

**Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting**

Cabinet – 18 December 2023

**Report Title**

Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy

**Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?**

Yes

**Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report**

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**Ward(s) Affected**

Borough-Wide

**Report Summary**

The current Aids and Adaptations Policy was adopted in April 2015. On 10 July 2023, Cabinet agreed to review the policy and to put in place some temporary delegations to facilitate continued delivery of the aids and adaptations service.

The review has now concluded, and this report recommends the adoption of a new Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy (Appendix 1) including a new set of financial delegations. The proposed Policy sets out how the Council intends to exercise its powers under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 by consolidating the traditional assistance for aids and adaptations with a range of new discretionary grants.

**Recommendations**

That Cabinet:

1. Approve the adoption of the new Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy (Appendix 1) and note the new scheme of delegation for authorising grants.
2. Approve the proposed increase in Disabled Facilities Grant fees from 10% to 15% in order to pay for additional administrative and technical services costs associated with the new Policy and note that the Council is permitted to include

necessary and reasonable fees associated with Disabled Facilities Grant applications within the overall cost of the eligible works.

3. Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Adult Care Housing and Public Health who can subdelegate to the Assistant Director of Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing to prioritise or withdraw discretionary assistance in accordance with the Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy and in line with the available budget.
4. Delegate authority to the Strategic Director of Adult Care Housing and Public Health to make minor amendments to the Policy when the need is identified.

### **List of Appendices Included**

- Appendix 1 Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy 2024
- Appendix 2 CYPs - Pathways to Care Policy Updated 2021
- Appendix 3 Equality Impact Assessment - Part A and Part B
- Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment

### **Background Papers**

#### **Cabinet Report Aids and Adaptations Policy – 10<sup>th</sup> July 2023**

<https://moderngov.rotherham.gov.uk/mgConvert2PDF.aspx?ID=141808>

**Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) delivery: guidance for local authorities in England** - <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-facilities-grant-dfg-delivery-guidance-for-local-authorities-in-england>

#### **Council Approval Required**

No

#### **Exempt from the Press and Public**

No

## **Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy 2024****Error! Reference source not found.**

### **1. Background**

- 1.1 In July 2023, Cabinet agreed that the Council's Aids and Adaptations Policy, last updated in 2015, should be reviewed. The Cabinet report set out the justification for the review, which included the opportunity to provide a more integrated approach to aids and adaptations between housing, social care, and health; to introduce flexibilities into the grant offer reflecting changes in legislation and guidance. To make the Policy more accessible, with closer alignment between council tenants and other residents of the assistance offer.
- 1.2 Legislation requires all local authorities to have a published document in place setting out the Council's policy on the local grant assistance, related to aids and adaptations. The proposed new Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy therefore sets out the types of assistance available to qualifying homeowners, council tenants, private tenants, and housing association tenants. The Policy supports disabled residents, older people, children, and their families with adaptations that support independence whilst also enabling carers to continue to support residents safely. The Policy includes details of how to apply, eligibility, and related conditions applied to the assistance available.
- 1.3 Funding for aids and adaptations is complex. For residents who are not council tenants, Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are funded by the Government as part of the Better Care Fund. The Government allocates the funding to councils each year. For council tenants, aids and adaptations are funded from the Housing Revenue Account (HRA), a ringfenced Council budget funded from housing income, largely rents. DFGs are subject to legislative requirements that are not applied where aids and adaptations are funded by the HRA. This means that in some cases full alignment of policy between council tenants and other residents is not possible.
- 1.4 The review took place between July and October 2023. In addition to considering the latest best practice, the review considered best utilisation of the service, comparing access from residents living in different housing tenures and the most common types of adaptations needed and associated costs and budgets. Views and feedback from stakeholders, partners and service users was gathered. Council officers heard directly from residents who had lived experience of aids and adaptations. In total more than 200 people were involved in the review.
- 1.5 The review was underpinned and supported by the Government's latest guidance for local authorities, published in 2022. The guidance sets out expectations on local authorities and the rights of a disabled person making an application for grants. Officers also consulted with Foundations, the national body for Home Improvement Agencies, in the development of the guidance.

