

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

meeting date: 26 OCTOBER 2023
title: MINOR AMENDMENTS TO THE DFG POLICY
submitted by: DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING
principal author: RACHAEL STOTT, HOUSING STRATEGY OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To seek Committee approval for amendments to the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Policy and to undertake a 6 week consultation the proposed changes.
- 1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities
 - Community Objectives – To meet housing needs of all sections of the community.
 - Corporate Priorities – To match the supply of homes to identified needs.
 - Other Considerations – none

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The DFG policy for Ribble Valley can be amended to reflect the needs of the borough. Whilst Officers have been administering grants two minor amendments have been identified which would ensure the policy is clear to all applicants who require grant assistance.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 The proposed amendments to the policy are highlighted in yellow within the attached DFG Policy (Appendix 1) and are as follows:
 - 3.1.1 Include the exception policy as to when repayment of the grant is required. The detail of exception policy was not previously attached.
 - 3.1.2 In the case of DFG top – up grants that the grant will be registered as a charge on the property. This was identified during a recent audit assessment and requested that this was made clear to applicants of the grant.
- 3.2 The proposed policy will be made available on the RVBC website for consultation for 6 weeks.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications,
 - Resources – All DFG's are funded through the Better Care Fund.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – DFG policy needs to stipulate the exception policy and be clear on when grants will be registered.

- Political – None.
- Reputation – Essential the policy is clear for applicants.
- Equality & Diversity – None.

4 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

- 4.1 Approve the proposed amendments highlighted within the attached DFG Policy
- 4.2 Approve a 6-week consultation on the proposed changes
- 4.3 In the event of no negative consultation feedback following the 6 week consultation period delegate approval of the amended policy to Director of Economic Development and Planning.

RACHAEL STOTT
HOUSING STRATEGY OFFICER

NICOLA HOPKINS
DIRECTOR OF ECONOMIC
DEVELOPMENT AND PLANNING

BACKGROUND PAPERS

(If any)

For further information please ask for Rachael Stott, extension 3235



Ribble Valley
Borough Council

www.ribblevalley.gov.uk

**PROPOSED DISCRETIONARY
DISABLED FACILITIES
GRANT POLICY**

Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

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

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Reviewed August 2023

1.Introduction

Housing is a key determinant of health and poor housing is directly linked to poor health. This disabled facilities grant policy details the financial assistance that the Council aims to provide to support improvements to enable disabled occupants to remain in their own home through the use of the Better Care Fund allocation.

The Council is required to adopt a Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant Policy which sets out how it intends to use its discretion to develop schemes having regard to the needs of the Borough, the availability of funding, and the Council's priorities.

This Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant Policy forms part of the Council's over-arching Housing Strategy. This policy was first adopted January 2018 and has proved to be successful in supporting the householder to maintain independent living.

2.Aims and Priorities

Improving the housing conditions across the Borough will support improvements in health and well-being as well as having a positive impact on the quality of local neighbourhoods, particularly for those residents who are vulnerable and cannot access their homes and gardens due to their disability.

This policy sets out in greater detail our offer to disabled occupants and their families. It also details to local Councillors, local residents and our stakeholders how we will work to maintain and improve the provision of adapted property across the borough.

Appendix 1 details the assistance schemes that the Council intends to offer during the life of this policy and sets out specific eligibility criteria relating to each scheme.

The health and well-being of disabled and vulnerable residents is often compromised due to their homes not meeting their specific needs, and this can impact on their ability to live with dignity within their homes.

3.Disabled Facilities Grants

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

The eligibility requirements, scope of works, and the general requirements governing mandatory DFGs are prescribed and the Council is unable to deviate from these requirements.

The Council is required to administer Disabled Facilities Grants to all eligible applicants irrespective of their tenure, and the Council aims to work collaboratively with housing associations to fund aids and adaptations within social housing wherever possible to ensure everyone has the same opportunity to have their home adapted.

In some cases the use of Disabled Facilities Grants is able to assist with reducing the length of stay in hospital and facilitating a quick return to home. This also reduces the demand for residential care placements.

