top ups” will be considered by our Disabled Adaptations Advisory Group and approved by the relevant Head of Service.

2.2.4 The general principle is that equipment, minor adaptations and/or assistive technology are tried first to assess whether they will meet the resident’s needs prior to application for a DFG. This will help to manage the demands made on the DFG/HRA budget.

2.2.5 All applicants are encouraged, though this is not a mandatory requirement, to enlist the Councils services to assist them in the process of an application. This support includes assistance with applying for funding, technical advice including schedules of work and drawings, assistance with planning applications and building control, assistance with the choice of contractors and monitoring work to ensure it meets the Councils standards. A fee from the funding we receive from BCF/HRA is allocated to cover the cost of this support.

2.2.6 Applicants not wishing to use the support offered from the Council can still apply for a DFG. Under these circumstances the applicant shall be solely responsible for making the application, sourcing contractors (homeowners

and private sector tenants) and overseeing any works undertaken. Works undertaken in these circumstances must be completed to the satisfaction of the Council prior to the release of any grant funding.

- 2.2.7 We also have a range of agreed contractors to undertake adaptation works. If applicants wish to use alternative contractors, they must pay for any additional costs themselves and are solely responsible for ensuring that all works are completed to our satisfaction.

## **2.3 Assessment of need**

- 2.3.1 DFGs may only be awarded if the works proposed are deemed as being 'necessary and appropriate' to meet the needs of a disabled occupant. These assessments are generally made by Occupational Therapists (OTs) /Occupational Therapy Assistants within our social services team. For certain types of adaptations, referrals will also be accepted from OTs working within the Health Service.
- 2.3.2 Following an assessment of a disabled person, the OT, if adaptations are considered necessary, will submit a recommendation detailing the purpose for the grant in accordance with section 23(1) of the Act.
- 2.3.3 The OT assessment will normally be undertaken with reference to Occupational Therapy guidelines. Recommendations will not be considered for grant where existing adaptations or equipment are already meeting the disabled person's needs (for example the replacement of a stair lift that, although old, is currently in working order). OTs are expected to explore the use of equipment and assistive technology prior to a request for adaptations being submitted.
- 2.3.4 OT recommendations are expected to clearly specify the least expensive adaptation(s) which are appropriate to meet a disabled person's needs. Where there is more than one type of adaptation which would meet the disabled person needs, if the recommended adaptations are not the least expensive option, the OT should identify any special circumstances which have been taken into consideration.
- 2.3.5 Where an applicant wishes to self fund a more expensive adaptation this should also be detailed on the recommendation so that the Council can identify the eligible costs and ineligible costs (see Section 9. – Different scheme (offset grants)
- 2.3.6 The OT will categorise each case into 'Fast track' or 'Standard'. Standard cases will then be prioritised (see section 10).

## **2.4 Application Process**

- 2.4.1 An assessment is usually carried out in the home by an Occupational Therapist (OT), an Occupational Therapy Assistant (OTA) or Trusted Assessor (TA). The assessment will consider whether there is a need for

equipment or other requirements. In some cases, a telephone assessment may be deemed to be appropriate.

2.4.2 In order for us to consider awarding a DFG, a valid application must have been received. Generally, support through this application process is provided via one of our Council support services. An application for DFG will only be classed as complete/valid when we have received the following documentation:

- A completed application form (prescribed form).
- A minimum of two written quotations (if not using a Council framework) from different contractors or suppliers, containing the details of all relevant works.
- Details of any fees and charges (for example agent's or architect's fees).
- An assessment of need from NYC Occupational Therapy or Council approved alternative (this will help us determine if the works are necessary and appropriate).
- Relevant financial information (not applicable to Council tenants)
- A certificate of future occupation signed by the applicant, confirming that it is his/her intention to remain in the property for the next five years (prescribed form)
- Proof of ownership, for example a copy of the Land Registry entry. (not applicable to housing tenants)
- If the applicant is a tenant, consent from the landlord for the works to proceed (prescribed form).

2.4.3 Once we have received the application form and accompanying documents in the above list, we must let the applicant know in writing whether the application is approved or rejected, as soon as possible and in any case no later than six months. Once an application for a DFG is approved, we must ensure that the DFG is completed within 12 months. We aim to assess applications and make decisions well in advance of the statutory timescales and strive to achieve the timescales set out Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Delivery Guidance of Local Authorities in England.

## 2.5 Consideration

2.5.1 We determine whether works requested are "necessary and appropriate" for the disabled person, by taking into account the following:

- The recommendations of the OT or Trusted Assessor.
- Whether the adaptation has been recommended in accordance with section 23(1) of the Act. (See Appendix A)
- Whether the proposed works are the least expensive option or, if there are reasonable special circumstances to warrant a more expensive option.
- Whether alternative schemes involving mobile aids/equipment have been considered/tried and are not appropriate.

- Whether the scheme is unduly influenced by the desires/aspirations of the disabled occupant/carers rather than actual need e.g. proposals for ground floor extensions where a person could use a stair lift but is unwilling to do so or requests shower facilities because they do not wish to use appropriate bathing aids.
- Schemes that are necessary to accommodate the needs of carers may be eligible under the Act for grant assistance.
- Whether a move to a more suitable property would provide a better solution.