## **2. Key Issues**

- 2.1 The review identified several opportunities to improve the service for residents. A summary of the review and the proposed changes to the policy are detailed as a summary in this report.
- 2.2 The table at Appendix 1 of the proposed policy provides an outline of all the aids and assistance schemes.

### **(i) Objectives and principles**

- 2.3 The Council's housing and social care services and the National Health Service (NHS) increasingly deliver integrated services and recognise the benefits of enabling people to stay in their own homes wherever possible. The development of preventative services can help avoid more costly interventions later down the line. The review highlighted that the current Policy did not fully reflect the principles of an integrated approach and could benefit from stronger alignment with the Better Care priorities. To address this, the new Policy includes updated principles and objectives that reflect a collaborative, multi-agency approach to assessing people's needs especially in relation to higher-cost adaptations, to ensure the most cost-effective solution meets the needs of individuals, their family and/or carer.

### **(ii) Discretionary grants and means testing**

- 2.4 Under the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 (RRO) the Council has a general power to assist households with the improvement of living conditions. This allows for more flexibility in the use of DFGs, for example by introducing discretionary grants to fund adaptations beyond the current funding ceiling in defined circumstances. Although funding is primarily for the provision of home adaptations to help people to live independently, the RRO enables the Council to offer other forms of assistance such as repairs, or assistance to move and can include the relaxation of means testing for these additional forms of assistance. This could increase access for some households who have not already made adaptations due to financial reasons and increase the utilisation of the DFG. To allow the Council to exercise these powers a policy must be adopted under the RRO.
- 2.5 The current Policy includes two approaches to how the Council processes applications for aids and adaptations grant assistance based on the applicants' tenure. For council tenants, the Council's processes mirror the approach for DFGs but relaxes means testing which would otherwise be applied. For all other residents the statutory rules on means testing are applied. This creates a significant disparity between tenures and may mean certain residents, such as private tenants, are less able to access the service. While full equalisation of means testing is not possible, adopting a policy under The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 can help to increase opportunities for private tenants to access financial assistance for aids and adaptations.
- 2.6 It is therefore proposed that the Council adopts the Policy under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 (RRO), and that the Policy sets out how the Council will exercise its powers under the RRO. This includes the

introduction of four new discretionary grants while maintaining and updating the existing top up grant. The four new grants are summarised in the table below. The new discretionary grants will enhance the range and flexibility of grants on offer to residents, while supporting wider objectives including avoiding costs in the social care and health systems. They will support greater access and uptake of grants which will ensure DFGs are fully utilised and social care and health costs are avoided.

Type of grant	Purpose	Maximum grant limit
Rapid Home Adaptations grant	Aimed at people who are disabled who are at risk of nonelective admission or readmission to hospital (e.g., through falls). This enables a faster response for the provision of adaptations that are straightforward to install.	£10,000
Time Critical grant	A fast-tracked grant that gives priority for work to be completed. It aims to support people on the end-of-life pathway or those with a life limiting neurological conditions, with an urgent need for equipment and adaptations to enable them to maintain their independence, safety or support their quality of life.	£10,000
Relocation grant	Assists people with a disability to relocate to a property to avoid a more expensive adaptation to their existing property, or where the landlord reasonably refused to give consent (where the applicant would otherwise qualify under the Disabled Facilities Grant scheme).	£10,000 – (Inc. £5,000 for relocation costs and £5,000 for any adaptations to the new property)
Professional Fees grant	Assists where there are associated preliminary or ancillary fees and charges prior to a Disabled Facilities Grant application being approved. This might include fees charged by a private architects or surveyor.	£2,000

- 2.7 Applicants will be able to apply for one discretionary grant within a 3-year period, after which applicants would need to go through the mandatory DFG process, where means testing is applied for non- council tenants.
- 2.8 Discretionary grants would always be subject to financial resources being available and can be withdrawn at any time. This is different to mandatory grants which the Council must provide.
- 2.9 It is proposed that means testing for the four new discretionary grants is not applied and instead a lighter-touch test of financial resources is introduced, whereby applicants with savings less than £16,000 will be eligible when they meet the qualifying conditions of the grant. For homeowners, a land charge on the property will be applied for grants over £5,000 to mirror the mandatory DFG conditions. For council tenants, the test of financial resources will not be applied.
- 2.10 In addition to the four new discretionary grants, the existing discretionary top up grant will remain. This is uncapped and subject to a means test unless the

applicant is a council tenant. The top up grant is intended to assist with higher cost works exceeding the £30,000 mandatory limit and are generally used for those complex cases where no alternative solutions can be found. Major construction works can be necessary. Costs of extensions to properties can vary between £50,000 and more than £200,000.

