

## **Home Adaptations and Assistance Policy**

### **(Previously Housing Renewal Policy)**

#### **Briefing Paper**

#### **Legislative Background**

- The Regulatory Reform Order (Housing Assistance) 2002 repealed much of the previous legislation governing provision of housing renewal grants to homeowners and replaced it with a wide ranging power to local authorities to provide assistance for “the purpose of improving living conditions within their area”.
- From that point there was a legislative requirement for the Council to publish a Housing Renewal Policy – and Herefordshire had such a policy since 2003.
- On 16<sup>th</sup> January 2015 the government removed the requirement to publish a Housing Renewal Policy following changes to the policy including changes around funding repairs – ie there was no longer any grant aided assistance towards repair of properties in relation to Decent Homes.
- However there is still a requirement under the RRO that “a local housing authority may not exercise the power conferred by article 3 in any case unless: (a) they have adopted a policy for the provision of assistance under that article” (etc)
- Duty to provide Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants remains within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 ( as amended)
- Policy now updated and renamed “Home Adaptations and Assistance Policy”.

#### **Changes made to previous policy: “Housing Renewal Policy – October to March 2016”, and “draft Home Adaptations & Assistance Policy 2016-2019”**

The main changes and additions to the previous policy are detailed as below.

#### **Introduction**

- The name of the Policy was changed from Housing Renewal Strategy to Home Adaptations & Assistance Policy to reflect the changes in Legislation.
- Updated overview of legislation and guidance provided

#### **National and Local Policy**

- Links to national and local policies & guidance have been updated

### **Types of Assistance**

- Additional types of assistance added: Discretionary DFG, Discretionary Fast-track Adaptations Scheme, Discretionary Assistance, Relocation Grant, Technology Enabled Care Services

### **Disabled Facilities Grants**

- Points of clarification added with regard to who can assess for a DFG and the Council's statutory obligations as Housing Authority
- Point of clarification added with regards to reason for not means testing registered provider tenants. This has been the case since 2009-2010.

### **Professional and Technical Advice**

- Information added about the Housing Health and Safety Rating System
- Information added to clarify when charitable funding may be pursued

### **Emergency Repayable Grant**

- Increased from £10k to £15k within 10 year period to reflect both the increasing costs within the building trade for materials and labour, and reflecting the extent of works required to remedy some of the Category 1 hazards now being identified.

### **Discretionary DFG**

- This option was previously in the Housing Renewal Policy but removed in the 2011-2012 policy due to budget restrictions. The Discretionary DFG allows the option of top ups where the DFG mandatory limit has been reached. If no other funding routes are identified the unmet needs would fall to the Welfare Authority under the Care Act 2014. This gives a clear and means tested route to resolve these issues and support continued living in the community. It takes the form of a repayable loan by adding a charge to the property.
- The amount of Discretionary DFG has been increased from £5,000 to £15,000 due to evidence of increased building costs.
- As there is now no means test for Children's DFGS the addition of a means test for the parents has been included here to ensure that this support is focussed appropriately to low income families.

### **Discretionary Fasttrack Adaptations Scheme**

- The existing Discretionary Fast Track Stairlift Scheme has been widened to also allow consideration of fast-track metal portable ramping systems, Ceiling Track Hoists and specialist WCs in the event of client needing adaptations for urgent hospital discharge, urgent risks to carers, reductions to costs of social care packages, or clients having severely limited prognosis. The cost effectiveness of this scheme will be evaluated during the policy period. There will be no means test applied to these pieces of equipment used under this scheme.

#### **Discretionary Assistance**

- As described to assist with one off circumstances which lie outside of other forms of assistance which are hindering the completion of an adaptation scheme or required in addition to other forms of assistance to help meet wider family or carer needs.

#### **Relocation Grant**

- Was available in 2006-2009 policy but removed in 2011 policy. Previous experience is that this grant is not often used but does offer an option in a few circumstances where there is a need to move. This is in line with Regulatory Reform Order flexibilities to support people identify more suitable housing options.

#### **Minor Adaptations and Handyperson's Assistance**

- Clarification of the different minor adaptations services added to identify those that fall within Care Act duties and that which falls under the RRO flexibilities.
- Clarification of target timescales for completion of works.

#### **Technology Enabled Care Services**

- Now included as part of the RRO flexibilities. Allows development of the telecare and technology enabled care services as an integral part of the provision for improving people's living conditions in tandem with our other Home Improvement Agency options for support & services.