2.5.2 In addition as part of the consideration of an application we have a duty to determine whether the works requested are “reasonable and practicable” and will consider:

- Whether the property meets the Housing Health and Safety Rating System Standard (free from Category 1 hazards) or can be made to be hazard free at reasonable expense.
- The location of the property
- The age of the property
- Planning/building regulation constraints
- The impact of the works on the existing facilities/amenities within the dwelling
- Physical constraints due to the size or layout of the property
- Whether the dwelling is overcrowded.
- The availability of other suitable accommodation which the disabled person could occupy
- The size of the property, the number of occupants, its location and any environmental or physical constraints.

2.5.3 A Disabled Adaptations Advisory Group is established to support a consistent approach to the efficient and effective delivery of adaptations to meet the needs of disabled adults and children and their parents and/or carers across North Yorkshire. The group will aim to ensure adaptations are delivered in line with this policy and other relevant legislation. Where adaptations are expected to be complex, the case will be referred in its early stages to the group for guidance. This group will aim to ensure that the decision-making process for all complicated cases is recorded appropriately and feedback to the applicant.

2.5.4 The group will also act to suggest ways to improve the delivery of adaptations, investigating and supporting the development of best practice in the delivery of adaptations and related issues/services.

2.5.5 Where we are likely to refuse an application for a DFG, we will contact the applicant to give them the opportunity to provide additional information which may affect such a decision, prior to a formal refusal being made. Where we have option but to refuse an application for grant, we will advise the applicant of the reasons for such refusal



- 2.5.6 An applicant will have the right to a review of such a decision and if so, desires should request a review in writing to the Director within 28 days of the date of the refusal letter.
- 2.5.7 Work cannot commence before the grant is approved. Any works that start before grant is approved may not be grant aided. Where works are approved and undertaken, they must be carried out to our satisfaction. We have the overriding decision as to whether the works have been carried out to a satisfactory standard and will make direct payments to contractors, other than where a prior agreement has been made with the applicant.

## **2.6 Means testing (Owner occupiers, private and housing association tenants only)**

- 2.6.1 At our discretion, we have set a threshold where we do not mean test for DFG (see Appendix C). However, where the Council has determined that the cost of works is likely to be in excess of this threshold, we will fund this work provided that the applicant is on one of the following means tested benefits.
- Income Support
  - Income-based Employment and Support Allowance (not contribution-based ESA)
  - Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (not contribution-based JSA)
  - Guarantee Pension Credit (not Savings Pension Credit alone)
  - Housing Benefit
  - Working Tax Credit and or Child Tax Credit (provided that the annual income for the purposes of assessing entitlement to the tax credit is less than £15,050)
  - Universal Credit (this includes any Universal Credit which is being introduced as a replacement for working age benefits and tax credits).
- 2.6.2 Applicants not in receipt of one of the above benefits will need to complete a 'Test of Resources' and will be required to provide information on their financial circumstances. This information, along with any supporting evidence, is used to calculate any contribution towards the agreed scheme of works. Only the financial situation of the applicant requiring the adaptation and/or their partner will be considered for the means test. If the adaptations are in respect of a child, then no means test will be completed (that being a child under 20 and in full-time, non-advanced education or approved unwaged training).

- 2.6.3 The test will consider average weekly incomes and any savings. This amount is then set against an assessment of basic needs, subsequently considered against a range of allowances. These allowances are set by Central Government and are subject to change. If resources are less than the applicant's allowances, they will not normally need to contribute towards the cost of the adaptation. If resources are more than an applicant's allowances however, they may have to financially contribute towards the adaptation in some way but may still have some costs paid for by the Council.
- 2.6.4 Where we expect the cost of work to exceed the non means test threshold, a provisional means test may be undertaken in the early stages of the process, prior to a valid application being submitted.
- 2.6.5 The council understands that sometimes a service user may wish to have a scheme designed which goes over and above the approved eligible scheme (i.e. the scheme recommended by the adaptations surveyor and occupational therapist). This can be considered providing the OT is in agreement that the alternative solution meets the needs of the disabled person. In such circumstances grant is payable for the most costs effective option, on completion of the works and receipt of suitable invoices.
- 2.7 Prioritisation**
- 2.7.1 During periods of high demand, we reserve the right to use a points-based prioritisation system to ensure priority is given to people applying for DFGs who are in greatest need (see Appendix B). In these circumstances written advice will be provided to the disabled person and/or their carer regarding how their request for assistance with adaptations will be processed, likely timescale and the priority scheme in operation for dealing with adaptations.
- 2.7.2 If the disabled person's health deteriorates from the initial assessment there will be the opportunity for their case to be reprioritised, subject to advice and information from Health or Social Services.
- 2.7.3 Additional points will also be awarded where the OT recommendation elapses 6 months to ensure progression through the waiting list.
- 2.7.4 If an applicant is dissatisfied with the level of prioritisation they have received, they have the right of review and in the first instance we will deal with such concerns and where appropriate arrange for the enquiry to be re-assessed.
- 2.7.5 If an applicant is still dissatisfied once this re-assessment has been carried out, they may appeal to the Council against the decision made, in writing, outlining the reasons why they feel the case has been incorrectly assessed. This will be referred to the Disabled Adaptations Group for review.

