

Bromsgrove District Council
HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY
2026

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 requires all councils to adopt and publish a policy outlining how they intend to exercise powers set out within the legislation, to include use of government funding received through the Better Care Fund, to meet both national aims, outcome measures, metrics and local needs in addition to locally funded forms of assistance.

The policy is designed to contribute towards the council's strategic aims and objectives by assisting with:

- a) The improvement of housing quality in all tenures
- b) Enabling people to stay in their home as they get older and provide disabled persons with maximum manoeuvrability around their homes
- c) Improving energy efficiency and eliminating fuel poverty
- d) Improvement of social care, health and social wellbeing

2. OUR POLICY AIMS

The key aims are to address the issue of vulnerable persons or persons on low incomes who either cannot afford to maintain their properties in good repair or who cannot fund essential adaptations required in order that they might fully utilise their home, benefit from safe and decent housing and retain their independence. This will include;

- Increasing the number of people who are able to remain at home and prevent inappropriate admission to hospital, residential and care homes
- Preventing delayed release from hospital or other types of care
- Reducing the number of persons and particularly vulnerable persons living in homes that have category 1 and serious category 2 hazards (as set out within the Housing Act 2004)
- Improving the health of customers by reducing the number of households in fuel poverty
- Assisting people to move at an earlier stage to avoid unnecessary Disabled Facilities Grant spend and care/support costs.

The council will consider in all cases a person's ability to repay or contribute towards the assistance given whether under a mandatory requirement or as a criteria set within any discretionary form of assistance (unless stated in the policy). The council's Home Adaptations Service or its appointed agent will provide in writing the conditions and any obligations to which any form of assistance provided is subject.

The council or its appointed agent will consider all applications for assistance on their merits however all cases will be assessed against the following criteria;

- All available options, including but not restricted to financial, have been fully explored
- Assistance through other means is not reasonably available or practicable
- The proposal fits the strategic aims of the council and/or national aims and metrics of the Better Care Fund Plan
- The proposal is economically viable considering the council resources available

The council will seek best value for the funding available whilst ensuring needs identified are met. Discretionary funding will normally involve a repayable local land charge for the cost of works. Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants will involve a local land charge where applicable under the legal framework. The council will ring fence recycled money from local land charges, where grants are repayable, to provide funding for future discretionary grants and support through the housing assistance policy applicable at that time. There is discretion to allow for non-repayment where appropriate.

The Armed Forces Covenant is a promise by the nation that those who serve or who have served in the armed forces, and their families, are treated fairly. The council works actively with the local representatives of organisations such as Royal British Legion (RBL) and the Soldiers', Sailors' & Airmen's Families Association (SSAFA) to ensure wider support is available to any cases where active or ex-service persons are identified. This includes acceptance of direct applications from these organisations and referrals to support from them or other agencies where identified as applicable. The council will include in any grant provision covering the costs of any relevant assessments or support work by RBL or SSAFA to enable the grant to proceed. Those with a service history may have received a financial award in association with their service, discharge or ongoing benefits in relation to that service. These amounts will not be considered in any means test undertaken to determine whether a contribution is required towards any grant in this policy.

The council will review this policy on a regular basis to reflect evidence concerning the conditions of housing within the area and respond to changing policies at a national or local level or to reflect evidence concerning the conditions of housing within the area.

3. SUMMARY OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE

Financial Assistance schemes are discretionary, except Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant, and are subject to the council having sufficient resources.

The Policy grants discretion to extend or amend eligibility criteria, conditions, level of grant or assistance and scope of works where the situation is exceptional and, in the opinion of the relevant Head of Service that assistance would help the council meet its strategic housing objectives and/or Better Care Fund metrics.

3.1 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants:

These are mandatory grants to support the provision of adaptations to promote independent living within the home, subject to the provisions of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

3.2 Discretionary Disabilities Assistance:

The following are discretionary forms of assistance enabled through the central government Better Care Fund allocation, subject to the primary requirements of Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant being firstly met:

- **Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant Top Up** - To enable top-up funding to a Disabled Facilities Grant scheme that exceeds the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant maximum where the additional costing is considered justifiable.
- **Dementia Dwellings Grant** - To assist persons with dementia with specialised living aids to enable independent and safe living.
- **Hospital Discharge: Disabled Facilities Grant** – For fast-tracked means tested works to the home to enable earlier discharge from hospital or place of temporary care where problems in the home are identified as a possible reason for delayed discharge. These DFGs will be prioritised to enable earlier discharge from hospital.
- **Home move grant : Disabled Facilities Grant** - to enable people to move to more suitable accommodation where this is considered more appropriate and/or cost effective than adaptations to their existing home.