2.11 The approval for a top up grant will be scrutinised by the Council and will only be considered where alternative cost-effective solutions are not available. This includes the best use of council stock, utilising space in the property differently, moving to a different property or looking to see if there are alternative affordable financial solutions that can assist with the shortfall.

**(iii) Managing demand more effectively**

2.12 The review found that the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) capital budget, which funds aids and adaptations for council tenants, is often oversubscribed. To address this, the new Policy provides for more cost-effective opportunities to meet applicants’ needs. For example, support to move to a more suitable property will help reduce the need for high-cost adaptations such as extensions.

2.13 In contrast, the DFGs budget for residents who are not council tenants is frequently underutilised, resulting in a recurring underspend. In 2022/23 the Council carried forward an underspend of £2,995,534 DFG funding. The new Policy will promote access to the service through introducing new grants and relaxing means testing in some cases.

2.14 The figures below show that over the last three financial years, there has been an increase in Council tenants applying for aids and adaptations assistance costing over £1,000. This equates to an average of 403 processed applications. In comparison the average number of private applications is significantly lower, at 119.

**Council residents’ number of applications and completed works**

2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
342 (Completed 341)	402 (Completed 389)	513 (Completed 479)



**Private residents’ number of application and completed works**

2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
124 (Completed 117)	117 (Completed 109)	154 (Completed 132)



**Breakdown of private completed works**

	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023
<b>Homeowner/Mortgaged</b>	77	63	92
<b>Housing Associations</b>	20	27	24
<b>Private Rented</b>	20	19	16

#### **(iv) Role of private and housing association landlords**

- 2.15 Landlord DFGs have been in existence since the introduction of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 but the current Policy does not allow for them. It is proposed to introduce direct landlord DFG applications to help increase the opportunities for private rented and housing association tenants. Unlike an application made by a tenant, landlord applications do not require means testing, which immediately simplifies the process. Applicants that are managed by landlords also provide landlords with the option to control work in their housing stock and use their own contractors.
- 2.16 The review also found that partnership working between the Council and housing associations could be strengthened to improve the service for housing association tenants. In addition, while housing associations are asked if they can contribute to DFGs, there is no set amount negotiated. It is considered good practice for housing associations to respond to the needs of their disabled tenants and new revised standards published by the Regulator for Social Housing strengthen these obligations. This creates an opportunity to strengthen the role of housing associations and therefore improve their tenants access to aids and adaptations. In support of this, the Council will develop operational processes to manage housing association applications and further discussions with housing associations to agree service level agreements will strengthen partnership working. The Council will also continue to work with housing associations to secure contributions before considering assistance through the top up grant.

#### **(v) Accessibility of the policy**

- 2.17 The Rotherham Federation Tenants Scrutiny Report, published in November 2020 and utilised in the policy review, concluded that the Council's policy needed updating to ensure information is accessible to people applying as well as making it clearer for professionals. The Government's best practice guidance for DFGs reaffirms what needs to be considered when developing such a policy. In addition to this, the review highlighted that the Council's webpage for aids and adaptations requires some improvements. The review looked at examples from other local authorities which included self-help tools and bite sized videos explaining the benefits of aids and adaptations and offered a more customer friendly version of the policy.
- 2.18 The Policy has been rewritten to reflect best practice and recent guidance and to remove ambiguity. Following the approval of the new Policy, a customer friendly version will be developed along with a refresh of the aids and adaptations webpages. This will be developed in partnership with the Tenant Scrutiny Panel and a dedicated group of tenants called the "Screen Team" who work in partnership with the Council's Tenant Involvement Team to ensure documentation and other public content, such as webpages, are customer friendly and accessible.