## **2.8 Warranties, Payments and Land charges**

- 2.8.1 The Council will use its discretion and where funding permits, a five year warranty and servicing contract will be provided for all relevant equipment (lifts, wash dry toilets, automatic doors etc) for private tenants and owners. This may also be extended to Housing Associations tenants where their landlord will not fund an extended warranty or take on take on the responsibility for repairs, servicing and maintenance. NYC will take responsibility for the service and maintenance of adaptations in its housing stock.
- 2.8.2 We shall fund the replacement of existing adaptations where they meet the end of their lifespan. These could include the replacement of stair lifts, wet floor showers and step lifts. In order to ensure the works are necessary and appropriate, a re-assessment and recommendation from an OT will be required, along with evidence from a qualified individual (engineer/grants officer) that the adaptation is beyond reasonable repair. It is expected that most adaptations should last in excess of 5 years before they require replacement.
- 2.8.3 Grant payments will be made when the grant eligible works are satisfactorily completed and on receipt of the contractor's (or in the case of materials, supplier's) invoice. We may inspect the grant works during their progress and are able to make interim payments where appropriate.
- 2.8.4 The grant eligible works must be undertaken by the contractor(s) who provided the approved estimate(s) included in the application. Prior permission shall be obtained in writing from us by the applicant before any change in contractor takes place. The use of a different contractor to one included in the application without permission may result in cancellation of the grant and/or repayment by the relevant person.
- 2.8.5 A grant approval can be re-determined where the eligible works cannot be completed without carrying out additional unforeseen works. We must agree to the additional costs prior to this work commencing.
- 2.8.6 Where applicants are required to contribute to the grant or additional works we will collect the relevant funds in advance of the commencement of works. The funds will be held by us and paid to the contractor on satisfactory completion of the work.
- 2.8.7 In the event of a breach of any of the conditions set by the Council, repayment may be demanded from the grant recipient in a sum up to or equal to the amount of the grant paid.
- 2.8.8 The legislation allows a Local Land Charge to be placed on the owner occupier's adapted property where the DFG exceeds £5,000. The land charge will be limited to a maximum of £10,000 (statutory limit). The Charge will be incurred if the property is sold within 10 years. The grant will be registered as a Local Land Charge and will be enforced when the

applicant has disposed (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the property. At the Council's discretion this land charge will only be applied where the adaptation is deemed to have added value to the dwelling, such as the creation of an extension.

- 2.8.9 Any grant monies repaid by applicants to the Council will be paid into the DFG fund from which they originated in order that the funding can be recycled via further DFGs to other residents in need.

## 3.0 Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants

### 3.1 Background

- 3.1.1 In addition to the mandatory DFGs we also have a range of discretionary grants that are provided to improve integration between health, social care and housing services, in particular to reduce hospital admissions and allow early hospital discharges. We are able to do this under powers provided to us under the **Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO)**. These powers give us additional flexibilities in the way adaptations and DFG can be provided. Under this policy therefore we have a range of discretionary grants that both broaden the scope of works that can be included under the DFG and help us introduce flexibility into the process to enable us to speed up the way DFGs are delivered.
- 3.1.2 Discretionary grants are subject to the levels of available funding in each financial year and the Council reserves the right to defer approval, or even consideration of applications, for periods of time in order to award grants within the budgets available and prioritise mandatory provision. Given the unpredictable nature of the demand, costs, and funding it is important to note that **discretionary grants may be withdrawn by the Council at any time.**

### 3.2 Discretionary – non means tested grant

- 3.2.1 As part of the standard DFG application process a standard test of resources is undertaken to determine whether the applicant needs to make a financial contribution toward the cost of works undertaken. The Council has however agreed to use its discretion under the Regulatory Reform Order to provide a 'non-means tested' DFG where the value of proposed works is less than £7000.
- 3.2.2 It is important that the level of non means tested grant funding is not a factor in assessing the disabled occupants needs. The grant award must therefore be based on the full OT recommendation and applicants will not be able to choose elements of the recommended works.

3.2.3 Applicants can only apply for a maximum of 1 non means tested grant in any 3-year period. Should further needs be identified during this period, applicants will be means tested in accordance with section 8 of this policy.

### 3.3 Discretionary - Fast Track grant

3.3.1 Grants will be awarded where works are able to be undertaken within weeks and **limited** to works such as stair lifts, ramps and wet floor showers. These applicants will be given the highest priority and where appropriate contractors may be paid extra to deliver these grants within a short timescale.

Cases are deemed as **Critical Fast Track** where the application:

- Allows the applicant to be discharged from hospital, or;
- The applicant is at the end of their life (with a life expectancy of less than 6 months), or
- The applicant cannot access essential hospital appointments, dialysis or day care without adaptations.
- The current situation is placing the service user and their Carers at considerable risk of injury e.g. from unsafe moving or handling.

3.3.2 Cases will only be deemed as an emergency following a health or social care assessment and will be 'fast tracked' through to completion and not be subject to any prioritisation process or means test.

### 3.4 Discretionary Top-Up Grants

3.4.1 This grant is intended to assist in cases where a major adaptation has been identified as essential to meet the needs of the disabled person and once all other options such as moving home have been considered. The level of grant available is discretionary and will be agreed on a case by case basis, subject to available funds, recommendations will be made by the Disabled Adaptations Group to the Head of Service for approval. Where agreement can't be reached over a suitable scheme by the group or Head of Service, the Assistant Director from each of the relevant service areas will review the recommendation prior to the grant being approved or declined.

