

# Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy

2024

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## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1 The Council is committed to enabling residents to live independently, safely and healthily in their community for as long as possible by facilitating the provision of aids and adaptations to their homes or by supporting residents to move to a more suitable home.
- 1.2 This policy sets out the Council's approach to providing an aids and adaptations service in line with its statutory responsibilities. It provides details on the range of financial assistance offered, including eligibility criteria, conditions associated with each type of assistance and how residents can apply.
- 1.3 This policy sets out how the Council intends to use its powers under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. It consolidates traditional assistance methods with four new additional discretionary grants, providing a responsive approach to residents' needs and fulfilling the following broader strategic objectives:
- Enable people's independence living at home for longer
  - Reduce delayed transfer of care (e.g., enable faster hospital discharge to a suitable home environment and reduce readmissions)
  - Prevent escalation of people's need e.g., as a result of injuries and falls
  - Support maintenance of people's physical and mental well-being
  - Reduce pressure on both acute and institutional services
  - Reduce instances of non-elective admissions and Emergency Department attendances for people with frailty and who have high levels of contact with multiple services

## **2. PARTNERSHIP WORKING AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE POLICY**

- 2.1 The Council will work with a wide range of partners, agencies, and stakeholders to improve the quality of housing by providing access to support and financial assistance for local people.
- 2.2 The assistance as set out in this policy has been produced collaboratively across Housing Services, Health & Social Care, and Children's Services to ensure a range of options and levels of assistance is available to meet the needs of people with a disability in Rotherham.
- 2.3 The voice of the customer has played an integral part in shaping the policy. We have collected feedback from a variety of sources and interviewed customers with lived experience of the adaptation journey.

### **3. LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT**

- 3.1 Regard has been given to the following legislations:
- 3.2 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act (HGCRA) 1996. There are also annual regulations called the Housing Renewal Grants Regulations which govern how local authorities administer Disabled Facilities Grants.
- 3.3 Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) provides Local Authorities with the discretion to provide assistance for the purpose of improving living conditions, so homes are safe to live in. This includes the use of Disabled Facilities Grant funding to support strategic priorities such as health, wellbeing and housing, for the benefit of local people. To use the powers provided in the RRO the Council must adopt a policy for the provision of the assistance. This policy fulfils that requirement.
- 3.4 The Regulator of Social Housing sets standards for all providers of social housing, including the Council. It requires providers to assist tenants seeking housing adaptations to access appropriate services and to cooperate with relevant organisations to provide an adaptations service that meets tenants needs.
- 3.5 The Care Act 2014 requires Local Authorities to identify, provide and arrange services, facilities and resources to prevent, delay or reduce the needs of individuals either for care or support. This includes the adaptation of properties.
- 3.6 The Social Care White Paper “People at the Heart of Care” emphasises the close links between housing and social care and includes an ambition to make “every decision about care a decision about housing”.
- 3.7 The Equality Act 2010, defines a disabled person as “someone who has a physical or mental impairment, which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on his or her ability to carry out normal day to day activities”.
- 3.8 Other relevant legislation and guidance includes:
- The Community Care (Delayed Discharges etc.) Act 2003 Guidance
  - Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000
  - The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970
  - The Children’s Act 1989

## 4. LOCAL POLICY CONTEXT

- 4.1 The assistance delivered through this policy will help achieve the aims and objectives of the Council and its strategic partners, as outlined in several strategies and plans.
- 4.2 This policy supports the Council's aims and priorities in the [Council Plan 2022-2025](#), specifically:
- Every neighbourhood thriving
  - People are safe, healthy and live well
  - Every child able to fulfil their potential
- 4.3 The [Housing Strategy 2022-2025](#):
- Supporting people to live independently
  - Strengthening communities
- 4.4 The [Rotherham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2025](#):
- All children get the best start in life and go on to achieve their potential
  - All Rotherham people enjoy the best possible mental health and wellbeing and have a good quality of life
  - All Rotherham people live well for longer
  - All Rotherham people live in healthy, safe and resilient communities
- 4.5 The [Rotherham Prevention and Health Inequalities Strategy and Action Plan 2022-2025](#)
- Develop the healthy lifestyles prevention pathway
  - Support the prevention and early diagnosis of chronic conditions
  - Advocate for prevention across the system

## 5. EVIDENCE OF NEED

- 5.1 Rotherham's total population was 265,800 in 2021 (Census, 2021). Rotherham has a high percentage of residents aged over 65, making up 19.6% of Rotherham's population (52,200), compared to the national average of 18.6%. The Rotherham population has increased steadily by about 1,000 per year from an estimated 257,716 in 2011 to 265,800 in 2021 (+3.3%). The number of residents aged 65+ is predicted to reach 61,907 by 2030. (Adult Care, Housing & Public Health Market Position Statement: Adult Care Market and Demand, 2022)
- 5.2 The age group of 75 years and over is showing the greatest rate of increase and the percentage of people aged 85 years and over has also increased from 2.1% (Census 2011) to 2.3% (Census 2021).

- 5.3 As the population continues to age, age-related conditions and disabilities will also increase along with the demand on a range of services.
- 5.4 The population of people living with a primary need of a learning disability in Rotherham is estimated to be 5,202 in 2022. This number is predicted to increase by approximately 100 people every 5 years, with an overall increase of 5% by 2032 (Adult Care, Housing & Public Health Market Position Statement: Adult Care Market and Demand, 2022).
- 5.5 Nationally it is estimated 1.1% of the population have autism. Based on this, we would expect around 2,900 people in Rotherham to be autistic. Projecting Adult Need and Service (PANSI) data for 18–64-year-olds predicts that over the next 15 years, the number of adults with autism will significantly increase, where with children it will remain steady.
- 5.6 Data from Adult Social Care in October 2023 reports that there are 3634 people open to adult care services. 29.61% are aged between 18 and 65, 58.92% (1461) are aged 65 years or over. Overall, the highest primary support reason is physical support 54.12%, (1996) followed by learning disability support 21.10%, (778) mental health support 10.95% (404), people needing support with memory or cognitive equates to 6.75%. Amongst 18–64-year-olds the highest primary reason for support is learning difficulties 18.68% (689) and for people aged 65 or over physical support is the highest reasons for support at 43.17% (1592).
- 5.7 There is currently no national register of people with disabilities in the U.K., so most data is collated through national surveys. However, Rotherham Children's Services operate a voluntary register.
- 5.8 The voluntary register data indicated in August 2023 that there are 597 children living with families registered as disabled. The actual figure is likely to be much higher. As 64% (385) have not recorded the type of disability. Within the register, the following disabilities are reported – 18% (107) of child are autistic or have Aspergers Syndrome, 10% (58) of children have learning disabilities and 3% (17) have a visual impairment.
- 5.9 Data from Rotherham Childrens Services reports that there are 142 children and young people with an open children's social care referral who are reported as disabled equating to 6.84% of all open referrals.

## 6. FUNDING CONTEXT

- 6.1 The assistance detailed in this policy for Council tenants is funded from the Councils Housing Revenue Account (HRA). This budget can only be used on Council-owned properties.
- 6.2 In addition to utilising its own resources, the Council receives an allocation from the Department of Levelling Up, Housing and Communities yearly to help people maintain their independence through adaptations and other measures. This funding is called the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and is funded from the money

received from the Better Care Fund. A condition of the allocation is that it cannot be used for Council-owned properties.

- 6.3 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants must be made available by the Council to disabled people who meet the required qualification criteria as set out in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, and the accompanying regulations.
- 6.4 Discretionary grants under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 (RRO) are offered subject to resources available at the time. The Council reserves the right to withdraw discretionary grants at any time and without notice.
- 6.5 The Council has sought to align its processes for adaptations for Council tenants with all other residents. Therefore, for the purpose of this policy Disabled Facilities Grants and discretionary grants referenced throughout this policy for all disabled people living in all types of tenures. Any exceptions specifically relevant to Council tenants will be clearly detailed within this policy.

## **7. TYPES OF AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS**

### **7.1 Minor Fixings Adaptations**

- 7.2 A minor home adaptation is defined as costing £1,000 or less in total. These are often related to maximising a person's mobility and preventing falls, for example: easy access steps, a grab rail or longer external metal handrail, automatic lighting at the front access, or a key safe. An assessment completed by an Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner may be needed to determine need.

- 7.3 There is currently no charge for this assistance, costing less than £1,000.