#### **(vi) DFG fees and charges**

- 2.19 Under The Housing Renewal Grants (Services and Charges) Order 1996 the Council is permitted to include costs incurred for necessary fees associated

with DFG applications of the overall cost of the eligible works, which are incorporated into the grant award. The costs cover technical services including administration costs for the delivery of the service. A benchmarking exercise demonstrated that most local authorities charge between 12% and 15%, whereas in Rotherham the charge is 10% and had not increased for several years. Increasing fees will help to cover additional administration costs in relation to the delivery of the service in particular for cases that are more complex.

- 2.20 It is proposed that there should be an increase from 10% to 15% for major adaptations of the overall cost of eligible works. This increase is incorporated into the grant award. The increase in revenue income will cover additional administration costs in relation to the delivery of the service, in particular for cases that are more complex.

#### **(vii) Making best use of adapted council homes**

- 2.21 The Council does not have a dedicated housing register for accessible properties. Such registers can contain detailed information about the specific access features of individual properties, enabling the Council to precisely quantify its existing stock of accessible housing and enable more accurate matching with the specific requirements of disabled housing applicants. This would assist with meeting people's needs through a more effective housing options solution and avoid the costly and wasteful removal of adaptations where they are no longer needed.
- 2.22 A review of the Council's Housing Allocations Policy is scheduled for 2024-25 and will consider the development of a dedicated adapted accessible housing register and explore the possibility of direct lets of adapted Council properties. The review will also consider the eligibility for rehousing where a Council tenant has received major adaptations to their property and wishes to register for rehousing, taking into account any change of circumstances.

#### **(viii) Decision making**

- 2.23 The Housing Allocations Panel includes housing, social care and occupational therapist professionals and is currently used to discuss most cases. The review found that best practice is that using a panel for decision making for routine cases can contribute towards delays and is unnecessary. The use of panels in a social care setting is also discouraged under the Care Act 2014. The new Policy proposes that the Housing Adaptations Panel will provide a framework to discuss high-cost cases costing £30,000 and above. The Aids and Adaptations Service Manager will make the final decision for works up to £30,000 and put forward the business case for recommendation for approval to the appropriate delegated authorising officer for works greater than £30,000. Operational procedures and the terms of reference for the Panel will be updated to reflect this change.
- 2.24 The thresholds for authorised officers and maximum financial approval limits were found to be unclear and because they reflected costs in 2015, too low. It was noted that Cabinet agreed an interim set of financial delegations in July



2023. It was also noted that there are currently no mechanisms to make minor changes to the policy through delegated authority.

2.25 It is proposed that the financial thresholds for authorising officers and maximum approval limit are clearly set out in the new Policy and are:

Delegated authorising officer	Maximum approval limit
Service Manager	Up to £30,000
Head of Service	Up to £50,000
Assistant Director	Up to £100,000
Strategic Director	Anything above £100,000

Anything above £250,000 would require an Officer Decision Notice.

2.26 A delegation is also sought to agree minor changes to the policy throughout its lifespan and are delegated to the Strategic Director of Adult Care Housing and Public Health who can subdelegate to the Assistant Director of Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing. This includes authority to suspend discretionary grant assistance in line with budgetary constraints.

### **3. Options considered and recommended proposal**

3.1 It is recommended that the Policy is approved by Cabinet. The Policy will help increase the number of people accessing aids and adaptations. This will enable more people to remain living independently in their own homes. The Policy also offers more cost-effective solutions as an alternative to high-cost adaptations, through better use of stock and more flexible grant arrangements.

3.2 An alternative option would be to implement a new policy that meets the legislative requirements for the grant but does not include any discretionary funding assistance. This would limit the assistance available and not address growing access to the DFG, therefore it is not recommended.

### **4. Consultation on proposal**

4.1 The development of the Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy has benefited from the insights of Council officers and external stakeholders including statutory agencies, housing associations and customers. Social care, housing, public health, occupational therapist and customer services professionals contributed to the review.