3.4.2 For owner occupiers, a local land charge for the full amount will be placed on the property requiring repayment upon sale, transfer, or assignment to another person.. This is in addition to any local land charge which may be placed on the property in line with the maximum mandatory grant as set out in the Housing Grants Construction & Regeneration Act 1996.

3.4.3 Where funding levels mean, it is necessary to remove or reduce the levels of discretionary top up offer, any duty of care will remain with Health and Adult Services and Childrens and Young Person's services.

### **3.5 Discretionary Re-location grants**

- 3.5.1 In some cases, moving home is more appropriate and cost effective to meet the needs of a disabled occupant, where it is not reasonable or practicable to adapt the existing home or where there is under or over occupation of the home.
- 3.5.2 A maximum of £10,000 will be considered at our discretion. The proposed property must be confirmed as suitable (requiring minimal adaptation) to meet the needs of the disabled person by Occupational Therapy Service., The grant can be used towards the expenses involved in moving home for example estate agent's fees, solicitor's fees, stamp duty, removal costs, disconnection and reconnection costs
- 3.5.3 Supporting quotes and/or invoices will be required, and the grant can only be paid once the applicant has exchanged contracts with a legally binding completion date.

### **3.6 Discretionary Repairs Grant**

- 3.6.1 The purpose of this assistance is to help owner-occupiers who have owned their properties for at least three years to fund repairs and improvements. The grant to cover Cat 1 & higher Cat 2 hazards. Types of works could include a leaking roof or an unsafe electrical installation, repairs/replacement heating systems.
- 3.6.2 Applicants must be older, disabled or deemed extremely vulnerable to apply for this support and not have the means to fund the repairs.
- 3.6.3 A grant of up to a maximum of £15,000 is available. We will place a local land charge for the full amount on the property for a period of 5 years, requiring repayment upon sale, transfer, or assignment to another person. (Applicants can only apply for a maximum of 1 grant in any 3-year period).

### **3.7 Discretionary Adaptation**

- 3.7.1 In addition to the mandatory obligations set out in Section 21 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. A grant may be made available for additional works not traditionally covered under the legislation which support the person to remain at home. This may include further support for carers, alternative forms of assistive technology, where the applicant does not meet the existing criteria for support. The grant is not intended to replace any existing provision (statutory or charitable) which is already in place
- 3.7.2 A grant of up to a maximum of £15,000 is available. We will place a local land charge for the full amount on the property for a period of 5 years, requiring repayment upon sale, transfer, or assignment to another person (equipment will be exempt from repayment conditions (Applicants can only apply for a maximum of 1 grant in any 3-year period).

### **3.8 Discretionary – support for dementia grant**

- 3.8.1 The purpose of this grant is to assist people living with dementia to make changes to their home environment which supports them to live independently for longer and with reduced risks. This may include work to provide contrasting colours to help make the home environment more supportive and easier to navigate for those with impaired memory and high levels of anxiety. The grant is not intended to replace any existing provision (statutory or charitable) which is already in place
- 3.8.2 A maximum of £2000 will be considered at our discretion (Applicants can only apply for a maximum of 1 grant in any 3 year period). This grant will not be means tested or repayable.

### **3.9 Discretionary - Safe and Secure grant**

- 3.9.1 The purpose of this grant is to assist disabled people to make changes to their home environment which supports them to live independently for longer and with reduced risks. The works may include items which are not 'fixed'. The fund could be utilised to pay for emergency heaters, deep cleans or hoarding situation, but should not be used to support debts (fuel or other debts).
- 3.9.2 A maximum of £1000 will be considered at our discretion (Applicants can only apply for a maximum of 1 grant in any 3-year period). This is not intended to replace any existing provision (statutory or charitable) such as Local Assistance Fund or any charitable funding which is already in place.

## **4.0 Minor Adaptations**

- 4.1 Minor adaptations have a value of up to £1,000. They are often simple solutions to assist a person to live independently with or without additional carer support. They can be installed swiftly, promote wellbeing, and reduce the risk of accidents; averting additional costs associated with hospital admissions, or residential care and support. Minor adaptations include items such as grab and stair rails, external handrails, half steps, hard of hearing smoke alarms, sight impaired lighting and small low-level ramps.
- 4.2 North Yorkshire Council provides minor adaptations free of charge for any person who has been assessed as needing it and for which he or she is eligible via Social Care and the Better Care Fund.

## **5.0 Other Financial Assistance - Discretionary Housing Assistance Grants/loans**

- 5.1 **Discretionary Housing Assistance Grants/loans** – A range of grants and loans may be made available at the Councils' discretion to improve the home environment. This assistance is discretionary and therefore such assistance only remains available while funds permit. Funding may be

withdrawn with immediate effect for grants/loans yet to be approved. This support may differ based on locality need. Details of current schemes will be made available on our web site.

## **5.2 Discretionary 'Cold & Mould' grant**

We will support tenants to understand how to reduce condensation in their homes, when to ventilate, how to get the best out of their heating systems and where to go for further advice and information. Due to the energy crisis, there are increased issues with damp and mould due to people not being able to afford to heat properties.