### **7.4 Equipment**

- 7.5 Equipment can be prescribed and loaned through the Community Equipment Service. To access equipment, an Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner assessment is needed. GP's can also make a direct referral, or where a disabled person is being discharged from hospital, an assessment can be arranged. Equipment provided through this service includes perching stools, raised toilet seats, crutches, pressure cushions and toilet frames.

- 7.6 There is currently no charge for this assistance. If people are wishing to purchase their own equipment at their own cost, then they contact Adult Social Care's Customer Contact Team on **Tel: 01709 382121**.

### **7.7 Assistive Technology and Technology Enabled Care**

- 7.8 Assistive technology and technology enabled care are a range of devices and sensors, which are used around the home to help assist disabled people to live independently and as safely as possible. Technology such as preventative fall detectors can monitor residents vital signs remotely and allow for the necessary intervention to be undertaken, before a fall actually occurs. Some of the sensors

and equipment are linked to a community alarm system that is monitored 24 hours a day, whilst other sensors can be linked directly to relatives. If the disabled person requires assistance, such as in the event of a fall within the home, the mobile response team can be alerted. Many items of Assistive Technology can be provided directly through Adult Social Care's Customer Contact Team, who can be contacted on **Tel: 01709 382121**. Where a more comprehensive assessment is needed an appropriate Social Care, Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner will need to carry out an assessment.

- 7.9 The majority of smaller types of equipment such as medication boxes can be purchased privately and are readily available in online stores and high street shops.
- 7.10 If assistive technology needs to be linked to the community alarm system, then there is a charge for this. These charges can be found on the Council's community alarm webpage. Alternatively, some devices could be linked to family and friends so that they can undertake the appropriate response.
- 7.11 Assistive technology will also be considered as part of a major DFG adaptation application. An example would be assistive technology to control sources of power, light and heat.

## **7.12 Major Adaptations**

- 7.13 These are defined as costing more than £1,000 and usually involve structural alterations, improvements to, or additions to the fabric of the property. A major adaptation could be made up of several minor adaptations.
- 7.14 Examples include level access showers, over bath shower facilities, kitchen adaptations, stairlifts, specialist equipment (such as fixed rise/fall baths, shower stretchers, wash/dry toilets) and extensions (within limits and where no alternative viable solution is possible).

## **8. ELIGIBILITY FOR A DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT**

- 8.1 To be eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant, the person requiring the aids and adaptations must:
- Be disabled
  - Intend to live in the property during the grant period (usually 5 years but this can be shorter, for example, if the person is terminally ill)
- 8.2 For the purposes of a Disabled Facilities Grant a person is disabled if:
- Their sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired
  - They have a mental disorder or impairment of any kind
  - They are physically substantially disabled by illness, injury or impairment



- 8.3 A person will be taken to be disabled if:
- They are an adult who is or could be registered under section 77 of the Care Act 2014
  - They are a child or young person registered under paragraph 2 of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989
  - They are a disabled child as defined by section 17 of the Children Act 1989
- 8.4 Disabled Facilities Grants for disabled children can only be made available to facilitate adaptations to the disabled child or young person's main residence. If care is provided at more than one residence, e.g., parents are separated or for the provision of short breaks, adaptations to the second home can be made under Section 2 Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 if the local authority determines the adaptations are "necessary" and/or "appropriate". Therefore, if it is in the best interests of the child to have adaptations in two locations the Council may use its own discretion.
- 8.5 Foster carers, or a carer under a special guardianship order (SGO) are eligible to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant on behalf of a child in their care, but provision may depend on the type and length of placement, including consideration of the grant condition period. The application should be made to the local authority where the foster carers or special guardian lives. It is likely in the case of the foster child that the foster child's social services authority would need to fund any works over the maximum grant limit.
- 8.6 Grants are considered for people where the person with a disability lives or intends to live in a dwelling such as:
- House, flat or bungalow or,
  - Qualifying houseboat or caravan
- 8.7 A valid application can be made by:
- Someone who has an owner's interest in the property (either an owner occupier or a landlord);
  - A tenant of a dwelling; or
  - The occupant of a caravan or qualifying houseboat
- 8.8 Under the Act, no grant is payable to the following:
- Public bodies such as a Local Authority or Clinical Commissioning Group
  - A "person from abroad" with no recourse to public funds
  - Anyone under 18 years of age (applications on behalf of children or young people aged 17 years and under must be made by an appropriate adult)
  - Schools cannot apply and should refer to the School's Accessibility Policy which supports schools to make relevant aids and adaptations

## **8.9 Eligible Works**

8.10 The Housing Grant, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 sets out for what purpose Disabled Facilities Grants can be used and eligible works are summarised below:

- Facilitating access to the dwelling and garden, to overcome or remove any obstacles, and allow free movement around the property
- Making the dwelling or building safe, e.g., lighting
- Facilitating access to a living or family room
- Facilitating access to a room used for sleeping
- Access to, or the provision of, a W/C, bath or shower (or both) and wash and basin facilities
- Facilitating accessible food preparation/cooking amenities
- Improving or providing a suitable heating system where necessary (this will be only for accessed and used rooms in the property, not necessarily the whole property)
- Providing accessible sockets, switches and controls for power, light and heat
- Allowing better access to care for a dependent person in the dwelling
- To allow access to the dwelling through common parts of a building, only within the boundary unless it is a drop kerb

8.11 The Council needs to be satisfied that the work is:

- Necessary and appropriate to meet the disabled person's needs
- Reasonable and can be done, depending on the age and condition of the property

8.12 Disabled Facilities Grants are designed to give disabled people a degree of independence in the home and are aimed to meet current and anticipated future needs. If the disabled person has care needs, the impact of adaptations on the level of this care should be considered including whether tasks will be reduced or eased. Adaptation works will not achieve their objective if the disabled person does not gain an acceptable degree of independence, or where the disabled person remains dependent upon the care of others and the adaptation does not significantly ease the burden of the carer.

## **8.13 Grant Condition Period and Intention to Reside**

8.14 As part of the Disabled Facilities Grant conditions an owner / tenant / homeowner must have intentions for the disabled person to live in the dwelling as their only or main residence for the 5-year period of the grant period or for such shorter period as health and other relevant circumstances permit. A signed certificate from private applicants is required confirming the intention of the applicant at the time of the application stating that it is their genuine intention, then no repayment of grant is required if circumstances change, and the disabled person can no longer occupy it as intended.

- 8.15 In cases where the applicant is a Council tenant, they will be expected to confirm it is their genuine intentions to remain in the council property for the same duration. Rehousing to another council property will only be considered in line with the Council's Housing Allocations Policy.

## **9. SUMMARY OF TYPES OF ASSISTANCE SCHEMES AVAILABLE**

- 9.1 The following assistance is available from the Council:

- Mandatory Grants
- Discretionary Grants which include:
  - Rapid Home Adaptations Grant
  - Time Critical Grants
  - Relocation Grant
  - Top-Up Grant
  - Professional Fees Grant

A summary table can be found in [Appendix 1](#), which includes all schemes for assistances. This includes grant types, financial eligibility, maximum funding, who the assistance is available for, and any terms and conditions.

### **9.2 Mandatory Grants – Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)**

- 9.3 The Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant is aimed at assisting people who are disabled to live independently in their own home and must meet the qualifying eligibility criteria (as detailed in section 8 of this policy). Applications must be supported by a recommendation from an Occupational Therapist or similar trained practitioner confirming that the person is disabled and that the proposed works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the person.

- 9.4 The works must be reasonable, and practicable.

- 9.5 Examples of adaptations work that could be carried out, includes access ramps, alterations to the heights of light switches and electrical sockets, level access shower, extensions, and specialist equipment such as wash and dry toilets and the provision of additional thermal comfort.

- 9.6 The maximum mandatory grant payable is currently £30,000.

- 9.7 Means testing applies to applicants living in private rented, housing association properties or homeowners. (Ref Section 12- Means Tested Contributions)

Means testing does not apply to council tenants.