4.2 A telephone survey was undertaken to gather the views from people with lived experience in accessing aids and adaptations. To ensure there was good representation the Council spoke to people living in a range of different tenures:

- Council tenants – 28 (40%)
- Private rented and housing association tenants – 15 (22%)
- Homeowners – 26 (38%)

- 4.3 Of these, 22 people had accessed minor adaptations and 47 people had accessed higher cost, major adaptations. Out of 69 responses, 44 (64%) people told us that assistance for relocating to a new home would be something they would consider as an alternative to major and costly adaptations. Most people said that they were satisfied with the service they had received. Areas for improvement were also identified and reflected in the development of the policy. For example, feedback included:

*“A household approach needs to be considered, especially when there’s noise disturbance and disruption in the home”.*

*“More communication with the Council and a better understanding of timescale is needed”.*

*“We would have liked a better understanding of the process, as it took time; also, more about what to expect when the works were being carried out”.*

*“It would have helped to have known more about what the contractors were going to do before the work started”.*

*“Less waiting time is needed”.*

- 4.4 In response to this and other feedback, the new Policy states that where cases involve disruption to the home environment, all members of the household’s needs will need to be taken into consideration in the planning of any proposed works. It also commits to a co-production approach to the design of aids and adaptations. The expected timescales throughout all stages of the aids and adaptations process are clear within the new Policy. The Policy also commits the Council updating applicants on progress of works and any potential delays. Where adaptations are approved, the applicant will be contacted directly by the Council and provided with information on the next stages. Where the Council is responsible for instructing an appointed contractor, the applicant will be notified who this will be and expected timescales. Finally, the introduction of the discretionary grants and the revised purpose of the Housing and Adaptations panel will help to reduce waiting time.
- 4.5 In addition to the survey, Council officers met with the Tenants Scrutiny Panel, the Housing Involvement Panel and the Carers’ Forum for Council staff. Feedback included the importance of the Council ensuring information about the range of assistance available was more accessible.
- 4.6 The Council has worked with Foundations, the National Body for Disabled Facilities Grant and Home Improvement Agencies in England. Since 2015, Foundations has been supporting local authorities to improve how they deliver DFGs. Council officers would like to acknowledge and thank the Foundations regional advisor for their support in the development of this Policy, which included facilitating a workshop with housing, social care, health and customer services professionals.

## 5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The Head of Housing Options will have responsibility for implementing the Policy. It is proposed that the new policy is introduced on 1st April 2024, which provides three months following Cabinet decision where an implementation plan will be developed. The implementation plan will support the launch of the new policy to ensure that the assistance available in this policy is communicated with professionals and customers.
- 5.2 Performance monitoring will include the number of DFG applications and utilisation of the discretionary grants and associated budgets.
- 5.3 The Policy will be reviewed annually. Any significant changes will need to be approved by Cabinet.

## 6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 The table below indicates the current capital allocations for aids and adaptations for the council and other homes and the funding streams that support those budgets.

Adaptation type	Council homes	Other homes	Total
Major adaptations	1,924,000	1,178,500	3,102,500
Extensions	711,731	598,000	1,309,731
Minor adaptations	268,000	420,500	688,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>2,903,731</b>	<b>2,197,000</b>	<b>5,100,731</b>
<b>Funding stream</b>			
Housing Revenue Account capital	2,903,731		
Disabled Facilities Grant		2,197,000	

- 6.2 As detailed throughout the report, the level of demand for the proposed new grants is currently unquantified. The table below indicates the financial cost implications based on an estimated 10% increase year on year of DFGs for non- Council tenants.
- 6.3 The table below includes mandatory grants and the new discretionary Rapid Homes and Time Critical grants. The table shows what the potential annual financial impact would be based on the increased applications assuming the additional DFG works cost is £10,000 per DFG. The total cumulative impact over four years would still not exceed the current accrued DFG underspend.