3.3 Discretionary Assistance:

- **Home Repair Assistance:** To ensure that persons on low income can undertake essential repairs or improvements to their home.

4.1 HOW TO APPLY AND MAKING A FORMAL APPLICATION FOR A MANDATORY OR DISCRETIONARY DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT (for information on how to apply for the other discretionary assistance please see section 5) for information regarding direct Council Application see 4.2

All applications must be on a form provided by the council or its appointed agent and must include the following documentation:-

- (i) Particulars of the work to be carried out including, where appropriate, plans, specifications, schedule of work and specialist reports. This should include the complete scheme in cases where the whole scheme exceeds that which is eligible for Assistance.
- (ii) Details of any professional fees or charges relating to the work and for which assistance is being sought.

- (iii) Proof of ownership of all land and buildings pertaining to the application from a solicitor or mortgagee, or copies of the title deeds/land certificate, or a copy of the tenancy agreement or licence to occupy in the case of a tenanted property.
- (iv) Proof of occupation and/or tenancy where applicable.
- (v) Proof of a qualifying pass-porting benefit is being claimed.
- (vi) Where no pass-porting benefit is received, full financial documentation including but not limited to income received, benefits received, savings, pensions and where applicable rental income from tenants and boarders.
- (vii) Where applicable, permission of co-owners and landlords
- (viii) A VAT exemption form where the applicant or relevant person is registered disabled or capable of being registered.
- (ix) A signed conditions form accepting the obligation to repay the assistance in the event of any breach of the relevant conditions concerning future occupation, letting or ownership.
- (x) If required, permission under any statute including but not limited to, planning permission, Building Regulation approval, Party Wall Act, etc.

Applications relating to the disabled will require an assessment report from the Occupational Therapy Service or Trusted Assessor.

An application will only be considered complete or valid when the council or appointed agent has all the information necessary to make a decision on the application.

Where an applicant uses the appointed agent to undertake the application and that agent is permitted to charge a fee, this will be included in the eligible costs.

The council may at its discretion choose to waive certain application requirements where considered appropriate to do so in the interests of the policy aims.

Once approval has been given the applicant has 12 months from the date of the approval in which to complete the works, unless otherwise stated.

4.2 Direct Application

Applicants are not obliged to use the services of the council's appointed agent. However, where the application is being coordinated through the council's appointed agent and there is a procurement framework approved by the council, then this will be used.

For a direct application to the council the applicant will need to provide quotes in line with the council's financial framework.

The council does not provide assistance to the applicant in the manner as its appointed agent would provide where the applicant chooses not to utilise the appointed agent and to submit an application directly to the council. The direct applicant will not be assisted in any way by the Council to make their application, there are no payments of grant funding upfront, the applicant has to manage the project, no

payment will be made until all works are completed. The decision to approve these applications may take up to 6 months.

5. DETAILS OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

5.1 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)

These grants are mandatory under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and are subject to a statutory test of resources (means test) required to establish whether the applicant is financially able to contribute towards the costs of the eligible scheme.

Disabled Facilities Grants are awarded to enable applicants to have access to and around their homes, or to use essential facilities within the home to enable them to live safely and independently. Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants can only be given for the purposes set out in the Act. Detailed guidance on what the council deems to be eligible works or not are set out in a separate document that is available to applicants or others upon request. This is maintained across the county as a common approach wherever possible.

Ongoing maintenance and repair of adaptations and equipment, whether provided under a grant previously or not, is the responsibility of the applicant or landlord as relevant.

Whilst it is recognised that a Disabled Facilities Grant is a mandatory grant, a move to a more suitable property may meet the needs of the applicant in a more appropriate way. This could include moving to a more suitable and/or adapted accommodation that may be available to the applicant.

The maximum amount of Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant is currently £30,000 set by statute. Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant for costs above the mandatory amount will not be made available except upon the agreement of the council, in accordance with this policy under the Discretionary top up for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant, and where justified to be the most satisfactory course of action in the circumstances or to have arisen through reasonable and unforeseeable additional works or costs.

The council/appointed agent will endeavour but cannot guarantee to determine complete applications and provide the relevant adaptations work within recognised national guidance timescales. In any event the council will determine a complete and valid direct application at the earliest opportunity within the statutory timescale of 6 months.