## **9.8 Discretionary Grants**

- 9.9 People applying for a discretionary grant must meet the criteria for a Disabled Facilities Grant (Ref Section 8). Applications must be supported by a recommendation from an Occupational Therapist or similar trained practitioner confirming that the person is disabled and that the proposed works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the person.
- 9.10 The works must be assessed as reasonable, and practicable. In addition, applicants must meet the conditions set out for each individual discretionary grant, as detailed within this policy.
- 9.11 Discretionary grants are not subject to a full means test, with exception of the top up grant. Private applicants with savings less than £16,000 are financially eligible for a discretionary grant. The Council must be satisfied that this condition has been met before approval. This will be determined through supporting evidence or other checks and will require the applicant to sign a financial declaration.
- 9.12 Where applicants do not qualify for a discretionary grant due to their financial situation, they may wish to purchase their own adaptation at their own cost, or apply for a mandatory grant, which is means tested.
- 9.13 Discretionary grants are limited to one discretionary grant within a 3-year period from the date the initial grant is approved.
- 9.14 Rapid Home Adaptations Grants:** This grant is 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.
- 9.15 The applicant must have a need that can be met by the installation of one or two of the following adaptation(s):
- Level access shower
  - Shower over bath
  - Stair lift
  - Ramped access to the property (including door widening and level access door)
- 9.16 The maximum discretionary grant is currently £10,000.
- 9.17 Applicants living in private rented, housing association properties or homeowners with savings of £16,000 or greater are not eligible for a discretionary grant.
- 9.18 Time Critical Grants:** This is a fast-tracked grant and 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.

- 9.19 This grant is also aimed at those whose cases are complex, such as for people ready for hospital discharge, where due to the person's property, this cannot be organised swiftly without interim measures being put in place at home to facilitate their safe return to their home. The grant also aims to support the person with the disability as well as assisting families and carer(s) to continue to support them with the overarching aim of improving the person's mental wellbeing at a difficult time.
- 9.20 To be eligible for a Time Critical Grant, an applicant must be eligible for the Disabled Facilities Grant in addition to meet the criteria below:
1. The person has a need as identified or confirmed by an Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner
  2. And has a condition with a diagnosis, confirmed by the Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner which falls into any of the following categories:
    - Diagnosis of a life limiting neurological condition i.e. Motor Neurone Disease
    - The person is on the end-of-life pathway under their GP, a consultant or hospice care
    - The person has a government benefit as defined under the Department of Work and Pensions Special Rules nearing the end of life
- 9.21 Examples of works to be provided to those people eligible for this grant could include access to first floor facilities via stair lifts, access to the property via ramps, access to appropriate and specialist bathing and toilet facilities including level access showers.
- 9.22 The maximum discretionary grant is currently £10,000.
- 9.23 Applicants living in private rented, housing association properties or homeowners with savings of £16,000 or greater are not eligible for a discretionary grant.
- 9.24 Relocation Grants:** This grant assists people with a disability to relocate to a property where the proposed work involves major work costing over £10,000 and it would be beneficial to the person and more cost effective if they moved to a home more suitable to their needs, or adaptations to their current home through Disabled Facilities Grant are determined not to be feasible, reasonable and practical, or where the landlord reasonably refused to give consent (where the applicant would otherwise qualify under the Disabled Facilities Grant). The Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner will assess that the new property is suitable to meet the needs of the person with a disability. If the Occupational Therapist has determined that aids and adaptations are needed in the new property, and these are expected to be under the threshold of £5,000, then this can be considered under the same grant. Therefore, a maximum of £10,000 can be awarded which includes a maximum of £5,000 for relocation associated costs and a maximum grant limit of £5,000 for aids and adaptations in the new property. Where

adaptations cost over £5,000 in the new property this should be applied for under a mandatory grant.

- 9.25 Applicants who have been awarded a medical priority through the Council Housing Allocation Policy will not automatically be considered for such grant.
- 9.26 The Council will pay any reasonable associated costs for enabling a move, subject to satisfactory evidence that the expenditure specifically for:
- Stamp duty
  - Mortgage arrangement fees
  - Estate agents' fees
  - Conveyancing costs
  - Furniture removal costs
- 9.27 Total overall maximum relocation discretionary grant is £10,000.
- 9.28 Applicants living in private rented, housing association properties or homeowners with savings of £16,000 or greater are not eligible for a discretionary grant.
- 9.29 Professional Fees Grants:** Assists people with a disability 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.
- 9.30 The maximum discretionary grant is currently £2,000.
- 9.31 Applicants living in private rented, housing association properties or homeowners with savings of £16,000 or greater are not eligible for a discretionary grant.
- 9.32 Top Up Grants:** Assists people with a disability in cases where the Disabled Facilities Grant limit of £30,000 is exceeded. This discretionary fund is on top of the maximum mandatory award to facilitate the adaptation works deemed necessary and appropriate to meet the identified need. This is generally for works such as extensions to a property or other complex structural changes to the property. Funding will only be made available as a last resort and must demonstrate best value as well as meeting the persons, or carers needs. All alternative options must have been exhausted. Examples include looking at how space in the property can be best utilised, best use of housing stock or assistance to move to a different property and alternative financial solutions.
- 9.33 There is no maximum limit. Each case will be considered on its own merits.
- 9.34 Means testing applies to applicants living in private rented, housing association properties or homeowners. Council tenants are disapplied to means testing. Means testing is disapplied for council tenants.

### **9.35 Housing Association Contributions – Top Ups**

- 9.36 Where the person is a tenant of a Housing Association the Council asks the Housing Association to contribute towards additional costs that exceed the £30,000 mandatory grant limit. The Council will encourage Housing Associations to work in partnership with the Council to help avoid any prolonged negotiation that can lead to long delays for the disabled person their family or Carer.

## **10. ACCESSING THE SERVICE**

- 10.1 Referrals for assistance can be made by contacting the Council's Housing Service **Tel: 01709 336009** or our online webform at: **[www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing](http://www.rotherham.gov.uk/housing)**
- 10.2 Applicants can self-refer, or a referral can be made by a family member, friend, advocate or a professional including the landlord with the applicant's consent.
- 10.3 A person can access support to make an application for a Disabled Facilities Grant. This is normally provided by the Aids and Adaptations team or, if specialist advice is needed, by the Occupational Therapy Service. A person may choose someone else to support them subject to the individual possessing the necessary knowledge and skills. Where an applicant is assessed to lack capacity (Mental Capacity Act 2005) any adaptation decision would be made in the person's best interests. The best interest decision would progress by the relevant professionals and focus on the person's needs, values and beliefs.
- 10.4 The Council aims to respond to enquires within 10 working days by telephone. With exceptions according to urgency and risk where the Council will aim to respond sooner, this would be for cases such as hospital discharge cases. Decisions on the level of priority is at the discretion of the Council.
- 10.5 During the initial telephone assessment, checks are carried out to establish how the applicant's needs can be best met and triaged.
- 10.6 The Council aims is to carry out minor adaptations within 28 working days from the order of works. Where there is an identified urgent need, these will be prioritised with aim of completing the works sooner.
- 10.7 The Assistive Technology and Enabled Care service can order devices within 10 working days or 3-5 working days where it is considered urgent, or these can be privately purchased.
- 10.8 Where relevant adaptation works cost over £1,000, requires community alarms services or where the request is not straightforward, applicants will be referred to an Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner for an assessment.
- 10.9 A triage system to make an initial assessment of the complexity and urgency of a case will help to determine if the case should be referred to an Occupational

Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner. In some cases, a trained professional such as a Trusted Assessor may assess the needs of the person.

- 10.10 Arranging the Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner assessment can vary depending on the demand of the service and usually takes between 9 and 12 weeks.
- 10.11 At times when the service is experiencing high demand and the wait time is expected to be longer than 12 weeks, a letter will be sent by the Occupational Therapist team acknowledging the referral and advising the applicant of an estimated waiting time before an assessment date will be arranged.

## **11. ASSESSMENTS**

- 11.1 Assessments are person-centred, and will always consider the views, values and cultural needs and outcomes of the person.
- 11.2 Officers and practitioners in housing, health and social care will work together to help ensure the person feels confident and empowered to manage daily tasks. People with a disability applying for assistance and engaging in an assessment with an Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner should be supported to consider all solutions available to them individually through the robust provision of information and advice from their first contact as part of a strengths-based solution focused approach.
- 11.3 For children and young people with a disability, assessments will take into account whenever possible the views of the child or young person with a disability and of their parents/carers. Assessments of children will consider the developmental needs of the child and their progress towards maximum independence, the needs of their parents as carers and the needs of other children in the family.
- 11.4 The initial assessment process evaluates what major adaptations are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled person (this is determined by the Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner), taking into account whether such major adaptations are reasonable and practicable. Factors considered include the age and condition of the dwelling, the practicalities and cost-effectiveness of alterations, conservation considerations and the structural characteristics of the property.
- 11.5 From the outset, discussions will be held with the applicant to consider and determine the most reasonable and practicable solution to meet their identified needs. The assessment will consider a range of options, including how rooms in the dwelling could be used differently to accommodate the person with a disability or how a move to another property would support the person's ongoing independence.
- 11.6 Where cases are not straightforward, more complex or likely to be of a high cost, it is important that an integrated approach between the Occupational Therapist/appropriately trained practitioner and the Housing Technical Officer will



help determine the eligible works and potential solutions for adapting the home environment and meeting the needs of the person. Where a proposed adaptation is likely to be very expensive, an officer from the Housing Options service may be asked to provide a professional opinion on alternatives.