Year	Number of applicants	Number of additional applicants	Annual potential financial impact	
			Per year	Cumulative
Baseline: 2022/23 applications from non-Council tenants	119			
		Cost per grant	10,000	
YEAR 1 (20% increase)	143	24	240,000	240,000
YEAR 2 (10% increase)	157	14	140,000	380,000
YEAR 3 (10% increase)	173	16	160,000	540,000
YEAR 4 (10% increase)	190	17	170,000	710,000

6.4 The table below shows the potential financial impact based on the scenario of an increase of uptake of the Relocation grant. This is a new grant, the objective of which is to save costs, where moving to a different home is assessed as being more cost effective compared with the cost of works needed on the existing property. It is difficult to predict what the uptake will be so close monitoring will be applied.

Potential financial impact of Relocation grant				
Number of applicants	Costs			Savings
	Relocation costs	Adaptation in new property (Assumed 50% require £5k adaptations)	Total anticipated cost	Reduction in mandatory adaptations
Cost per grant	5,000	2,500	7,500	<b>Savings must exceed costs - Relocation will only be considered if cost effective</b>
10	50,000	25,000	75,000	
20	100,000	50,000	150,000	
35	175,000	87,500	262,500	
50	250,000	125,000	375,000	

6.5 The proposal to increase the fees charged from 10% to 15% for all minor and major adaptations and increase the fees charged from 5% to 10% on extensions would result in increased income to both HRA and General Fund revenue budgets. This would see a corresponding reduction in the funding available to provide assistance to applicants unless the capital budgets are increased. The table below shows the resulting values.

	<b>Current</b>	<b>Proposed</b>	<b>Fees cost to be absorbed from capital budget allocation</b>
Cost of service	£522,500	£522,500	
Fees for other home adaptations	-£172,500	-£260,000	<b>£87,500</b>
Fees for Council home adaptations	-£205,000	-£310,000	<b>£105,000</b>
<b>Over / under recovery of service cost</b>	<b>£145,000</b>	<b>-£47,500</b>	<b>£192,500</b>

- 6.6 The introduction of new grants and a lighter test of financial resources will make applying for funding more accessible to people who would normally suffer financial hardship through the mandatory DFG means test and help speed up the DFG application process. It is anticipated that additional staff resources will be required for the management of these proposals. This will be funded via the additional fees generated and managed through the request to recruit process.
- 6.7 Revenue budgets will be required within the HRA for the Relocation Grant. This will be achieved by reducing the capital allocation.
- 6.8 The removal of means testing will result in a reduction of financial contributions from applicants towards the costs of the works. In 2022/23 the means tested contributions were £58,000.
- 6.9 Whilst it isn't possible to know what demand will be, expenditure will need to be contained within budget. This can be managed by closely monitoring spend and utilising the flexibility within the Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy.
- 6.10 There are no procurement implications associated with the approval of the new policy, however it should be noted that where third party suppliers are engaged to provide goods, works or services to enable delivery of the policy these must be procured in compliance with the Public Contracts Regulations 2015 (as amended) and the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.

## **7. Legal Advice and Implications**

- 7.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide assistance to individuals and families living in a variety of tenures where works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, and that it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the works having regard to the age or the condition of the building. The report seeks to amend the Council's current approach to make it more efficient and equitable across different groups. It is important that the Council reviews its policies and updates them when necessary and in light of developments within the local community including changes in demand.
- 7.2 The approach proposed is appropriate in light of the issues identified in the review undertaken this year.

## **8. Human Resources Advice and Implications**

8.1 There are no associated HR implications associated with this report.

## **9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults**

9.1 Rotherham's vision for children and young people with SEN and disabilities is the same as for all our children and young people; that they be safe, happy, healthy, confident, and successful, contributing to a thriving, inclusive community that is welcoming to all. Timely access to aids and adaptations will enable our children and young people to live in safe and appropriate homes with their families and/ or carers as part of their community.

9.2 Children's cases are increasingly complex and require adaptations to promote independence and/ or reduce risk and behaviours. Ensuring the right home environment, through the provision of appropriate aids and adaptations, reduces the risk of children and young people with complex needs requiring care outside of the family.

9.3 It is anticipated that the new policy will ensure that there is a clear pathway for aids and adaptations. The policy will assist with supporting more children and young people and their families to improve their quality of life by enabling them to have safe home environment which promotes independency.