- 5.2.1 Where the cause of damp and mould is non-structural it can be too simplistic to blame residents for drying their laundry on radiators if there is no space in their home for a tumble dryer or the weather is poor, other than those residents fortunate enough to have outdoor space.
- 5.2.2 Discretionary assistance will therefore be made available to all vulnerable tenants. This will be a range of support for example the provision of hygrometers to help people see the temperature and humidity levels in their home, and to enable them to try and prevent the cold humid temperatures where mould grows. (The hygrometers are accompanied by an instruction sheet and advice on minimising condensation).
- 5.2.3 A maximum of £2000 will be considered at our discretion (Applicants can only apply for a maximum of 1 grant in any 3-year period). This is not intended to replace any statutory duty of the landlord.
- 5.2.4 Occupancy factors do not mean that the landlord has no responsibility, and landlords should recognise that some homes were not designed with modern living in mind. Landlords should take reasonable steps in partnership with residents in these circumstances including considering improving ventilation or other appropriate measures.
- 5.2.5 This support will be in addition to our statutory duties, which are included within our enforcement policy delivered by our Housing Standards Team and other offers for grants and support for landlords which are available to improve their energy efficiency, especially those with EPCs below EPC-C.

## **5.3 Energy efficiency advice and ECO schemes**

- 5.3.1 We will also direct homeowners and tenants to our energy advice services for further advice on keeping warm and reducing energy costs, along with providing support to homeowners and landlords to access to grant funding to improve heating and ventilation (including support to access collective energy switching schemes and oil buying cooperatives)
- 5.3.2 Eligible homeowners can access our Gas Safe Charity Hardship Fund, funding from Foundations Independent Living Trust (FILT) to reduce the causes of gas poisoning, fires and explosions and to identify problems where they occur by delivering practical assistance to vulnerable gas consumers in North Yorkshire.



The type of work funded with a Gas Safe grant are gas safety checks, gas servicing, gas boiler repairs or work on gas cookers, fires, pipework, or water heaters.

- 5.3.3 Current Government measures to reduce greenhouse gas emissions to net zero include the grants such as the Home Upgrade Grant, and ECO4, both of which provide grants for energy efficiency upgrades to homes. The support outlined in this Policy does not replace these national schemes but is complimentary to them and seeks to provide additional assistance to targeted individuals who would otherwise not be able to access support e.g., in cases where a financial contribution would be required. In addition to supporting the individual concerned, this also offers an opportunity to leverage in additional national funding, with the associated benefits to the local economy.

#### **5.4 Private Rented Sector Energy Efficiency Top-Up Grant**

- 5.4.1 The Private Rented Sector Tenant Support Grant is offered, subject to available funds, to landlords whose tenants are eligible for the national schemes such as Home Upgrade Grant or ECO scheme, where there is a shortfall in the national funding available to carry out energy efficiency improvements which increase the EPC Rating of the property to a minimum of EPC C. The grant is available to support access to either the national Home Upgrade Grant, or resources available through ECO4. Grants awarded will be paid directly to the national scheme administrator and not the applicant, and any further shortfall above the grant maximum will need to be met by the applicant.
- 5.4.2 The Private Rented Sector Tenant Support Grant may fund towards the shortfall for measures identified as required to bring the property up to a minimum EPC rating of C (maximum grant £5000)

Examples of eligible works (though not exhaustive)

- External / internal wall insulation
- Loft and cavity wall insulation
- Boiler upgrades

The landlord or tenant must have a live application for either the Home Upgrade Grant or current ECO scheme (or successive schemes). The landlord is responsible for ensuring that they fully comply with the requirements of the national scheme within which they are participating. The grant must be repaid if the property is sold within five years. A local land charge is secured against the property. Grants will not be approved retrospectively.

#### **5.5 Home Appreciation Loan (HAL)**

- 5.5.1 The Home Appreciation Loan (HAL) is an equity release loan to assist vulnerable homeowners in bringing their homes up to health and safety standards and decency standards or to assist with adapting the property. To qualify for assistance an applicant must normally: -

- a) Be aged 18 or over
- b) Be a homeowner and
- c) be either 60 or over, disabled, or have a child under 16 living with them or 26 weeks pregnant and be on one of the following qualifying benefit.

- For people over 60, or at least 26 weeks
- pregnant, or with children under 16: -
- and at least one of the following: -
- For anybody else
- Auto qualify - Income Support
- Auto qualify - Guaranteed Pension
- Credit
- Auto qualify - Income Based Job
- Seekers Allowance (over 60s only)
- Local Council Tax Support
- Attendance Allowance
- Auto qualify - Income Support
- Local Council Tax Support
- Housing Benefit (including disability element)
- Attendance Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance
- Working Tax Credit (if including a Disability Living Allowance
- Working Tax Credit (if including a disability element and household income is less than £15,460 per year)
- Child Tax Credit (if your household income is less than £15,460 per year)
- Industrial Injuries Disablement
- Benefit (including Constant Attendance Allowance)
- War Disability Pension (including Mobility Support) disability element and household income is less than £15,050 per year)
- Child Tax Credit (if your household income is less than £15,050 per year)
- Industrial Injuries Disablement
- Benefit (including Constant Attendance Allowance)
- War Disability Pension (including Mobility Support)

**\*And unable to access commercial loans.**

5.5.2 The HAL can only be used to cover works that have been specified and agreed on the schedule of works provided by the local authority. The types of which work which will be considered:

- To meet the health and safety and decency standards – examples are rewiring, roof repairs and window replacements.
- Energy efficiency works such as central heating boilers, replacement radiators.