- 11.7 Where adaptations require design changes it is crucial that the Occupational Therapist/appropriately trained practitioner and Technical Officer take a co-production approach by working together with the applicant and their families so they can be engaged in the process and the creating of the design at the appropriate stage.
- 11.8 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. The Council will assess the impact that any alterations to the home will have on other family members. This will be carried out jointly between the Occupational Therapist/appropriately trained practitioner and the Housing Technical Officer as part of the planning process.
- 11.9 **Complex cases:** Where cases are complex or indicate the works will potentially exceed the mandatory £30,000 grant limit, the Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner will involve adult care or children's social care services and work in collaboration with the person, Carer or other household members living in the property. This will help to determine potential solutions and help to support any adaptations recommended as part of determining what is necessary and reasonable. This will help to prevent a delay in the decision-making process.
- 11.10 The adult or child with a disability may be eligible for statutory support from the local authority (under the Care Act or Children's Act). The Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner will always make the person/child/family aware of their rights to this support as part of the assessment.
- 11.11 The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 does not state that social care assessments are mandatory. However, to help determine if adaptations are necessary and appropriate, Social Care will be consulted, and the person with the disability may require a social care assessment to help determine if the installation of adaptations are necessary and appropriate and the most cost effective.
- 11.12 The Council will consider how best to achieve value for money, taking into account:
  - How to design adaptations that will meet current and anticipated future needs
  - Projected costs of health and social care in the longer term
  - Alternative options including moving to a different property

Value for money will not always be achieved by choosing the cheapest option.

- 11.13 An adaptation should satisfy the present and anticipated needs of the disabled person even in large and complex adaptations costing above the maximum grant.
- 11.14 Consideration should be given to potential alternative options for the relevant works that could meet the required purposes. For example, where the purpose is to provide access to a room suitable for sleeping, then a stairlift or utilising an existing ground floor room is likely to be preferred over building a new bedroom.
- 11.15 Each application will be considered on its own merits.
- 11.16 Only then can the Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner recommend (in collaboration with the person with the disability and Carer) which solution is appropriate.
- 11.17 Where a home is in serious disrepair or beyond economic repair then the decision may be taken that the relevant works are not reasonable and practicable. The Council will in these cases provide information and advice to the applicant on their housing options.
- 11.18 The Occupational Therapist referral report will be prepared and submitted to the Housing Adaptation Service in a timely way to avoid any unnecessary delays in the meeting of needs of the disabled person.
- 11.19 The Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner must complete a referral report. On cases where the cost of works indicate that it will exceed the Disabled Facilities Grant mandatory limit of £30,000 or is considered complex a more comprehensive Occupational Therapist referral report is required.
- 11.20 A summary of what minimum information should be included in the recommendation referral reports is detailed in [Appendix 2](#).
- 11.21 In practice, when an application is received by the Aids and Adaptations Team it should be complete and ready for an almost instant decision. This will avoid unnecessary delays in a decision.
- 11.22 Routine DFG applications supported by the Occupational Therapist recommendations (under the cost of £30,000) will be submitted directly to the Aids and Adaptation Service Manager for a decision, therefore they will not be required to go to panel, unless there are exceptional circumstances.
- 11.23 On receipt of a referral from an Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner, the Aids and Adaptations Team will deal with each case on a priority basis, regardless of their tenure.

Each case will be classified, by recommendation of the Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner, into one of the following categories:

- High Priority

- Standard Priority

11.24 High Priority cases will be dealt with first, in periods of high demand, and the date a referral is received is also taken into account when distinguishing between referrals.

## **12. MEANS TESTED CONTRIBUTIONS**

12.1 In accordance with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 all applicants for a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant are means tested except for Council tenants going through the Councils own application process.

12.2 Where a landlord other than the Council makes an application for a grant towards the cost of works required for the provision of adaptations on behalf of a person with a disability living in their property (private, housing association, and licensee), means testing will not apply. In this case the Council reserves the right to request to retain nomination rights to a rented property for the 5-year term of the grant where a landlord applies for assistance and the property becomes available for reletting.

12.3 The Means tests determine whether any contribution is to be paid towards the cost of works by the applicant. Means testing considers the income and capital of the person with the disability and his or her spouse or partners.

12.4 Where it is apparent that the person applying may not automatically qualify for a grant, a preliminary means test may be undertaken to provide the prospective applicant with an early indication of their likely contribution. Such preliminary tests will not be applied in urgent cases to ensure there are not any unnecessary delays or where the disabled person is in receipt of a passporting benefit.

12.5 If a person applying is on a means-tested benefits they are 'passported' to a full grant. Which means if the applicant is in receipt of the following benefits they will not be means tested.

- Universal Credit
- Income Support
- Income-based Employment and Support Allowance (not contribution-based ESA)
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (not contribution-based JSA)
- Guarantee Pension Credit (not Savings Pension Credit alone)
- Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit (where your annual income for the purposes of the tax credits assessment was below £15,050)
- Housing Benefit

Applications for disabled children are also passported to a full grant.

- 12.6 Where a contribution is required, the applicant should be notified and informed when payment should be made before any approved work commences.
- 12.7 Where an applicant withdraws their DFG application due to not being able to pay the contribution due to financial hardship the aids and adaptation service will notify the occupational therapist team of the withdrawn DFG application.
- 12.8 Where the person with a disability is a child or young person or is in receipt of a means-tested welfare benefit this means that they are exempt from means testing.
- 12.9 A child is a person under 16. The child should be in receipt of Child Benefit. A “young person” is 16 or over but under 20 who is receiving full-time education.

### **13. ADMINISTRATION OF DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS AND CONDITIONS**

- 13.1 Disabled Facilities Grants are administered by the Council’s Housing Services under the provisions of the Housing Grant, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.
- 13.2 For Council tenants the Council has two distinct roles and will consider its function as a landlord as well as awarding grants to assist with adaptations in council tenancies. As a landlord the Council also has to consider whether to permit an adaptation to be installed. (Ref Section 13.6)
- 13.3 Where an application for a grant is approved but at a later date it is found by the Council that the applicant was not entitled to the grant awarded due to a fraudulent application, the Council may demand that any grant which has been paid be repaid immediately, together with interest from the date on which it was paid until repayment, at such reasonable rate as the Council may determine, but generally within a twelve months period.

#### **13.4 Landlord consent**

- 13.5 There are occasions where an adaptation will fundamentally alter the property from its original size, layout and design, which may affect its suitability for future lettings. In these instances, the landlord may decline an adaptation. Discussions may be had with the landlord whether alternative accommodation may be offered.

#### **13.6 Council adaptations and landlord consent**

- 13.7 For Council tenant adaptations the Council will consider the following factors as part of the landlord consent decision-making process:
- The suitability of the property for the size of household, this can include overcrowding or under occupancy (as defined by the Council’s Housing Allocations Policy)
  - The applicant’s ability to safely access any common parts (it is the Council’s policy not to install stair lifts in the common parts of a property)

- Whether there are any competing needs of family members that need to be met in that particular property
- Whether there is suitable alternative accommodation available considering the applicant's circumstances and health conditions
- The availability of the applicant's existing support network and carers
- Whether external adaptations, for example ramping, would adversely affect the area for other people
- Any significant rent arrears
- Any ongoing antisocial behaviour
- Any other relevant factors

13.8 If the Council declines permission for an adaptation, the Council will write to the tenant and explain the reason(s).

### **13.9 Homeowners - proof of ownership:**

13.10 Homeowners will need to provide appropriate proof of property ownership. The Council will also confirm ownership details with the Land Registry.

13.11 A prospective owner can make the application before they have acquired the property, but the application cannot be approved until they take ownership.

### **13.12 Local Land Charge**

13.13 Where Disabled Facilities Grant adaptations are carried out in privately owned properties and the grant funding exceeds £5,000, a Local Land Charge will be registered against the property for a period of 10 years. If 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 of completion, the Council will require the repayment of the proportion of the grant that exceeds £5,000, by demand. The amount repaid to the Council will not exceed £10,000.