4.Discretionary Top-up Grant

The Council have agreed to use discretionary powers to provide in eligible cases a top-up award in addition to the £30,000 mandatory grant. In more complex cases the work required often goes over the mandatory grant award maximum. This top-up of a maximum of £25,000

will assist to provide all the required work identified by the Occupational Therapist (OT). In addition to this, the 10% administration fee will also be eligible for the discretionary grant. The additional £25,000 can only be accessed where the full £30,000 of mandatory grant has been utilised. The discretionary element will be registered as a land charge if the works include alterations to the property on owner occupied properties and, in the event the property is sold within a 10 year period, the Council require repayment. * Please see exception policy. In exceptional circumstances where more than one DFG is approved, more than £25,000 may be registered.

The availability of the top-up grant is at the discretion of the Council and subject to availability of funding.

5. Ribble Valley Adaptation Grant

For some households the means testing requirement makes them not eligible for assistance. This often means the works are not carried out or don't fully meet the person needs. The Ribble Valley adaptation allows a grant to provide the associated works to address the needs of the applicant as recommended by the Occupational Therapist up to a maximum of £10,000. Where the RVA is providing the calculated contribution the applicant will still be eligible for further items to be provided as a DFG.

The availability of the Ribble Valley Adaptation Grant is at the discretion of the Council and is subject to the availability of funding.

6. Home Safety and Energy Efficiency

For all OT referrals received a standard home energy efficiency and home safety assessment is available to the grant applicants and this will be carried out by the Home Improvement Agency (or other suitable agency).

Where simple energy efficiency measures are identified, such as boiler repairs, boiler servicing, insulation measures, a grant for upto £2,000 can be applied for.

Where simple home safety measures are identified which reduce the risk of falls or accidents in the home, such as removal of tripping hazards, smoke detectors, carbon monoxide monitors, then a grant for upto £2,000 can be applied for.

This is not means tested and only available to households assessed as requiring adaptations to the home.

7. Dementia Grants

Small grants to fund home modifications that would allow someone with a diagnosis of a neurological disorder to remain living safely in their home. These could include Smart Home Kits such as a smart thermostat to control heating and hot water, video doorbell, smart switches, smart lightbulbs and an Alexa or Google Home for voice or other assistive technology grants. The dementia grant is a maximum of £2,000 and is a non means tested award available on request with supporting evidence from a medical practitioner (e.g. GP, consultant, OT). A home assessment will be carried out by the Home Improvement Agency (or other suitable agency) to assess the needs of the household.

8. Review of the Policy

The ability to provide Discretionary Top up, Ribble Valley Adaptation grants, Home Safety or Dementia Grants will be reviewed quarterly regarding financial capacity to award the discretionary element. Mandatory grants will take priority.

The provision of all grants mandatory and discretionary will be reported to each Health and Housing Committee.

The policy will be reviewed annually by the Health and Housing Committee.

*** Exception Policy**

The Council may demand repayment by the recipient of the grant if –

- a) the recipient disposes (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the premises in respect of which the grant was given within 10 years of the certified date; and
- b) the local housing authority, having considered -
 - i. the extent to which the recipient of the grant would suffer financial hardship if required to repay all of the grant;
 - ii. whether the disposal of the premises is to enable the recipient of the grant to take up employment or to change the location of his employment;
 - iii. whether the disposal is made for reasons connected with the physical or mental health or well being of the recipient of the grant or of a disabled occupant of the premises.; and
 - iv. whether the disposal is made to enable the recipient of the grant to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or infirm and in need of care, which the recipient of the grant is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the recipient of the grant is in need by reason of disability or infirmity is satisfied that it is reasonable in all circumstances to require the repayment.
 - v. The land charge is removed on death of the applicant or the person who would derive benefit from the adaptation.

Priority 1 – Assist disabled and vulnerable residents to remain in their homes through the provision of aids and adaptations

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
<p>Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant</p>	<p><u>Maximum assistance per application:</u></p> <p>Statutory maximum: £30,000 from Better Care Fund allocation</p>	<p><u>Assistance to:</u></p> <p>Meet the Council’s statutory obligation to assist disabled residents to live independently in their homes</p>	<p><u>Aids and adaptations to:</u></p> <p>a) be recommended by an Occupational Therapist;</p> <p>b) meet the regulations governing eligibility for works, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ adaptations to aid access into and around the property; 	<p><u>Applications considered from:</u></p> <p>a) disabled home owners;</p> <p>b) disabled tenants (both in the private and social housing sectors);</p> <p>c) disabled persons living at home with their family, and;</p>	<p><u>Applications to include:</u></p> <p>a) completed application form, and;</p> <p>b) two estimates for the works in the required format</p> <p><u>Applications subject to:</u></p> <p>a) means test through standard test of</p>