- Works to meet the decency standards such as replacing the kitchen or bathroom including tiling to these rooms if required. The amount will not normally restrict for kitchen/bathroom however only reasonable costs of these items will be considered to include a reasonable quality of fixture and fittings, the local authority to determine the reasonable amount. Kitchen appliances such as cookers, washers, fridge freezers etc are not covered by the loan scheme.
- To cover the costs of any shortfall on mandatory disabled facilities grants that have been agreed by local authorities including any client's contribution which is more than £1,000.
- Any disabled adaptations that a client may have to pay for themselves.
- Consideration will also be given to homeowners that wish to use the HAL for overcrowding purposes e.g. loft conversions if it will be provide necessary space for a family.

5.5.3 There is a limit to the amount of HAL which will be considered for this purpose and it must be agreed by the Local authority and the Yorkshire equity release and loan officers. The minimum loan that will be available is £1,000 and the maximum loan is normally £30,000.

5.5.4 The loan must not normally exceed 50% of the unimproved value of the property and the total borrowing (including any outstanding mortgages or secured loan) must not exceed 70% of the unimproved value of the property.

5.5.5 Loan referral outside of these limits may be considered in exceptional circumstances There will be limited budget each year for this assistance and enquires will be dealt with in date order in a waiting list system.

5.5.6 Loans are provided by Sheffield City Council on behalf of the Council via the Homes and Loans Service. The loan will be subject to the conditions and operating practices and policies of the Homes and Loans Service.

## **6.0 Reviewing the Policy**

6.1 This policy will be reviewed in line with any significant changes in legislation, guidance, or case law. Separate to this it will be reviewed every three years.

6.2 Minor alterations to the Housing Assistance and Disabled Facilities Grant Policy can be made by the Director of Community Development in consultation with the portfolio holder.

## Appendix A

### Works Eligible for Assistance

#### 1.1 General

1.1.1 The adaptation works eligible for assistance will be those listed under section 23 (1) of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, as follows.

#### 1.2 Access to the Dwelling

1.2.1 Works eligible for assistance may include:

- i) Ramped access to main entrance door for wheelchair use; widened or shallower steps to main entrance door or a step lift;
- ii) Widened entrance door for wheelchair use;
- iii) Resurfaced or re-graded path to entrance door;
- iv) Alterations to secondary entrance door/patio window to provide access to rear garden/yard where access cannot easily be gained via the adapted main entrance and drive/side path;
- v) Structural alterations required to allow installation of stair lift, through floor lift or step lift equipment.

#### 1.3 Making the Dwelling Safe

1.3.1 Works eligible for assistance may include:

- i) Works to provide means of escape from fire (usually to flats);
- ii) Provision of guards or cladding etc; to prevent persons with behavioural problems harming themselves;
- iii) Specialised glazing or shades to windows to protect occupants with a medical condition which make them sensitive to sunlight;
- iv) Repairing defective stairs or floors etc which are hazardous

#### 1.4 Access to Principal Family Room

1.4.1 Works eligible for assistance may include:

- i) Widened doorway for wheelchair access;
- ii) Provision and installation of stair lift/through-floor lift equipment and structural alterations required to allow installation, if the principal living room is on an upper floor;
- iii) Widened doorway in entrance hall to access principal family room for wheelchair use;

#### 1.5 Access to Sleeping Room

1.5.1 Works eligible for assistance may include:

- i) Provision and installation of stair lift/through-floor lift equipment and structural alterations required to allow the installation, where access is required to a bedroom or room suitable for sleeping which is above ground floor level;
- ii) Conversion of a ground floor room into a bedroom; Widened doorway for wheelchair access to sleeping room;
- iii) Construction of bedroom extension (see notes on extensions);
- iv) Strengthened ceiling and/or preparation works for ceiling track hoist

## **1.6 Access to WC**

1.6.1 Works eligible for assistance may include:

- i) Provision of a WC where one does not exist.
- ii) Provision and installation of stair lift/through-floor lift equipment and structural alterations required to allow the installation, where access is required to a WC above ground floor level;
- iii) Strengthened ceiling and/or preparation works for ceiling track hoist, where hoist is to be provided by North Yorkshire County Council Adult & Community Services
- iv) Repositioning WC to facilitate access by wheelchair user;
- v) Raised/lowered WC pan;
- vi) Provision of grab rails;
- vii) Provision of ground floor WC where upper floor cannot be accessed;
- viii) Widened doorway for wheelchair access;
- ix) Extension for a WC (see notes on extensions).