Eligible Applicants

- Any applicant registered or capable of being registered under the Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970 and requires adaptations to be provided.

- Any disabled person, as described by Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, s.100. Applicants can be property owners or tenants
- Landlords can make an application on behalf of their tenant.

Qualifying Criteria

- A referral from the Community Occupational Therapist (COT) via Social Services or a Trusted Assessor confirming that the works are 'necessary and appropriate' is required. This referral will recommend works.
- Entitlement to a Disabled Facilities Grant is mandatory but before approval the council has to be satisfied that the relevant works are both necessary and appropriate for the disabled person, and additionally that it is 'reasonable and practicable' to carry out the works.
- A permanent and legal residence, or long-term in the case of fostering, including dwellings, mobile homes, caravans and houseboats.
- Second or holiday homes will not be considered for assistance.

Conditions

- Works must qualify as described in s23 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended).
- Works must be recommended by a Community Occupational Therapist or Trusted Assessor and be necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled applicant.
- The works must be reasonable and practicable to carry out having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling or building.
- Applicant will be subject to a financial assessment of resources except where:
 -
 - i) the applicant (relevant person(s)) is in receipt of one or more of the following means tested benefits; Housing Benefit, Income Support, Guaranteed Pension Credit, Income-based Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Income-based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Working/Child Tax Credit where income is less than set threshold, Universal Credit
 - ii) The application is in respect of a disabled child.
- Proof of title is required
- Landlord consent to the works is required where applicable.
- Conditions relating to the recovery of equipment in specified circumstances are applied.

- The council will use its powers to place a local land charge against the property and recover the amount, in line with current legislation and regulations. At time of adoption of this policy, this is where the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant exceeds £5000. The charge may be up to a maximum of £10,000 and repayment of the sum on charge is required where the adapted property is sold, transferred or otherwise disposed of within a 10 year period from completion of the work. Conditions for any land charge and repayment will be informed to any applicant or their representative.
- At the time of adoption of this policy, In the case of a Disabled Facilities Grant where a 10 year conditional repayment obligation exists and the recipient intends to dispose of the property by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise within the 10 year period, the charge must be repaid, unless the council, having considered:
 - i) the extent to which the recipient of the assistance would suffer financial hardship were he/she to be required to repay all or some of the grant or charge;
 - ii) whether the disposal of the property is to enable the recipient to take up employment, or to change the location of his/her employment;
 - iii) whether the disposal is made for reasons connected with the physical or mental health or well-being of the recipient of the assistance or of the disabled occupant of the property; and
 - iv) whether the disposal is made to enable the recipient of the assistance to live with, or near, any person who is disabled and in need of care, which the recipient of the assistance is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the recipient of the assistance is in need of by reason of disability, is satisfied that it is reasonable in the circumstances to waive or reduce the repayable sum. This will be updated in line with any legislative/regulatory changes and informed to the applicant or their representative as part of the application process.

Maximum Assistance

- £ 30,000

5.2 DISCRETIONARY ASSISTANCE

5.2.1 Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant (Top Up)

Where DFG works requested are in excess of the mandatory limit (currently £30,000) or considered to be unreasonable given the age, construction and/or condition of the property, alternatives to discretionary DFG funding including the following will normally be considered first;

- a) Referral to Social Services and other relevant organisations (including charities) for their consideration of providing additional resources

- b) Alternative schemes of work.
- c) Advising the applicant to move to alternative accommodation, with funding for adaptations to the new accommodation available if required.

Subject to availability of funding the council may consider Discretionary Top Up for Disabled Facilities Grant. Where Discretionary Top Up for Disabled Facilities Grant is considered appropriate the discretionary assistance will not normally exceed £30,000. The cost of works funded above the mandatory grant limit will be registered as a Local Land Charge and repayable to the Council in full on the sale transfer or disposal of the property for owner-occupied properties. For rented properties there will be a condition that the landlord agrees to let the property to persons requiring the adaptation for their lifetime unless breach of tenancy contract occurs that results in re-possession or the disabled tenant moves to meet changed needs.

If the cost of works exceeds both the mandatory disabled facilities grant and discretionary top up grant amounts the applicant must be able demonstrate that they can fund the remaining balance before grant approval. Should the applicant not be able to demonstrate availability of additional funds this grant will be unable to proceed.