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ works to ensure the safety of the applicant; ▪ provision of suitable bathroom or sleeping facilities, heating, and access to lighting and power; ▪ provision of suitable kitchen facilities or adaptation of existing kitchen, and; 	<p>d) parents or guardians of a disabled child;</p>	<p>resources, except where;</p> <p>b) the grant is approved in respect of a disabled child under the age of 19</p> <p><u>Works to be:</u></p> <p>a) completed within 12 months of grant approval;</p>

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ works to enable a disabled resident to care for dependent residents. 		<p>b) completed to the satisfaction of the Council</p> <p>c) 10% admin is charged for the technical support and administration of the grant.</p> <p><u>Grants in excess of £10,000</u></p> <p><u>to be:</u></p> <p>a) registered as a local land charge against the property if the works include alterations to the property on owner</p>

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
					<p>occupied properties (ie, not equipment)</p> <p>b) 10% admin fee is charged .</p> <p>c) a maximum of £10,000 be repaid if the property is sold, transferred, or assigned within 10 years.</p>
Ribble Valley Adaptation Grant	Maximum individual grant	As per Mandatory DFG towards the one item	Ribble Valley Adaptation Grant to address the needs of the applicant; <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • provision of stair lift • conversion bathroom to 	As per mandatory DFG	All scheme conditions are the same as Mandatory DFG above except:

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
	£10,000 + admin fee To be funded from Better Care Fund		wet room <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ceiling track hoist • wash only bidet • provision of ramps, half steps and galvanised rails • access inside or outside the property • Any other adaptation as recommended by the OT 	Only 1 Ribble Valley adaptation grant within a 5 year period	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • no means test

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
Disabled Facilities Discretionary Top up Grant	<u>Maximum assistance per application:</u> £25,000 from Better Care Fund allocation + admin fee	<u>Assistance to:</u> a) provide top-up funding to meet the reasonable cost of aids and adaptations to assist the applicant to live independently in their home, where a Disabled Facilities Grant is approved at the statutory maximum and the eligible expense less contribution also exceeds the statutory maximum (currently £30,000).	<u>Aids and adaptations to be:</u> (As set out above for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants)	<u>Applications considered from:</u> a) applicants for a Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant, where the eligible costs of the work exceed the mandatory grant	<u>Applications to include:</u> a) No separate application - assistance linked to Mandatory DFG application <u>Applications subject to:</u> a) means test through standard test of resources, except where

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
					<p>b) the grant is approved in respect of a disabled child under the age of 19</p> <p><u>Works to be:</u></p> <p>a) completed within 12 months of application approval</p> <p>b) completed to the satisfaction of the Council</p> <p><u>All the discretionary top up grant amount to be:</u></p>

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
					<p>a) registered as a local land charge against the property if the works include alterations to the property on owner occupied properties (ie, not equipment)</p> <p>b) 10% admin fee is charged.</p> <p>c) the full grant to be repaid if the property is sold, transferred, or assigned within 10</p>

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
					years. See exception policy.
Home Safety and Energy Efficiency Grant	Max assistance per application	Assistance to ensure the property is free from hazards and any energy efficiency measures or hard to	Aids available ; Boiler servicing Boiler replacement Insulation	Applications eligible from; All households where adaptations are recommended by OT	Owner occupiers for energy efficiency grants only. 10% admin fee is charged.

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
	£4k non means tested	heat properties are improved.			
Neurological Disorder Assistance Scheme	£2k max Smart technology or any aids required to assist remaining in the home. As identified	To ensure all households have the adaptations required to enable them to remain at home if possible.	Smart technology Colour coded doors / walls As identified in the home assessment.	All households with a local connection living in their own home with a neurological diagnosis from a medical practioner.	10% admin fee is charged.

Scheme	Assistance Available	Purpose	Scope of Assistance	Eligibility	Scheme Conditions
	through an assessment.				

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