

Disabled Facilities Grant Housing Policy 2017 – 2020

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1. Introduction

This policy sets out how the local authority intends to use its powers under the Regulatory Reform Order (2002) to introduce a wider range of housing interventions to promote independent living and well-being. It sets out the assistance available for funding essential repairs to reduce injury and accidents in the home, to ensure homes are adequately heated and the scope of adaptations available under the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

Importantly it aims to provide greater flexibility in how the DFG is used to help deliver wider strategic projects to keep people warm, safe and well at home and to reduce bureaucracy in the grant's administration.

2. Policy Implementation & Review

The policy will be in place from October 2017 to end March 2020. This is in line with the government's commitment in Autumn 2015 to increase national funding to £500m by 2019/20 for DFG (compared to £220m 2015/16, £394m 2016/17).

The policy will be made available on the council's website and a summary document available on request

It is subject to funding and annual review in line with the Better Care Board funding decisions and confirmation of the transfer of funding to Housing via the DFG.

An annual report will report on performance, setting out the spend against each intervention and outcomes using the person-centred outcome measures below:

- I am enabled to remain independent for as long as possible
- I am supported to have social connections and feel happy

- I am enabled to stay well and maintain a good quality of life for as long as possible
- I am able to access a range of community support to help me maintain my resilience and wellbeing
- I have access to appropriate information and support to enable me to manage my long term health condition/s
- I have access to appropriate advice and support to help me to avoid harm or injury

An earlier review may be necessary if performance or take up falls below the expected level to ensure the policy is delivering what it is intended for.

Any changes to the policy will be published on the council's website and a summary document available on request.

The governance of the policy and the assistance given will be with Housing. Annual performance reports will be subject to scrutiny at Housing & New Homes Committee.

3. Strategic aims

The policy relates to national objectives for housing, as well as local strategies. These are summarised below:

National Strategic Context

Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods ("Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods, National Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society," Communities and Local Government, February 2008) based housing in an ageing society on two clear principles - being able to make choices that reflect lifestyle and circumstances and being able to remain living safely at home for as long as possible. The strategy with subsequent removal of the DFG ring fence enables local authorities to pool budgets and provide services that best meet local need.

The publication of the Government's Vision for Adult Social Care ("A vision for adult social care: Capable communities and active citizens Dept. of Health 2010) confirmed the Government's commitment to ensuring that personalisation will be at the centre of independent living for older and disabled people. Adaptation services and Home Improvement Agencies (HIA) are supporting the changes by adopting a more personalised approach and reducing the time taken to adapt as well as reducing costs through smarter procurement to help meet rising demand.

Funding for DFGs in England is now channelled into the Better Care Fund (BCF) One of the aims of the BCF is to achieve improved integration of care and support services. DFG funding in England for 2015/16 was £220m and increased to £394 million in 2016/17. The Autumn Statement 2015 contained a commitment to provide £500m by 2019/20 for DFGs and estimated that this would fund 85,000 home adaptations in that year, preventing 8,500 people from needing to move into a care home in 2019/20 (Autumn Statement 2015, para 1.109).

In the July 2012 White Paper, Caring for our future: reforming care and support, (HM Government, Caring for our future: reforming care and support, July 2012) the Government made a commitment to extend the work of HIAs and to work with Foundations, the national body for Home Improvement Agencies, to do more to reach out

to a wider population and extend their service to more people who fund their own adaptations.

The Care Act 2014 obtained Royal Assent in May 2014. Section 3(1) of the Act places a duty on local authorities to carry out their care and support services with the aim of integrating those services with local NHS and other health services.

Local

Corporate Plan (2015 – 2019)

The policy meets Corporate Plan principles:

- Public accountability - working with, and answerable to, citizens and partners; strengthening partnership delivery arrangements.
- Citizen focused - making services simpler, more connected and more personal.
- Increasing equality – better coordination of council and other public services to tackle inequality and protect the most vulnerable people in society.
- Active citizenship - moving to more collaborative and empowering relationships with our diverse communities.

Sustainable Community Strategy Brighton & Hove Connected and Housing Strategy 2015.

The policy contributes to delivery of Housing Strategy priorities:

Priority 2: Improving Housing Quality - work to improve housing conditions in private rented and owner occupied homes through renewal advice, assistance and enforcement; improving Home Energy Efficiency, improving thermal comfort and reducing fuel poverty and CO2 emissions.