Discretionary top up grants are subject to available budget in year

Maximum Assistance

£30,000 (once only)

5.2.2 Dementia Dwelling Grant

Subject to availability of funding the council may consider providing non means-tested assistance to provide aids and adaptations in the home

Assistance to support people living with dementia to remain safe and independent within their home. The assistance is intended to provide aids, adaptations and environmental adjustments that support individuals to better navigate and use their home, reduce risks and promote independence and well being. Examples of support may include, but are not limited to night lighting, touch lamps, dementia-friendly clocks, improved lighting controls and other assistive products.

Eligible Applicants

Individuals with a diagnosis of dementia.

- A referral from the Early Intervention Dementia Team Service (EDTS) or other relevant referring agent.
- The grant offer will be a combination of standard and bespoke products based around an assessment of individual need. Assessments will adopt a person-centred approach recognising that dementia affects individuals differently.

Qualifying Criteria

- Dementia diagnosis or living with a recognised memory loss affecting day-to-day independence.
- Aid the person to remain in the home independently for a longer period.

Conditions

The proposed assistance will support the individual to maintain independence, safety and wellbeing within the home.

- Works or equipment must directly relate to the needs arising from the individual's dementia.
- Assistance will only be provided where it supports the individual to remain safely and independently in their home.
- Only one application will normally be approved within a two-year period, up to a maximum of £750.
- Exceptions may be approved at the discretion of the relevant Head of Service where justified.
- Works must be completed within 12 months of approval.

Maximum Assistance

£750

5.2.3 Hospital Discharge – Disabled Facilities Grant

Subject to availability of funding this assistance is intended to aid timely discharge from hospital or temporary place of care and help avoid re-admission.

This assistance forms part of the Disabled Facilities Grant and will be prioritised. Where a request to facilitate discharge from hospital is received the council or its appointed agent will endeavour to fast track that application and delivery of required eligible works as soon as is practical to achieve.

This grant is subject to the same means-testing and other requirements for a mandatory DFG.

5.2.4 Home Move Grant Assistance- Disabled Facilities Grant

The aim of providing this discretionary financial assistance is to enable people to move to more suitable accommodation where this is considered more appropriate and/or cost effective than providing adaptations to their existing home. A Disabled Facilities Grant must be used to adapt the property they are moving to up to the total amount they would be entitled to including the £3k for tenants and /£8k for owner occupiers.

Eligible Applicants

- Any disabled person, as described by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, s100.

- Applicants can be property owners or tenants.

Qualifying Criteria

- A permanent and legal residence
- Eligible costs - legal and ancillary fees, estate agent fees, removal costs, carpet and curtains

Conditions

- This grant can only be used alongside adaptations at the new property, and the amount awarded will count toward the maximum mandatory DFG allowance.
- The assistance will only be approved on a strict case by case basis
- Applicants must be moving from a property which is their main residence to another property which will become their main residence and both properties must be within the Council's area.
- Assistance will not be given towards the purchase price of a property.
- Grants cannot be awarded retrospectively. If the move is aborted costs will not be paid.
- All applicants will be required to complete the move within 12 months from the date of approval of their application.

Maximum Assistance

- £3,000 for tenant transfers, £8,000 for move into an owner-occupied property.

5.2.5 Home Repair Assistance

This discretionary assistance, available subject to budget availability of the council, is intended to ensure persons on low income can undertake essential repairs or improvements to their home. It is available to homeowners and tenants with a repairing responsibility that do not have sufficient financial resources to maintain their homes in a safe, health enabling condition free of serious defects or hazards. The assistance is repayable on sale, transfer or disposal of the property and does not accrue interest charges.

Eligible Applicants

- Owner occupiers or private tenants with a repairing responsibility, having savings of less than £16,000 and in receipt of one or more of the following means-tested benefits:- Income Support, Guaranteed Pension Credit, Income-based Employment Support Allowance (ESA), Income-based Job Seekers Allowance (JSA), Working Tax Credit, Universal Credit, Housing/Council Tax Support (not including single person or disabled person discount), or
- Where the household income is less than £31k, or

- Assessment of income and expenditure shows they would not reasonably be expected to repay a loan for the works needed within a 2 year period. Assessment by council or it's agent.

Qualifying Criteria

- The property is the applicant's permanent and legal residence.
- The property needs essential repairs as determined by the Housing Act 2004 to address Category 1 or significant Category 2 hazards as determined under the Housing Health & Safety Rating System, in order to make the property safe, warm, weatherproof and healthy for the occupants
- No assistance will be granted in respect of properties built or converted less than 10 years prior to the application date.