13.14 Before requiring repayment of any Disabled Facilities Grant the Council must be satisfied that it is reasonable in all the circumstances to require repayment, and will take into consideration:

- Whether repayment of the grant would cause financial hardship
- Whether there is a satisfactory reason for the move, e.g. for a job, to improve health or well-being, or to receive care from others.

13.15 The Council will not place a Local Land Charge where the application is being made for a child in a long-term foster placement.

### **13.16 Changes in circumstances**

13.17 If after the approval but before the works are finished, the applicant stops being eligible for the grant (e.g. they sell or intend to sell the property), then the Council won't make any further payments and can demand repayments.

- 13.18 In the unusual and unfortunate circumstances where, after approval, but before the works are finished, the disabled person passes away, or they move, or the works become unsuitable to meet their needs, then the Council will use their discretion whether any more payments should be made and may need to reclaim some or all of the costs.
- 13.19 For person's for whom the works have been recommended passes away after approval, but before the works are completed, the Council can still pay for some or all of the works including any fees or charges. The works will not be left incomplete but may not be completed to the full Occupational Therapists or appropriately trained practitioner's recommendation if some aspects of the work are no longer required.

#### **14. HOUSING ADAPTATIONS PANEL**

- 14.1 The Housing Adaptations Panel will provide a framework to discuss high-cost cases which cost £30,000 and above. The aids and adaptations service manager is delegated to make the final decision for works up to £30,000 and put forward the business case for recommendations to approve works to the appropriate authorising officer for works greater than £30,000.
- 14.2 The Panel will include representation from housing, social care, occupational therapist (OT) and where appropriate other professionals involved in the case.
- 14.3 In cases where a panel is used, and where an expert assessor has been involved in the care and support journey, the same person or another person with similar expertise should be part of the panel to ensure decisions consider complex or specialist issues.
- 14.4 The Panel will not cause unnecessary delays.
- 14.5 The Service Manager for Aids and Adaptations is responsible in ensuring relevant and up to date Terms of Reference for panel meetings are in place and appropriate recording of decisions are accessible.

#### **15. NOTIFICATION OF A DECISION**

- 15.1 The Council Adaptations Service must notify an applicant as soon as reasonably practicable and not later than six months after the date of the application has been received from the Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner whether an application is approved or refused.
- 15.2 When adaptations are refused the applicant will be notified in writing of the decision, clearly outlining the reasons for the decision and information on the corporates complaints policy if the applicant is dissatisfied with the council decision.
- 15.3 When 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.

15.4 The applicant will be updated on progress of works (and any potential delays) at all stages. The Aids and Adaptations Service will oversee this.

## **16. SOCIAL CARE**

16.1 Where social care determines that a need has been established, it has a duty under the Care Act 2014 for adults and, Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 for children. Even where housing services are unable to approve or to fully fund an application it is their duty to assist. An example of this could be where an applicant for Disabled Facilities Grant has difficulty in meeting their assessed contribution from the Disabled Facilities Grant means test or the work will cost more than the upper limit, the social care authority can step in to provide financial assistance.

## **17. ALTERNATIVE HOUSING OPTIONS**

17.1 Alternative housing options will need to be considered where an adaptation is considered not necessary or appropriate or not practical for the existing property.

17.2 The Council will discuss with the applicant the option of a transfer to alternative accommodation that better meets the needs of the disabled person. This could include:

- Arranging a suitable alternative within the council's stock, for which a priority medical banding on the housing register would be given; or
- The purchase of a suitable property to meet the needs of the person; or
- Housing with a social housing provider

17.3 Examples of why this may be considered are where:

- Not considered as necessary and appropriate, which includes,
- The costs for adaptations does not provide best value
- A vacant property which is already suitably adapted to meet the essential needs of the disabled person can be identified
- An extension can be avoided by a move to a larger property
- The current property is not suitable for a particular adaptation
- Adaptations to a property may reduce its potential to be let in the future.

17.4 In cases where rehousing is being looked at as the approved or preferred option, then this must be possible within a reasonable timescale (based on an assessment of risk and availability of accommodation). If it is not possible to find suitable alternative accommodation within a reasonable time, adaptations to the existing property or another property will be considered.

17.5 If an applicant is a homeowner and is proposing to buy a new adapted home, an application for a grant can be made but a Disabled Facilities Grant can only be awarded once the purchase has been completed and this can be proven. If an

applicant is looking to move either through selling and buying or moving within both the private and social rented sector, they will be encouraged to liaise with the Council regarding the suitability of the dwelling to meet the needs of the person with a disability, whether it is possible to adapt the property, and the likely timescales, cost and contribution expected to do so.

17.6 The Council is committed to making best use of their housing stock. Appendix 4 details the Council's approach to letting council adapted properties.

## **18. HOW DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS AND WORKS ARE DELIVERED AND SUPERVISED**

18.1 The legal requirement is for the Adaptations Service to complete adaptations within 12 months of a Disabled Facilities Grant application being approved.

18.2 The Adaptations Service uses its own procured approved contractors in the delivery of adaptation works. This approach enables the Service to ensure that the contractors deliver the necessary works to the appropriate standards and specification, thereby meeting the identified needs:

- To an agreed schedule of rates
- In line with relevant legislation and guidance
- In reasonable timeframes
- With appropriate recourse in relation to any defects

18.3 This approach is designed to provide access to approved contractors that complete work to set specifications with experience of delivering specialist adaptation schemes. This provides peace of mind to applicants that the works will be delivered appropriately.

18.4 The options available to private applicants regarding how they can apply for assistance which are outlined in Appendix 3.

18.5 Council tenant adaptations works will always be fully managed by the Council's Adaptations Service on behalf of the applicant, which is Option 1 in Appendix 3.

### **18.6 Using own contractors – non compliance**

18.7 If after approval the Council finds out that:

- The application was wrong; or
- Works were started before the approval; or
- Works were not completed within 12 months; or
- The works cost less than expected; or
- The works were done by a different contractor, then the Council can refuse to pay, reduce the grant or even demand repayments



## 19. MAINTENANCE AND WARRANTIES

- 19.1 When equipment is installed using a Disabled Facilities Grant for private residents the awarded applicant becomes the owner of the equipment and is therefore responsible for its maintenance, repairs and for removing the equipment once it is no longer needed.
- 19.2 Every adaptation is provided with a minimum 1-year warranty. With some adaptations, extended warranties are also provided. Information on specific warranties will be provided to the applicant as part of the grant approval process.
- 19.3 When equipment is installed for Council tenants the Council will be responsible for its maintenance and repairs at the end of their initial warranty period. Information relating to maintenance and services will be provided to the tenant before and after the installation.

### 19.4 Removal of Adaptations

- 19.5 If the adaptations installed in a property are no longer required by a homeowner or private resident the responsibility remains with the homeowner or private landlord to remove and will be at no cost to the Council. Where this relates to Council tenants, Housing Services will normally require the adaptation to remain in situ. In some exceptional cases the Council may re-convert properties by removing the adaptations, but this is at the discretion of the Council.

## 20. FEES AND ANCILLARY CHARGES

- 20.1 The Housing Renewal Grants (Services and Charges) Order 1996 the permitted the Council to include costs incurred for necessary fees associated with Disabled Facilities Grant applications of the overall cost of the eligible works.
- 20.2 The Council will include a 15% administration fee of the overall cost of eligible works. For example, if the cost of work totals to £10,000 the overall cost of the grant award will be £11,500. (Includes £1,500 fee)

Where cost of works exceeds the £30,000 mandatory grant limit the discretionary top up grant will cover the costs of the fees. For example, if the cost of works totals to £30,000 the overall cost of the grant award will be £34,500 (includes £4,500 fee)

- 20.3 **Extensions:** In relation to extensions, any additional costs for specialist services such as consultancy services etc will be met by the Disabled Facilities Grant.
- 20.3 Fees can cover the following but not limited to:
- Confirmation, if sought by the Council, that the applicant has a relevant owner interest
  - Relevant legal fees
  - Technical and structural surveys
  - Design and preparation of plans and drawings

- Preparation of schedules of relevant works
- Assistance in completing forms
- Applications for building regulations approval (including application fee and preparation of related documents), planning permission, listed building consent and conservation area consent (and similar)
- Obtaining of estimates
- Consideration of tenders
- Supervision of the relevant works
- Disconnection and reconnection of utilities were necessitated by relevant works
- Payment of contractors

## **21. PAYMENT OF ASSISTANCE**

- 21.1 When the adaptation work is complete the relevant contractor will submit the final invoice to the Council. The Council will only release the applicant's approved grant money allocation to pay the contractor(s) on behalf of the applicant on the Council's confirmation of satisfactory completion of the specified works required to meet the needs of the applicant. The appointed Adaptations Officer will inspect the works and must be satisfied the work has been completed appropriately and to the correct standard and the applicant must also agree the works are satisfactory.
- 21.2 Payments will be delayed until such time as any issues identified have been resolved.
- 21.3 For applicants who choose to use their own contractors for major works such as extensions, grant money allocation will be released in three installments to pay the contractor(s) on behalf of the applicant. The appointed Adaptations Officer will inspect the works and must be satisfied the work is to the correct standard and the applicant must also agree the works are satisfactory at each stage.