Priority 3: Improving Housing Support – through investment in a range of housing interventions, helping people remain independent helps to mitigate pressures on the more intensive and costly services provided by Adult Social Care, Children's Services and Health.

Fuel Poverty and Affordable Warmth Strategy 2016 – 2020

The policy contributes to funding and delivery of Affordable Warmth Strategy priorities:

- Increase the energy efficiency of the City's housing stock.
- Support residents struggling to pay their energy bills - through work with local advice agencies to ensure residents have access to advice on housing, benefits, money and energy.
- Work together to tackle fuel poverty through partnership and learning - through building upon existing networks to promote available support to all sectors, relevant organisations and communities across the city.
- Increase effective targeting of vulnerable fuel poor households and those most at risk of the health impacts of cold homes.
- To maximise resources and opportunities for tackling the causes fuel poverty.

Better Care Plan 2016

The policy contributes to the Better Care plan priorities that future service provision is:

- **Person centred** - designed around the individual and delivered close to home.

- **Proactive and preventative** - helping people stay healthy and remain independent.
- **Responsive and co-ordinated** - provided in a seamless way that minimises admissions to hospital.
- **Supportive** - when someone is admitted to hospital the system will support them to recover and return home as soon as they are ready.
- **Integrated** - with organisations working together in innovative ways to provide health and social care services.

4. Key priorities

This policy sets out the local housing interventions in place to assist people with renewals, repairs and adaptations in their homes using DFG funding. The key priorities are to meet the needs of older people, disabled people or families with disabled children and to target accident prevention, relieving fuel poverty and assisting with hospital discharge.

5. Capital resources

The total amount of capital funding committed to the policy is up to £400, 000 in 2017/18. This funding comes from the central DFG allocation via the Better Care Board. Because long term commitments are not known there will be an annual review of the policy. Assistance is available subject to funding.

6. The assistance being offered

Assistance being offered	Eligibility criteria & conditions	Means test	Amount available
<p>Relocation Grants to support people eligible for a DFG where it is more suitable for them to move rather than remain in their current property</p>	<p>Eligible for DFG Available to owner – occupiers and private tenants where it is not reasonable or practicable to adapt to meet the disabled person’s assessed needs Conditions: 1. Before proceeding with the process of moving, the property proposed as the new home must be confirmed as suitable by the council’s Housing Adaptations Service. 2. Property to remain in owner-occupation for five years following the Move. (not applicable for private tenants)</p>	<p>Subject to DFG means test</p>	<p>Maximum of £20,000 to cover the costs arising from the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • estate agents fees (limited to a maximum of 1.5% of the property value) • stamp duty (limited to a maximum amount of £7,500) • solicitors fees • valuation fees • mortgage arrangement fees • removal costs • necessary utility and service set up costs • minor adaptations

			to make the property suitable
<p>Hospital Discharge Grants</p> <p>to support any older or disabled person being discharged from hospital</p>	<p>Any older person aged 65 or over or disabled person being discharged from hospital to home - owner-occupier, private tenant or housing association tenant.</p> <p>Conditions</p> <p>1. referral from adult social care or hospital rehabilitation/intermediate care teams, discharge coordinator, hospital social care team or Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)</p> <p>2 excludes packages of care funded by NHS continuing healthcare</p>	Not subject to means test	<p>Maximum of £2,500</p> <p>The grant is not specified, so any work that supports the discharge from hospital to home is eligible under the criteria including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • minor works, such as clutter clearance/deep cleaning • urgent home repairs hazards removal heating systems repaired/emergency heating provided
<p>Dispensing with the means test</p> <p>to cover the most common adaptations carried out ie stair lifts and level access showers</p>	<p>Eligible for DFG Adaptations assessed as necessary and appropriate, reasonable and practicable supported with an Occupational Therapist/OT Assistant recommendation.</p>	Not subject to means test	Maximum of £5,000
<p>Warm, Safe Homes Grants</p> <p>to help low income home owners and private tenants to quickly access financial assistance for a wide range of minor adaptations and repairs to reduce risks of accidents in the home</p>	<p>Available to owner-occupiers and private tenants where the household is in fuel poverty measured by the Low Income High Costs (LIHC) indicator i.e. they have fuel costs above the national average & spending this amount leaves them with an income below the official poverty line, or the household in receipt of Housing Benefit or any of the other 'passporting benefit' for DFG</p>	Subject to means test	<p>Maximum of £5,000 to cover costs arising from:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • electrical and gas safety checks and repairs • repairs or modifications to stairs, floors and steps • safety and security repairs • boiler repairs or replacement loft/cavity wall insulation, including loft clearance
<p>Handyperson</p>	Available to owner-	Subject to DFG	Maximum of £2,500