9.4 The Council's Children's Pathway to Care Policy enables carers to apply for funding for specific housing accommodation requirements to prevent a child becoming a looked after child or support a child to be discharged from care. The policy will support objectives set out in the Children's Pathway to Care Policy.

## **10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications**

10.1 The Policy includes a section that focuses upon equal opportunities and identifies and recognises Rotherham's diverse population.

10.2 An Equality Analysis has been conducted in line with the Council's procedures (Appendix 3).

10.3 The Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy makes a positive impact and is inclusive to all people with protected characteristics. The Policy makes a commitment to removing barriers by ensuring that aids and adaptations are accessible for all, and that people with a disability can live independently, safely and healthily in their homes.

The key benefits of the new Policy include:

- Improving access for disabled people in their homes improves their ability to live and remain active within their local communities.
- Ensures the households that are most in need receive funding to cover the costs of their adaptations.
- An increase in applicants who will now be able to proceed with a grant.

- The Council will provide support to applicants with their applications where it is required.

10.4 There is no known negative impact of this Policy.

10.5 An implementation plan for the launch of the new policy will ensure information is accessible both online and in hard copy. Targeted promotion internally and externally will be included as part of a phased approach to implementation.

10.6 The service will collate and monitor and review equality data to identify trends and improve service delivery by identifying unrepresented groups and promoting assistance available.

## **11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change**

11.1 Climate change poses a significant threat to environments, individuals, communities, and economies on a local, national, and international scale. In recognition of this the Council has aimed to be net carbon neutral as an organisation by 2030, and for Rotherham as a whole to achieve the same position by 2040.

11.2 It is acknowledged that emissions will be difficult to calculate in the domestic properties affected because it would depend on the existing state of the property and the intervention required. In general, when construction is required, this would result in an increase in emissions from both materials use and installation, though obviously these are one off emissions.

11.3 Anticipated implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change are detailed in the Carbon Impact Assessment (Appendix 4).

## **12. Implications for Partners**

12.1 The Policy aims to strengthen working relationships with housing associations to proactively ensure that people can live independently in their homes through aids and adaptations. The Policy is also aligned with a range of joint strategic objectives, including the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and Better Care Plan.

12.2 Contractors may struggle to service a sudden increase in work. Early discussions and forecast planning between the service manager and contractors will assist in mitigating any risks to delivery. A robust implementation plan will be instrumental in managing the delivery of the service.

12.3 The Policy will provide a clearer pathway to aids and adaptations, providing clear guidance and information for all internal and external partners as well as internal officers.

## **13. Risks and Mitigation**

13.1 A summary of risks and mitigations is provided in the table below:

Risk	Mitigation
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Financial risks created by additional expenditure due to higher demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The service currently underspends every year which has provided a significant financial buffer.</li> <li>• The introduction of a lighter touch test of financial resources will be introduced for discretionary grants but these grants will be capped in value.</li> <li>• Robust finance management and monitoring will be in place.</li> <li>• The Policy allows discretionary grants to be prioritised under the approved officer's delegated authority.</li> </ul>
Insufficient staffing resources to manage the expected increase in demand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase in DFG fees will assist with additional resources.</li> <li>• Effective implementation plan will be in place.</li> <li>• Monitoring of demand, regular meetings with housing, finance, procurement and occupational therapist teams.</li> </ul>
Contractors' capacity not able to keep up with a sudden increase of works following the implementation of the new policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitoring of demand, and forecasting, regular meetings with contractors and internal colleagues.</li> <li>• Monitoring of performance and forecasting of works.</li> <li>• Review contractors' performance and ability to meet any increased demand, regular meetings with contractors.</li> <li>• Planned procurement activity including frameworks.</li> </ul>
The demand from private customers is as high as anticipated	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Implementation will include a proactive communication plan for residents.</li> <li>• Review of the website and accessibility of information.</li> <li>• Policy will be reviewed annually to understand areas for improvement.</li> </ul>

## 14. Accountable Officers

### 14.1 Head of Housing Options

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

Named Officer	Date



Chief Executive	Sharon Kemp	04/12/23
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	30/11/23
Assistant Director, Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	30/11/23

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