## **1.7 Access to Bathing Facilities**

1.7.1 Works which may be eligible for assistance include:

- i) Provision and installation of stair lift/through-floor lift equipment and structural alterations required to allow the installation, where access is required to an existing bathroom above ground floor level;
- ii) Provision of bath or shower for the first time;
- iii) Provision of shower (thermostatically controlled) over a bath, including necessary curtain, tiles and grab rail;
- iv) Replacement of bath with shower facility;
- v) Replacement of shower with a bath;
- vi) Provision of bath and shower where there are 2 or more disabled occupants with differing needs;
- vii) Provision of bathroom extension (see notes on extensions);
- viii) Relocation of bath/shower to facilitate use by wheelchair user;
- ix) Strengthened ceiling and/or preparation works for ceiling track hoist, where hoist is to be provided by North Yorkshire County Council Adult & Community Services;
- x) Widened doorway for wheelchair access;
- xi) Provision of fixed seat/grab rails;
- xii) Non-slip/sloping floor to create shower facility.

## **1.8 Access to Wash Basin**

1.8.1 A wash-hand basin will normally be provided in the same room as the WC. Works to provide access may include:

- i) Relocation of wash-hand basin to facilitate use by wheelchair user;
- ii) Replacement of wash-hand basin with more suitable type e.g. replace vanity unit with wall fixed wash-hand basin;
- iii) Replacement of taps with lever taps in association with above.

## **1.9 Access to Kitchen Facilities**

1.9.1 The extent of adaptation work in a kitchen should be related to the extent of cooking and food preparation normally undertaken by the disabled person.

1.9.2 Works which may be eligible for assistance include:

- i) Rearrangement of kitchen fittings/appliances to facilitate their use;
- ii) Enlargement of the kitchen if it is too small to allow its safe use by wheelchair user;
- iii) Adapted work-top/storage unit for wheelchair user;
- iv) Adapted doorway for wheelchair user;
- v) Widened doorway for wheelchair user

## **1.10 Access to Power, Light and Heat**

1.10.1 Works which may be eligible for assistance include:

- i) Relocating power points to make them accessible;
- ii) Adaptation of heating/lighting controls to make them accessible;
- iii) Replacement of solid fuel fire with other heating appliance in living/sleeping rooms normally used by a disabled occupant;
- iv) Improvement of inadequate heating in living/sleeping rooms normally used by disabled occupant;
- v) Provision of central heating.

## **1.11 Access to Permit Care of Other Persons**

1.11.1 Where the disabled occupant cares for other persons e.g. spouse, young children or elderly relatives who are normally resident in the dwelling, works may be provided to other rooms in the dwelling to allow the disabled person access to care for those persons, including:

- i) Provision and installation of stair lift/through-floor lift equipment and structural alterations required to allow the installation, where the disabled person lives on the ground floor but needs access to bedrooms;
- ii) Widened doorways to bedrooms of those being cared for by disabled, wheelchair user;

## 1.12 Access to the Garden/Outside space

- 1.12.1 In deciding the extent of providing access to the gardens and/or outside space within the curtilage of the dwelling, the following will be taken into account.
- i) Grant assistance will not be given where there is already access to the garden but grant assistance may be given to improve an existing access to make it safe for the disabled occupant to use. It does not include extending an existing access e.g. creating a side access so a person can also go around the side of a house.
  - ii) Generally, the most modest solution for providing access to both the house and the garden will be considered and this can mean that one access may be sufficient to access both the house and the garden.
  - iii) Where homes have communal gardens, e.g., blocks of flats served by a single access, grants will not normally be provided for an individual access to the garden unless it can be demonstrated that because of the disabled persons condition the travel distance to the garden would be excessive and unreasonable.

## Appendix B

### Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants Priority Pointing System

|             |  |
|-------------|--|
| TOTAL SCORE |  |
|-------------|--|

|                            |
|----------------------------|
| NAME OF DISABLED OCCUPANT: |
|----------------------------|

|                      |
|----------------------|
| ADDRESS OF PROPERTY: |
|----------------------|

|  | Points  | Points awarded                  |
|--|---|---------------------------------|
| <b>Fast track request</b><br>The Occupational Therapist has flagged the case as extremely urgent due to health and safety issues or life threatening illness (to be applied in exceptional circumstances). | Fast track requests are outside pointing scheme | N/A - allocate case immediately |
| <b>1.0 Time waiting for adaptation</b>   |   |                                 |
| DATE PASSED TO OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY  |   |                                 |
| OT recommendations made in last 6 months   | 0   |                                 |
| Months over 6 months<br>For every month elapsed over 6 months since recommendations.   | 2   |                                 |
| <b>2.0 Reason for recommending adaptation</b><br>(Score as many as apply)  |   |                                 |
| To facilitate access into/out of the property  | 10  |                                 |
| To facilitate access to the toilet.  | 20  |                                 |
| To facilitate the use of the kitchen/enable food preparation.  | 7   |                                 |