## **22. SERVICE STANDARDS**

- 22.1 There is no national standard for the services provided through this policy excepting a statutory requirement for Council to determine valid and fully made applications for mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant within 6 months and to complete the works within twelve-month months from the approval date. This is replicated for council housing adaptations to ensure a consistent approach to delivery.
- 22.2 This does not account for pre-application activities such as the screening process and the 'application support' and administration including Occupational Therapy or appropriately trained practitioner assessment, means testing, producing specifications, finding contractors etc.
- 22.3 In a few cases there may be details to pursue, such as proof of property ownership, landlord or owner's permission etc., and if there are alternative schemes under consideration or issues to do with financing the applicant's contribution. However,

the service records all key activities and dates and can report on a variety of measures, including date enquiry received, date application submitted, date determined, date works started, value of works and contributions, date works finished, and completed as in signed-off.

- 22.4 The actual payment of the Disabled Facilities Grant should take place no more than 12 months after the application was made.

### **23. CONSIDERATION OUTSIDE THIS POLICY**

- 23.1 This policy is not intended to fetter the discretion of the Council as no policy can cover all circumstances and therefore, we may have to deal with applications not meeting the requirements of the policy and criteria. Assistance outside of those set out above can be awarded at the discretion of the Aids and Adaptations Service manager. Such an award will only be made subject to the provision of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) England and Wales Order 2002 and subsequent guidance. An example may include exceptional circumstances where adaptations to a person's home cannot move forward due to identified repairs needed in the home or items cluttering the property which needs to be addressed before the adaptations or modifications can be carried out.

### **24. COMPLAINTS**

- 24.1 If a person who received the adaptations or applicant has cause for dissatisfaction with the service or a decision, this should be in the first instance raised informally with the Aids and Adaptations Service Manager. If this is not resolved to the persons satisfaction, they have the right to have their case investigated via the Council's complaint procedure.
- 24.2 The details of the Council's complaints policy will be provided on request or when it is considered that this information will be of assistance to that person.
- 24.3 Information can also be found on the Councils webpage.  
<https://www.rotherham.gov.uk/council/complain-council-services/1>
- 24.4 Details of how to make a complaint will also be included in any correspondence setting out decisions made under this policy.
- 24.5 Once the Council's formal complaints process has been exhausted, the Housing Ombudsman can be approached to review and investigate complaints about this policy.
- 24.6 The Council recognises that some people may need additional support raising concerns informally or when making a complaint under this policy and will also signpost people to the support available locally through groups such as Citizens Advice.

24.7 Any such complaint will be treated seriously and will (if necessary) be reflected in subsequent reviews of this policy or in amendments to the way that services are delivered.

## **25. DATA PROTECTION**

25.1 All data will be held in accordance with the Data Protection Act 1998 and the General Data Protection Regulation (EU) 2016/679 (GDPR).

25.2 The Council may investigate or formally verify any of the information provided in connection with any application for assistance. In order to progress an application it may be necessary to share information provided with internally with other services or other organisations that may assist with the grant process.

These may include:

- Rotherham Council –Housing Benefits, Planning & Building Control
- Rotherham Council – Adult Social Care or Children’s Services
- Relevant Government Departments
- Relevant Agencies appointed by applicant’s

25.3 The Council is under a duty to protect public funds and may use the information provided for the prevention and detection of fraud. It may also share this information with other bodies administering public funds solely for these purposes. The above information will need to be communicated with applicants at the time their personal information is obtained in the form of a Privacy Notice. This is necessary to comply with individual’s ‘Right to be Informed’ in accordance with GDPR.

25.4 Safeguards will ensure the security of the data and will comply with Article (1) (f) of the GDPR.

## **26. EQUALITY**

26.1 The Council is committed to fulfilling its roles as an employer, service provider, purchaser of goods and services without discrimination. We will apply this policy fairly and give equal treatment regardless of age, disability, gender, sexual orientation, transgender status/gender reassignment, race and religion/belief. All members, employees and agents of the Council must seek to eliminate discrimination and promote equality diversity, inclusion and good relations between all groups.

26.2 The Council wants to improve the lives and well-being of everyone in the Borough. This policy is particularly relevant for anyone who has a disability or long-term condition. It is the Council’s aim is to ensure that people have a safe and suitable home and immediate surrounding areas so that they can live independently in their current home for as long as is possible. The Council will record and monitor data to gain insight on the impact of this policy on diverse applicants and help improve operational processes.

26.3 An Equality Impact Assessment has been carried out in respect of this policy and which identified no negative impacts on any person/group with a protected characteristic as a result of this policy.

## **27. PERFORMANCE AND DELIVERY**

27.1 The Aids and Adaptation service will ensure that customer satisfaction feedback is routinely evaluated. This will help to identify any trends in the overall service improvement and the effectiveness of this policy.

27.2 Performance and delivery of the major adaptations service is monitored by the Directorate Leadership Team for Adult Care Housing and Public Health.

27.3 The Council is committed to delivering excellent services and welcome constructive feedback and comments to further refine our service offer and will review performing against the standards set out in this policy.

## **28. OFFICER SCHEME OF DELEGATION FOR GRANT VALUE**

28.1 Budget managers are authorised to incur expenditure in accordance with the estimates that make up the budget and the Capital Programme within their delegated area of control and work within the authorised cash limits and utilise the resources allocated to them in the most efficient, effective, and economic way.

28.2 The approval limits below are solely to support the management and administration of the Aids and Adaptations Policy and relate to this service only.

28.3 A £30,000 mandatory grant limit is prescribed by the funding guidance unless additional funding is supported in the application of an Aids and Adaptations Assistance Policy.

28.4 The decision to approve expenditure should demonstrate that value for money considerations have been considered.

28.5 The authorising officer's roles and maximum approval limit 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

28.6 Anything above £250,000 will require an Officers Decision Notice.

## **29. IMPLEMENTATION AND REVIEW OF THIS POLICY**

- 29.1 This policy will be implemented from 1st April 2024 and will be reviewed every three years.
- 29.2 An implementation plan will support the introduction of the new policy to ensure that the assistance available in this policy is communicated to internal and external partners, stakeholders and local residents.
- 29.3 For minor changes to the Policy authority is delegated to Strategic Director of Adult Care Housing and Public Health.
- 29.4 To suspend, withdraw or prioritise any of the discretionary grant assistance under this Policy in line with budgetary constraints, authority is 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.