Conditions

- Only one application for assistance will be considered up to a maximum of £20,000 within any 3 year period. Where exceptional circumstances exist this condition may be relaxed at the discretion of the relevant Head of Service.
- Assistance is repayable in full to the council on sale, transfer or other disposal of the property. A Local Land Charge will be placed on the property for this purpose.
- The applicant must have lived at the property for a minimum of 12 months immediately prior to the application date as his/her sole permanent residence.
- The approved works must be completed within 12 months of the date of approval.
- The scope of work should aim to tackle all the identified category 1 or significant category 2 hazards unless there are reasonable grounds to limit the works.
- Where the works are in respect of common parts or group repair assistance will only be considered to a reasonable sum or proportion of costs reflecting the applicant's liability.

Maximum Assistance

- £20,000 (within 3 year period)

6. GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Any person who makes an application for Assistance must;

- (i) Be over 18 years of age at the date of the application
- (ii) Live in the dwelling as his/her only main residence and

- (iii) Have an owners interest in the dwelling (other than by virtue of being a Registered Social Landlord under Part 1 of the Housing Act 1996 or being eligible for such registration) or be a tenant or licensee of the dwelling, alone or jointly with others but not being a member of the landlords family, with a tenancy or licence permitting occupation of the dwelling for a minimum period of 12 months after approval of the Assistance, and
- (iv) Have the power or duty to carry out the works and where appropriate have the owner's consent in writing to carrying out the works, and
- (v) Satisfy such test(s) of resources as the council, or statute, may from time to time have in place
- (vi) Not be ineligible, by virtue of the Housing Grants, construction and Regeneration Act 1996, regulations made under the Act or any other enactment
- (vii) Homeowners have the primary responsibility for ensuring their homes are properly maintained and in the first instance should pursue private finance. We may assist eligible, vulnerable homeowners to make sure they have the opportunity for achieving the correct property standards.

Where an owner occupier has given a signed undertaking to occupy a property as his/her principle residence after completion of the assisted works for a period of time, and if they cease to do so during that time, they will repay on demand to the council the total amount of Assistance paid out.

Where a landlord (or owner) has given a signed undertaking that the property will be available for letting for a period specified after completion of the assisted works, and if the landlord ceases to make the relevant property available for letting during the specified period then the landlord will repay on demand to the council the total amount of Assistance paid out.

Where the council has the right to demand repayment but extenuating circumstances exist, the council may determine to waive the right to repayment or to demand a sum less than the full amount of Assistance paid out.

7. SUPERVISION OF WORKS

In the absence of any agent agreement with the council or its appointed agent, the responsibility for supervision of the works rests with the applicant or with any suitably qualified and indemnified building professional or agent acting on the applicant's behalf and not with the council.

All work must be undertaken;

- a) In accordance with manufacturers recommendations and best practice.
- b) In accordance with and to the satisfaction of the council.
- c) In accordance with building, planning and installation regulations where applicable and Health and Safety regulations.

Payment of grant/assistance will be made, in whole or by part payments, on receipt of contractors invoice following satisfactory completion of the eligible work as determined by the council's Officer or its appointed agent.

8. PAYMENT OF ASSISTANCE

The Assistance will only be paid if;

- (i) The assisted works are completed within 12 months from the date of the approval unless the delay was caused by the council or its appointed agent.
- (ii) The assisted works are carried out in accordance with the specifications set out in the formal approval or as varied with the prior agreement of the council or its appointed agent.
- (iii) The assisted works are carried out to the satisfaction of the council or its appointed agent and the applicant.
- (iv) The council or its appointed agent are provided with an invoice, demand or receipt for payment in an acceptable format.

Invoices must be addressed to the applicant c/o the council or its appointed agent and must contain sufficient detail for the council to identify in full, the works carried out, the price charges and any variations previously agreed with the council or its appointed agent, and must not be provided by the applicant or a member of his/her family.

The payment of the Assistance to the contractor may be made via the applicant, or, where requested within the original application, paid directly to the contractor engaged by the applicant.

The Assistance may be paid in one lump-sum on satisfactory completion of the works or by staged payments as the work proceeds. Stage payments (Interim payments) will only be made where the council or its appointed agent, is satisfied that the value of work completed exceeds the value claimed. A maximum of three stage payments and final payment will be considered.