<p>services – to help with small building repairs, minor adaptations, general home safety checks and remedial actions, falls and accident prevention checks</p>	<p>occupiers and private tenants</p>	<p>means test</p>	<p>Home safety checks Falls and accident prevention checks Remedial works such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • repairing floor coverings • installing locks, chains and spyholes
<p>Fast – track adaptations - to fund adaptations up to £5,000 using other housing professionals such as Private Sector Housing Officers (PSHO) or Trusted Assessors,</p>	<p>Eligible for DFG Adaptations assessed as necessary and appropriate by a PSHO or Trusted Assessor supported with a written recommendation</p>	<p>Not subject to means test</p>	<p>Maximum £5,000 Straightforward adaptations that do not need the specialist assessment of an Occupational Therapist (OT), such as:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • external rails • door intercom & automatic door entry systems
<p>Making homes dementia friendly – to help people with dementia, to make changes to the home that would support them to live in their own home safely and for longer.</p>	<p>Any person diagnosed with dementia – owner-occupier, private tenant or housing association tenant Conditions 1 referral from adult social care or hospital teams, advocate, voluntary and community sector 2 excludes packages of care</p>	<p>Not subject to means test</p>	<p>Maximum £2,500</p>
<p>DFG Fees Grant</p>	<p>Eligible for DFG. To cover reasonable professional fees and charges associated with the grant application where these are incurred, such as private OT fees where engaged to advise on what works are required and specialist technical eg Structural Engineer fees or similar</p>	<p>Not subject to means test</p>	<p>Maximum of £2,000</p>

	to determine if a DFG project is feasible.		
Funding in Excess of the Maximum Amount – to fund adaptations in excess of the DFG grant limit £30,000	Eligible for DFG Considered on a case by case basis	Subject to DFG means test on grant up to grant limit	Maximum of £20,000

7. Additional charges or fees

The assistance is given as a grant for a specific purpose and no repayment required. Where there are conditions attached to the grant assistance these are explained in the table above.

Where the work is required to go through the local Home Improvement Agency (HIA) the grant will include reasonable fees. The fees attached to the assistance will be paid to the HIA on completion of the relevant work.

For the handyperson services, charges for materials may be made or applicants may need to supply materials themselves.

8. Application process

Application will be by completing a short DFG application form and submitting this to the Housing Adaptations Service

- By email at: adaptations@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- post to: Housing Adaptations Service, Room G14, Hove Town Hall, Norton Road, HOVE BN3 3BQ

Where eligibility for assistance requires evidence or consents this must be submitted with the application form.

The application for grant assistance must be approved before the work can start.

Advice and assistance with the application process is available from the Housing Adaptations Service and the home improvement agency.

9. Complaints and redress

If you're not happy with the way in which we have dealt with an application please contact the Housing Adaptations Service in the first instance.

If we cannot put things right you can contact the customer feedback team at:

Email address: customerfeedback@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Phone: 01273 291229

Address: Customer Feedback Team,

Hove Town Hall

Norton Road

Hove, BN3 3BQ.

10. Discretion on cases that fall outside policy

Applications which fall outside this policy will generally be refused. However, the council recognises that in certain cases it may be appropriate to approve such an application. In such cases, decisions will be made by the Executive Director of Neighbourhoods, Communities & Housing in consultation with the Chair of the Housing & New Homes Committee.

11. Key service standards

Once the application is received we will notify the applicant of the decision as quickly as possible and in critical cases i.e hospital discharge cases, within two weeks. Assistance under the policy can be paid to the applicant, or to the Home Improvement Agency acting on the applicant's behalf.

Data protection, safeguarding procedures and equality standards will be fully complied with.