## APPENDIX (1)

### TABLE SUMMARY OF THE AIDS AND ADAPTATION ASSISTANCE SCHEMES FOR ASSISTANCE

Types of Schemes to Assist	Funding Max and Authorisation	Financial Eligibility	Purpose of Assistance & Conditions	Available to:		
				Council Tenants	Home-owners	Other Renters
Equipment	N/A	No charge to loaning equipment	<p>Small items of aids/equipment to help with daily tasks, can be loaned where there is a need for such equipment. Items can include perching stools, raised toilet seats, crutches, pressure cushions and toilet frames.</p> <p>A referral from an Occupational Therapist/appropriately trained practitioner, GP or hospital discharge team is required.</p>	✓	✓	✓
Assisted Technology	N/A	No charge (Charges may apply to assistance linked to Community Alarms)	<p>Electronic devices to assist vulnerable adults with continuing to live independently at home, include range of simple, battery-operated stand-alone items.</p> <p>A home activity monitoring systems requires Community Alarms.</p>	✓	✓	✓
Minor Adaptations	Up to £1,000	No charge	<p>Small installation works/adaptations to help with everyday tasks that do not require structural changes to the home. Include things like grab rails, stair rails and bath rails.</p> <p>No repayment conditions.</p>	✓	✓	✓
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (Disabled Facilities Grant)  Council tenants	Up to £30,000	Means tested for private renting, housing association	Typically for larger items of equipment and alternations to the home to assist people to live independently in their home. Adaptations will need to be deemed to be necessary and appropriate, reasonable and practical.	✓	✓	✓

<p>(Funding HRA)</p>		<p>tenant and homeowner) Children as defined in the policy are exempt to means testing.</p> <p>Non-Means Tested for Council tenant's.</p>	<p>Examples of adaptations work that could be carried out, includes access ramps, alterations to the heights of light switches and electrical sockets, level access shower, extensions, and specialist equipment such as wash and dry toilets and the provision of additional thermal comfort.</p> <p><b>Conditions</b> The applicant must be eligible for the Disabled Facilities Grant.</p> <p>Works commenced prior to grant approval will not be eligible.</p> <p>No repayment condition's</p> <p><b>Rented applicants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• *Must sign a certificate confirming that they intend for the next five years (grant period) they will continue to live in that same property.</li> <li>• Landlord consent to carry works and confirmation intentions applicant will continue to live in the property for next 5 years required.</li> </ul> <p><i>*For Council tenants they will be required to confirm their intentions for future occupation, Rehousing applies in line with the Housing Allocation Policy.</i></p> <p><b>Homeowners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land charge will be registered against the property for a period of 10 years when the grant funding exceeds £5,000. Repayable upon sale or transfer of the property. Repayment to the Council of the</li> </ul>			
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			<p>proportion of the grant that exceeds £5,000, by demand.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The amount repaid to the Council will not exceed £10,000.</li> <li>No local land charges where the application is being made for a child in a long-term foster placement.</li> </ul>			
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**Applicants must meet the Mandatory (Disabled Facilities Grant) application criteria to be considered for a Discretionary Grant. Discretionary Grants are subject to funding being available.**

Types of Assistance	Funding Max	Financial Eligibility	Purpose of Assistance & Conditions	Available to:		
				Council Tenants	Home-owners	Other Renters*
Rapid Home Adaptations Grant	Up to £10,000	<p>Applicants who are living in private rented, housing, associations and homeowner with less than £16,000 savings are eligible.</p> <p>Council tenants are eligible.</p>	<p>Aimed at people who are at risk of nonelective admission or readmission to hospital (i.e., through falls). This enables a faster response for the provision of uncomplicated to install adaptations.</p> <p><b>Conditions</b> The applicant must be eligible for the Disabled Facilities Grant and must have a need that can be met by the installation of the following adaptation(s):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level access shower</li> <li>Shower over bath</li> <li>Stair lift (straight &amp; curved)</li> <li>Ramped access to property (including door widening &amp; level access door)</li> <li>Or a combination of 2</li> </ul> <p>One discretionary grant within a 3-year term from initial approval date Supporting documentation, regarding savings Signed Financial Declaration</p>	✓	✓	✓

		Children as defined in the policy are eligible.	<p>No repayment conditions. (See land charge)</p> <p><b>Rented applicants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant signs certificate of future occupation and intends to reside there for five years*</li> <li>• Landlord signs certificate of future occupation</li> <li>• Landlord consent for works to be carried out</li> </ul> <p><i>* For Council tenants they will be required to confirm their intentions for future occupation, Rehousing applies in line with the Housing Allocation Policy.</i></p> <p><b>Homeowners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land charge will be registered against the property for a period of 10 years when the grant funding exceeds £5,000. Repayable upon sale or transfer of the property. Repayment to the Council of the proportion of the grant that exceeds £5,000, by demand. The amount repaid to the Council will not exceed £10,000.</li> <li>• No local land charges where the application is being made for a child in a long-term foster placement.</li> <li>• Proof of ownership</li> </ul>			
Time Critical Grants	Up to £10,000	Applicants who are living in private rented, housing, associations and	This is a fast-tracked grant and 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.	✓	✓	✓

		<p>homeowner with less than £16,000 savings are eligible.</p> <p>Council tenants are eligible.</p> <p>Children as defined in the policy are eligible.</p>	<p>This grant is also aimed at those who cases are complex, such as for people ready for hospital discharge, where due to the person's property, this cannot be organised swiftly without interim measures being put in place at home to facilitate their safe return to their home. The grant also aims to support the person with the disability as well as assisting families and carer(s) to continue to support them with the overarching aim of improving the person's mental wellbeing at a difficult time.</p> <p><b><u>Conditions</u></b></p> <p>One discretionary grant within a 3-year term from initial approval date</p> <p>Supporting documentation, regarding savings</p> <p>Signed Financial Declaration</p> <p>To be eligible for a Time Critical Grant, an applicant must be eligible for the Disabled Facilities Grant in addition meet the criteria below:</p> <p>The person has a need as identified or confirmed by an Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner,</p> <p>And has a condition with a diagnosis, confirmed by the Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner which falls into any of the following categories:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Diagnosis of a life limiting neurological condition i.e. Motor Neurone Disease</li> <li>• The person is on the end-of-life pathway under their GP, a consultant or hospice care</li> <li>• The person has a government benefit as defined under the</li> </ul>			
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			<p>Department of Work and Pensions Special Rules nearing the end of life</p> <p>Examples of works could include access to first floor facilities via stair lifts, access to the property via ramps, access to appropriate and specialist bathing and toilet facilities including level access showers.</p> <p>No repayment conditions. (See land charge)</p> <p><b>Rented applicants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant signs certificate of future occupation and intends to reside there for five years*</li> <li>• Landlord signs certificate of future occupation</li> <li>• Landlord consent for works to be carried out</li> </ul> <p><i>* For Council tenants they will be required to confirm their intentions for future occupation, Rehousing applies in line with the Housing Allocation Policy.</i></p> <p><b>Homeowners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land charge will be registered against the property for a period of 10 years when the grant funding exceeds £5,000. Repayable upon sale or transfer of the property. Repayment to the Council of the proportion of the grant that exceeds £5,000, by demand. The amount repaid to the Council will not exceed £10,000.</li> </ul>			
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>No local land charges where the application is being made for a child in a long-term foster placement.</li> <li>Proof of ownership</li> </ul>			
Relocation Grant	<p>Up to £10,000</p> <p>2 levels within this maximum limit</p> <p>£5,000 for relocation associated costs</p> <p>£5,000 adaptation works to the new property.</p>	<p>Applicants who are living in private rented, housing, associations and homeowner with less than £16,000 savings are eligible.</p> <p>Council tenants are eligible.</p> <p>Children as defined in the policy are eligible.</p>	<p>Aimed at providing assistance with relocating to a property that better meets the need of the applicant, or where a major adaptation is not appropriate in the principal home, or where the landlord disagrees. The grant is intended to cover reasonable costs, subject to satisfactory evidence that the expenditure has been incurred and are specifically for</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Stamp duty</li> <li>Mortgage arrangement fees</li> <li>Estate agents' fees</li> <li>Conveyancing costs</li> <li>Furniture removal costs</li> </ul> <p><b>Conditions</b></p> <p>One discretionary grant within a 3-year term from initial approval date</p> <p>Supporting documentation, regarding savings</p> <p>Signed Financial Declaration</p> <p>The applicant must be eligible for the Disabled Facilities Grant as well as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The proposed work on the existing property involves major aids and adaptations work costing over £10,000 and relocating is considered beneficial to the person and more cost effective if they moved to a home more suitable.</li> <li>The Occupational Therapist or appropriately trained practitioner agrees the new property is suitable to meet the needs of the person with a disability.</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓

			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicants who have been awarded a medical priority through the Council Housing Allocation Policy will not automatically be considered for such grant.</li> <li>• Costs must be reasonable subject to satisfactory evidence that the expenditure</li> </ul> <p>If the Occupational Therapist has determined that aids and adaptations are needed in the new property, and these are expected to be under the threshold of £5,000, Therefore, a maximum of £10,000 can be awarded which includes a maximum of £5,000 for relocation associated costs and a maximum of £5,000 for aids and adaptations in the new property.</p> <p>No repayment conditions (see land charges)</p> <p><b>Rented applicants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant signs certificate of future occupation and intends to reside there for five years*</li> <li>• Landlord signs certificate of future occupation and agrees that tenant will reside there for five years</li> <li>• Proof of new tenancy or purchase of a property</li> <li>• Other documentation and evidence of costs</li> </ul> <p><i>For Council tenants they will be required to confirm their intentions for future occupation, Rehousing applies in line with the Housing Allocation Policy.</i></p> <p><b>Homeowners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proof of ownership</li> </ul>			
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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land charge will be registered against the property for a period of 10 years when the grant funding exceeds £5,000. Repayable upon sale or transfer of the property. Repayment to the Council of the proportion of the grant that exceeds £5,000, by demand.</li> <li>• The amount repaid to the Council will not exceed £10,000.</li> <li>• No local land charges where the application is being made for a child in a long-term foster placement.</li> <li>• Proof of ownership</li> </ul>			
Professional Fees Grant	£10,000	<p>Applicants who are living in private rented, housing, associations and homeowner with less than £16,000 savings are eligible.</p> <p>Children as defined in the policy are eligible.</p> <p>Not applicable to Council tenants</p>	<p>Aimed at assisting any associated preliminary or ancillary fees and charges prior to a Disabled Facilities Grant being approved. This might include fees charged by a private Occupational Therapist, private architects and surveyors.</p> <p><b>Conditions</b> The applicant must be eligible for the Disabled Facilities Grant.</p> <p>No repayment conditions.</p> <p><b>Rented applicants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant signs certificate of future occupation and intends to reside there for five years</li> <li>• Landlord signs certificate of future occupation and agrees that tenant will reside there for five years*</li> <li>• Landlord consent for works to be carried out</li> </ul> <p><b>Homeowner</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proof of ownership</li> </ul>	N/A	✓	✓

Top-Up Grant	No upper limit (Each case considered on own merits)	<p>Means tested for private renting, housing association tenant and home owner)</p> <p>Children as defined in the policy are exempt to means testing</p> <p>Non-Means Tested for Council tenants</p>	<p>Aimed were there are cases the Disabled Facilities Grant limit of £30,000 is exceeded, the Council will consider providing such additional assistance of a grant-funded top up payment. This discretionary fund is on top of the maximum mandatory award to facilitate the adaptation works deemed necessary to meet the identified need. Funding for this will only be made available as a last resort.</p> <p><b>Conditions</b> The applicant must be eligible for the Disabled Facilities Grant.</p> <p>No repayment conditions. (See land charge)</p> <p><b>Rented applicants</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Applicant signs certificate of future occupation and intends to reside there for five years*</li> <li>• Landlord signs certificate of future occupation and agrees that tenant will reside there for five years</li> <li>• Landlord consent for works to be carried out</li> </ul> <p><i>* For Council tenants they will be required to confirm their intentions for future occupation, Rehousing applies in line with the Housing Allocation Policy.</i></p> <p><b>Homeowners</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Land charge will be registered against the property for a period of 10 years when the grant funding exceeds £5,000.</li> </ul>	✓	✓	✓



			<p>Repayable upon sale or transfer of the property. Repayment to the Council of the proportion of the grant that exceeds £5,000, by demand.</p> <p>The amount repaid to the Council will not exceed £10,000.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• No local land charges where the application is being made for a child in a long-term foster placement.</li><li>• Proof of ownership</li></ul>			
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## **APPENDIX (2) - OCCUPATIONAL THERAPIST RECOMMENDATION ADAPTATIONS REFERRAL REPORTS GUIDE**

The Occupational Therapist recommendation referral reports must include the following information:

- The needs that the person has, based upon the eligibility criteria set out in section 23 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Grant 1996
- The evidence used to make a determination about the nature and level of need;
- Whether the adaptations proposed are necessary to meet the identified needs and the rationale for this (including risk, sustainability and appropriateness of current support being provided);
- Whether the adaptations proposed are appropriate to meet the identified needs and the rationale for this (including what alternative options have been explored, what may be available and why this is not appropriate).
- Any consultation with specialists and involvement with social care.
- In relation to complex cases costing over £30,0000 - Projected costs of health and social care in the longer term without the proposed assistance is known.
- Any information available in regard of the building to be adapted that may assist the Adaptations Team to make a determination about how 'reasonable and practicable' this is; and
- Any other information that would be beneficial to include for the purpose of supporting the application.

## **APPENDIX (3) - MANAGED DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT APPLICATION AND WORKS PROCESS OPTIONS**

If the applicant starts to carry out any work to the property requiring adaptation before the Disabled Facilities Grant has been considered the Council will not approve the grant.

Council tenant's adaptations works will be fully managed by the Council's Aids and Adaptations Service on behalf of the applicant applying as detailed below - Option 1.

### **Option 1 - Managed Application Process**

The Council's Adaptations service will fully manage the application on behalf of the applicant. The service will handle everything on behalf of the applicant through an agreement between the applicant and the service.

This can be the simplest and least demanding option for an applicant, particularly for more extensive adaptations, as the service will organise and manage both the application and the work.

The Service will:

- Where applicable, assess the applicant's financial circumstances by a statutory means test which will identify any contribution to be paid towards the cost of the works.
- Arrange for a technical officer to visit to discuss how the adaptations can be provided in the home and what building works or alterations are required to provide them.
- Draw up a schedule of works and plans (and planning permission or building regulations approval if required).
- Assist in the completion of the formal Disabled Facilities Grant application forms.
- Supervise the contractor on site on behalf of the applicant.
- Deal with any unforeseen works and interim payments.
- Arrange final payment to the contractor and collect any certificates and guarantees from them and pass them on the applicant.

### **Option 2 – Applicant Contractor Process**

This option is where an applicant may wish to use the services of the Council's to prepare their application for Disabled Facilities Grant, including the preparation of drawings but wishes to use their own choice of an independent contractor to carry out the works.

The legislation states that applicants must submit at least two competitive quotes for the work. These should be from independent contractors that realistically reflect the cost of the works/service provided. The best price will be awarded the contract for the works.

The Council may also compare the costs against their own rates. In cases where the quotes received are significantly greater than the Councils rates the Council will award a grant based on these calculated costs.

Unless otherwise directed by the Council, a contractor whose estimate accompanied the application must carry out the works.

A comprehensive information pack will be provided to any applicants who wish to pursue this option including the role that the Service supporting the Disabled Facilities Grant application and the responsibilities regarding the works which will transfer to the applicant.

### **Option 3 – Applicant Managed Process**

This option is where an applicant may wish to complete all elements of the application, supporting information and building management themselves. An applicant can use their own architect or draftsman and contractors to plan, develop or build a preferred scheme. A comprehensive information pack will be provided to any applicants who wish to pursue their own application which outlines the information required to make a Disabled Facilities Grant application and the requirements to receive Disabled Facilities Grant funding.

### **Option 4 - Housing Association Landlords Process**

This option is only when a Landlord makes a direct landlord application on behalf of a tenant. Where the Landlord may wish the Council to complete all elements of the application, supporting information and lead on the building management themselves. The Landlord can use their own architect or draftsman and contractors to plan, develop or build a preferred scheme. A comprehensive information pack will be provided to the Registered Social Landlord who wish to make a Disabled Facilities Grant application and the requirements to receive Disabled Facilities Grant funding.

## **APPENDIX (4) - LETTING ADAPTED COUNCIL PROPERTIES IN ACCORDANCE WITH THE HOUSING ALLOCATION POLICY**

- 1.1 Adapted properties that become available will be offered to those with matching needs or similar needs.
- 1.2 If this is not possible within a reasonable timescale, based on an individual property, then properties may be offered to applicants without a need for the adaptations, as a last resort.
- 1.3 If a person requiring adaptations applies to join the housing register, they may be granted priority banding for a suitable adapted property.
- 1.4 Future tenants must accept the adapted property 'as is', unless the new tenant's assessed needs require additional special requirements.
- 1.5 Where the adaptation is preventing the property from being re-let, i.e. in the situation of a void, after a certain length of time the council may consider removing the adaptation.
- 1.6 Adapting Vacant Properties**
- 1.7 If the Council is considering offering a disabled person a vacant un-adapted or partially adapted property requiring adaptations or further adaptations, Council officers, including an Occupational Therapist and the Adaptations Team's Technical Officer will firstly have to assess the suitability of the property to meet the disabled persons assessed essential needs.
- 1.8 Once there has been an assessment of a vacant property, the council reserves the right to withdraw an offer of accommodation if the property is not deemed suitable. The disabled person will be advised regarding their housing options.
- 1.9 If major adaptations are required and the property is deemed suitable, some or all of the adaptation work will be carried out as a priority where possible and practical, to minimise void times.