The council or its appointed agent will not enter into any form of contract with a builder or contractor, and, in the absence of any agent agreement with the applicant, it is a matter for the applicant to agree any contract with the builder or contractor. Whilst the council's Standing Orders on procurement do not directly apply as no contract exists with the council, the principles of the Standing Orders will be referred to for determining the administration of procedures regarding the obtaining of quotes, etc.

The provision of assistance other than Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants is subject to the availability of funding. All applications will be considered based on the identified needs and circumstances of the applicant or household.

Assistance may be offered in a variety of forms including, but not restricted to, financial assistance, advice, provision of materials, carrying out of works, and loans. Advice offered may include Housing Options advice to ensure the most appropriate option for the applicant or household is considered and may include advice on housing rights, benefits entitlement, repairs or improvements, energy efficiency, re-housing or signposting to other agencies or services.

The council may enter into partnership or contractual arrangements with other organisations or agencies in order to deliver assistance in an effective and timely manner, such as a Home Improvement Agency or Energy Advice Service. The Home Improvement Agency is engaged to provide support to applicants throughout the process of seeking assistance and this may include identification of options, specifications, documentation, engagement of contractors, works supervision and monitoring through to completion.

Where assistance is provided the eligible costs will include necessary associated costs such as Building and Planning Fees, Architect and other professional fees and Home Improvement Agency/Energy Advice Service fees.

The provision of mandatory grants and discretionary financial assistance will be subject to internal and external auditing to ensure adequate procedures are in place and followed and that there is appropriate use of public funds.

9. WHERE ASSISTANCE WILL BE RESTRICTED

The following will not be eligible for assistance:

1. Where ownership of the property is disputed.
2. Where the owner(s) has a statutory duty to carry out the necessary works and it is reasonable in the circumstances for them to do so.
3. The Council will not consider an application for assistance in respect of premises built or converted less than 10 years prior to the date of the application, except where the application is for a Disabled Facilities Grant.
4. No assistance will be given in respect of properties owned by Statutory Authorities or trusts. This includes properties owned by Registered Social Landlord, NHS Trusts and Police Authorities, except in the case of a Disabled Facilities Grant (Mandatory or Discretionary), Dementia Dwellings Grant,
5. Where the residence is not regarded as permanent.
6. No assistance will normally be given for work started before formal approval of an application, except that:
 - (i) The council may in exceptional circumstances exempt an application from this condition for example where a defect may present a serious risk to health and safety.
 - (ii) The council may, with consent of the applicant, treat the application as varied so exclude any works that have been started before approval.
7. Grant assistance will not normally be provided for works covered by insurance. Where, before a grant for assistance is approved it is found that an applicant

can make an insurance claim, the insurance company will be requested to confirm in writing the level of their liability, if any. The level of assistance will be reduced by an amount equivalent to the insurance company's liability. Where assistance is approved, a condition will be imposed requiring the applicant to pursue any relevant claim against an insurance company or third party for;

- a) Claims for personal injuries where the works are required under a Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant.
 - b) Claims on the applicant's property insurance or on a third party where the application is in respect of works for which financial assistance has been given and to repay the financial assistance provided out of the proceeds of such a claim.
8. The council will assess whether the scope of the works are reasonable and eligible, in particular having regard to the age, condition and structural layout of the property.
 9. The council will determine whether prices provided by contractors meet value for money. In determining this, the Officer will give consideration to similar jobs priced within the last year. The Officer may liaise with the relevant body or contractor to check the specification and any estimates, as part of the procurement procedure.
 10. In the event that the Officer believes the price for contracts are too high and identifies an appropriate price for this work (which is lower) they will advise the client that the total eligible assistance will be the lower amount. The client is under no obligation to use the lower priced contractor but must be aware the council will only make a grant or assistance payment up to the value of the lower price.
 11. In the case of an application for Disabled Facilities Grant where the client chooses to pursue a different scheme of work's or an enhanced scheme of works over and above the standard specification the client will be advised the Council will only provide assistance to the value of the scheme of works the Officer has determined would otherwise satisfy the basic primary requirement(s) identified by the report of the Occupational Therapy Service, subject to the Officer being satisfied the clients preferred scheme will also satisfy the primary requirements.
 12. The council may refuse any application for assistance lacking the required information or documentation.
 13. Where the client deviates from the scheme of work(s) submitted and subsequently approved by the council without prior consultation with, or agreement of, the Officer the council may rescind the approval or refuse to make any further payment of assistance. The council may also seek to recover any interim assistance payments previously made against the approved scheme.
 14. If the applicant is an owner of the dwelling in respect of which Assistance has been approved and ceases to be the owner before the works are completed the applicant must repay to the council on demand the total amount of Assistance that has been paid.