|  |     |  |
|--|-----|--|
| To facilitate getting up and down steps and stairs.  | 10  |  |
| To facilitate the use or access to bathing/showering.  | 10  |  |
| To facilitate access to a room used or usable as the principal family room   | 5   |  |
| To facilitate access to or the provision of a room used or usable for sleeping   | 5   |  |
| To improve or provide a heating system   | 10  |  |
| Other (specify and score 1 – 20) Give reasons:<br>e.g. To facilitate access to garden, ergonomics within the dwelling. Works to make the dwelling safe for disabled person score maximum |     |  |
| <b>3.0 Adaptations</b>   |     |  |
| Existing adaptations exist, which partially meet needs or would do so in the short term.   | -10 |  |
| <b>4.0 Disabled Occupant's Mobility</b><br>(Note: only apply <b>one</b> score.)  |     |  |
| Room bound or house bound without proposed adaptation.   | 30  |  |
| Total wheelchair user.   | 15  |  |
| Mainly wheelchair user but can stand for short periods.  | 10  |  |
| Ambulant indoors but needs wheelchair outdoors.  | 8   |  |
| Ambulant but uses frame/sticks or support system.  | 6   |  |
| Ambulant but unsteady or blind/deaf.   | 4   |  |

| <b>5.0 Safety factors<br/>(Disabled Occupant)</b>                          |           |  |
|--|-----------|--|
| Single parent with disabled child.   | <b>10</b> |  |
| Lives alone.   | <b>15</b> |  |
| Has carer who is not managing  | <b>20</b> |  |
| Disabled parent with able bodied child aged under 16.                      | <b>5</b>  |  |
| Lives with/well supported by family/others or has occupying related carer. | <b>5</b>  |  |
| <b>6.0 Child or Young Person's application</b>                             |           |  |
| As defined in the DFG Regulations  | <b>10</b> |  |

|       |  |
|-------|--|
| DATE: |  |
|-------|--|

|          |  |
|----------|--|
| OFFICER: |  |
|----------|--|

|           |
|-----------|
| COMMENTS: |
|           |

| Assistance   | Funding Max          | Financial Eligibility | Objective   | Available to:   |                 |                |
|--|----------------------|-----------------------|---|-----------------|-----------------|----------------|
|  |                      |                       |   | Council Tenants | Owner Occupiers | Other Renters* |
| <b>Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)</b>                 | <b>Up to £30,000</b> | Means Tested          | To assist disabled people to remain living independently in their own homes   | ✓               | ✓               | ✓              |
| <b>Discretionary Non-means tested adaptation grant</b> | <b>£,7000</b>        | Non-Means Tested      | To assist disabled people to remain living independently in their own homes by providing simple low-cost adaptations                                      |                 | ✓               | ✓              |
| <b>Discretionary Fast Track Adaptations grant</b>      | <b>£30,000</b>       | Non-Means Tested      | To assist disabled people to have emergency adaptations in their own homes.   |                 | ✓               | ✓              |
| <b>Discretionary 'Top up' grant</b>                    | <b>N/A</b>           | Means Tested          | To assist disabled people to remain living independently in their own homes by providing additional funding in excess of the grant maximum                |                 | ✓               | ✓              |
| <b>Discretionary Re-location grants</b>                | <b>£10,000</b>       | Non-Means Tested      | To assist disabled people with moving home is more appropriate and cost effective or where it is not reasonable or practicable to adapt the existing home |                 | ✓               | ✓              |
| <b>Discretionary Repairs Grant</b>                     | <b>£15,000</b>       | Non-Means Tested      | To help older, disabled or extremely vulnerable owner-occupiers who have owned their properties for at least three years to fund repairs and improvements |                 | ✓               |                |
| <b>Discretionary Adaptation</b>                        | <b>£15,000</b>       | Non-Means Tested      | To cover adaptations/works not traditionally covered under the legislation which support the person to remain at home                                     |                 | ✓               | ✓              |

|   |                |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|----------------|---|---|---|---|---|
| <b>Discretionary – support for dementia grant</b>           | <b>£2,000</b>  | Non-Means Tested  | To assist people living with dementia to make changes to their home environment which supports them to live independently for longer and with reduced risks               |   | ✓ | ✓ |
| <b>Discretionary - Safe and Secure grant</b>                | <b>£1,000</b>  | Non-Means Tested  | To assist disabled people to make changes to their home environment which supports them to live independently for longer and with reduced risks                           |   | ✓ | ✓ |
| <b>Minor Adaptations</b>                                    | <b>£1,000</b>  | Non-Means Tested  | To provide simple solutions to assist a person to live independently with or without additional carer support.  | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| <b>Discretionary ‘Cold &amp; Mould’ grant</b>               | <b>£2000</b>   | Non-Means Tested  | To support tenants with repair responsibilities to carry out measures relating to damp and mould and improve heating and thermal efficiency.                              |   | ✓ | ✓ |
| <b>Gas Safe Charity Hardship Fund</b>                       | <b>£500</b>    | Non-Means Tested  | To reduce the causes of gas poisoning, fires and explosions and to identify problems where they occur by delivering practical assistance.                                 |   | ✓ |   |
| <b>Private Rented Sector Energy Efficiency Top Up grant</b> | <b>£5000</b>   | Must be eligible and awarded in line with government schemes such as HUG/ECO                                      | Grant may fund towards the shortfall for measures identified as required to bring the property up to a minimum EPC rating of C  |   |   | ✓ |
| <b>Home Appreciation Loan</b>                               | <b>£30,000</b> | A Low-Income Household. Unable to access other forms of financial assistance or borrow from a high street lender. | To offer financial assistance to vulnerable home in bringing their homes up to health and safety standards and decency standards or to assist with adapting the property. |   | ✓ |   |

\* The provision will not replace the duties of the landlord