15. Where a grant condition imposes a liability to repay the Assistance, or a part thereof, the condition will be registered by the council as a Local Land Charge.
16. Where Assistance has been approved the works must be completed within 12 months of the approval date, except where an extension of time, not exceeding 6 months has been agreed by the council. Where no extension is agreed the council may rescind the approval or refuse to make any further payment of assistance. The council may also seek to recover any interim assistance payments previously made against the approved scheme.
17. In the case of common parts of a dwelling the council will only consider assistance for the reasonable sum or proportion of the applicant's liability. The applicant must prove a repairing liability for the common parts.
18. The council may, where financial or operational demands dictate, defer payment of a Disabled Facilities Grant for a period not exceeding 12 months. Any deferment will be detailed in the approval notice.
19. The provision of Assistance is allowed for caravans and houseboats used as a main residence, subject to meeting other eligibility requirements. Holiday residencies, caravans on holiday sites or sites with restricted occupancy, second homes (as defined by council Revenues criteria), properties without a certificate of lawful residential occupation and sheds, outbuildings or appurtenances will not qualify for Assistance.
20. The council recognises that this policy cannot cover every likely situation and there may be persons who genuinely are in need of some form of urgent support that are precluded from accessing Assistance due to a specific aspect. In these situations the council may consider offering assistance in exceptional circumstances, in particular where support would help the council meet its strategic objectives, as determined by the relevant officer.

10. SECURITY AND REPAYMENT OF ASSISTANCE

Where a grant condition imposes a liability to repay the Assistance, or a part thereof, the condition will be registered by the council as a Local Land Charge.

Any grant approval document will set out what amount of money will be placed as a local land charge for the applicant to confirm their acceptance. If significant separate works are identified, a review and revised approval will be issued for the applicant to agree to.

The council will recover grant/assistance monies in full if the relevant conditions of the assistance are not met. Where not already a requirement of the specific terms of the assistance granted, a local/legal land charge may be entered against the property for the purpose of debt recovery.

If an application is approved but it subsequently appears to the council that the applicant (or one of two or more joint applicants) was not, at the time the application was approved, entitled to receive the assistance approved, then no payment, or further payments, of assistance will be made and the council may seek to recover

immediately any payments made together with interest accruing from the date of payment.

The council may, at its discretion determine to require repayment of a lesser sum than the full amount of Assistance.

Any repayment of grant or land charge associated with a grant of financial assistance under this policy will be recycled to provide financial assistance under the terms of this or successor policies.

11. DEATH OF THE APPLICANT

If the applicant should die before the Assistance is approved, the application will be treated as withdrawn.

If the applicant should die after approval of the Assistance or whilst the approved works are in progress, the council may, at its discretion agree to completion or making good of the works and pay the Assistance in full, or an appropriate proportion of the approved sum relative to the works completed.

Where an applicant receiving Disabled Facilities Grant assistance dies following completion of the works but prior to the expiry of the ten year local land charge the council will seek repayment of the sum on charge from the applicant's estate if a disposal by sale, transfer or other change in ownership or tenure takes place.

12. ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS

The council or its appointed agent reserves the right to impose additional conditions when making a grant/assistance approval. These may include but are not restricted to:

- (i) A contribution to the cost of the assisted works by the applicant.
- (ii) The right to nominate tenants to housing accommodation available for rent.
- (iii) Housing accommodation being maintained in repair after completion of the assisted works.
- (iv) The right of the council or its appointed agent to recover specialised equipment when no longer needed.

13. DECISIONS, NOTIFICATIONS AND REDETERMINATIONS

The council or its appointed Agent will notify the applicant in writing when their application has been approved or refused. The decision will be notified as soon as reasonably practical and, in any event, no later than six months after receipt of a full and valid application.

If the application is approved, the notification will specify the eligible works, the value of the assistance and the builder/contractor who will execute the works. In the case of a Disabled Facilities Grant the council may, where financial or operational demands

dictate, defer payment of the assistance for a period not exceeding 12 months. Any deferment will be detailed within the grant approval notice.

The council or its Agent will maintain a document that sets out in details what works are considered eligible or not for a DFG by the council. This document will be made available to any applicant or other person upon request. The council will work with other Worcestershire authorities to ensure as far as possible consistency on eligible works.

For complex cases such as extension and cases likely to be above the mandatory DFG threshold of £30k, the council's agent will arrange a meeting with the Council and relevant professionals to inform the council to determine the most appropriate course of action to meet the discretionary DFG criteria. If the application for Assistance is refused, the council or its Appointed Agent will give the reasons for the refusal and confirm the procedure for appealing the decision.

Where Assistance has been approved and the council or following consultation with its appointed Agent are satisfied that through circumstances beyond the control of the applicant which could not have reasonably been foreseen, the cost of the assisted works has either increased or decreased, the council may, at their discretion re-determine the assistance given and notify the applicant accordingly by issue of a re-approval notice.

Works requested beyond the scope of the mandatory DFG or agreed schedule may be undertaken directly with the contractor at the applicant's own expense. Any such works will not be assisted by the council or its agent.

14. REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S DECISION

Any person having made a valid application for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant or Discretionary Assistance may request a review of the decision not to consider or to refuse an application.

A request for review of must be submitted to the council/or appointed agent (where delegated decision) with 21 days of the date of the decision letter. The request must be in writing. A review of the decision will be undertaken by the council's relevant Head of Service and the decision will be notified to the applicant in writing. If the person remains dissatisfied with the review decision they have the right to approach the Local Government Ombudsman.

Any departure from Policy will only be considered where the applicant can demonstrate both wholly exceptional circumstances to justify such a departure but also that the applicant does not have the means by which they could reasonably be expected to otherwise fund and undertake the work.

Complaints about service delivery rather than Policy must be made in writing to the council appointed Agent who will investigate the complaint in accordance with their Complaints Procedure which is available on request.

15. ADDITIONAL CAPITAL FUNDING SCHEMES

Capital funds for housing assistance may be used for projects which meet the strategic housing objectives. These may include but are not limited to:

- Energy efficiency measures
- Assistance to landlords
- Empty properties
- New build adaptations

To be undertaken by agreement of the relevant Head of Service with the relevant member/portfolio holder. Details can be obtained from the Private Sector Housing Team upon request.

16. Governance, Delivery and Monitoring

16.1 Service Delivery

Bromsgrove District Council delivers its Disabled Facilities Grant and discretionary housing assistance functions through the Worcestershire Home Adaptations Service (WHAS), hosted by Wyre Forest District Council under a formal Collaboration Agreement. WHAS provides the operational administration and delivery of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants, discretionary assistance and associated home adaptation services on behalf of the participating authorities.

16.2 Council Responsibilities

Whilst operational delivery is undertaken by the shared Home Adaptations Service, Bromsgrove District Council remains responsible for: -

- adopting and reviewing this Housing Assistance Policy;
- setting local discretionary assistance;
- approving funding and budgets;
- ensuring compliance with statutory duties and financial governance; and
- exercising any functions reserved under each Council's Constitution and Scheme of Delegation.

16.3 Decision Making

Grant applications will be determined in accordance with:

- the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996;
- the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002;
- this Housing Assistance Policy; and
- the Councils' Schemes of Delegation.

Applications outside delegated authority or involving exceptional circumstances may be referred to the appropriate senior officer. Decisions shall be made under the Council's Scheme of Delegation and in accordance with this Policy. Applications outside delegated authority or involving exceptional circumstances may be referred to the appropriate senior officer or committee, as applicable.

16.4 Monitoring and Policy Compliance

The shared Home Adaptations Service will monitor delivery of this Policy through regular management oversight, performance reporting and quality assurance.

Performance monitoring will include, where appropriate:

- grant approvals and expenditure;
- delivery timescales;
- budget monitoring;
- customer satisfaction;
- compliance with statutory and policy requirements;
- quality assurance and case audits;
- complaints and lessons learned; and
- performance against agreed service indicators.

Performance and compliance will be monitored through the governance arrangements established under the Collaboration Agreement and reported to the appropriate governance bodies. Where monitoring identifies non-compliance or opportunities for improvement, appropriate corrective action will be implemented and monitored.

16.5 Review

This Policy will be reviewed periodically to reflect changes in legislation, Government guidance, available funding, operational requirements and learning arising from performance monitoring or audit. Minor administrative or operational amendments that do not alter the intent of this Policy may be approved under delegated authority where permitted by the Council's Constitution. The Council reserves the right to review individual decisions and undertake periodic audits of grant applications to ensure consistency, transparency and compliance with this Policy.

Version Control

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