

# HOUSING

## *Assistance Policy*

Feb 2018



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# Introduction

**Government funding through the Better Care Fund is paid to the Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils, to be used for activities which support the national aims and/or outcome measures for the fund, as follows:**

- To fund commissioned out of hospital services and reduce delayed transfers of care
- To prevent unnecessary admission to hospital

This policy sets out how the councils intend to use the government allocation to contribute towards the outcome measures, to meet our local needs and is made in accordance with The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

Any assistance given by the councils is for the purpose of improving the housing stock and enabling vulnerable households to live in good standard, safe, warm and healthy homes. Copies of this policy are available to download from the council websites; [www.wychavon.gov.uk](http://www.wychavon.gov.uk) and [www.malvern hills.gov.uk](http://www.malvern hills.gov.uk)

The key aims are to assist vulnerable people to live in homes which are decent, suitable and affordable and in particular to;

- Increase the number of vulnerable people who are able to live independently at home.
- Reduce the number of people living in homes that have category 1 and serious category 2 hazards (as set out within the Housing Act 2004).
- Reduce the number of unfit homes, occupied by vulnerable people.
- Increase the number of empty properties that are brought into use particularly where that accommodation can then be used to reduce homelessness or be used for temporary accommodation.

The councils will consider in all cases a person's ability to repay or contribute towards the assistance given. The councils will provide in writing the conditions and obligations to which any assistance is subject.

The councils will consider all applications for assistance on their merits however all cases will be assessed against the following criteria:

- All available options have been fully explored
- Assistance through other means is not reasonably available or practicable
- The proposal fits the strategic aims of the councils
- The proposal is economically viable considering the council resources available

The councils will review this policy on a regular basis to take into account changing policies at a national and more local level, as well as information and evidence on the condition of housing in the district.



# Types of Assistance Available

## Disabled Facilities Grants

These are mandatory grants to support the provision of adaptations to promote independent living within the home.

## Discretionary Housing Assistance

- Discretionary 'Top Ups' – can be provided where the maximum of a Disabled Facility Grant has been exceeded or to top up Minor Adaptations / Handyperson services
- Discretionary Standard Adaptations Assistance – to fast track applications through a shorter process
- Housing Repairs Assistance – for essential home repairs
- Empty Homes Assistance - to encourage owners to bring empty homes into use
- Home Move Assistance - to assist people to move to more suitable accommodation
- Hospital Discharge Assistance – for minor adaptations to prevent admissions and enable discharge from hospital
- Warm and Healthy Homes Assistance – to enable residents to install energy measures, to remain warm and healthy

Service Development/Investment – to assist with effective delivery to the customer and investment in new projects and/or acquisitions

The provision of assistance other than mandatory disabled facilities grants is subject to the availability of funding. All applications will be considered based on the identified needs and circumstances of the household. Housing options advice will be provided in all cases to ensure the right option for the household is being pursued to address their need.

Housing options advice may include information about housing rights, entitlement to benefits, adaptations, home repair / improvements, energy efficiency, re-housing, and signposting to other services.

The councils will work with a range of partners including other statutory services, voluntary sector services and landlords to enable appropriate help to be provided.

The councils work closely with Care & Repair Worcestershire (Home Improvement Agency), who provide an optional, added value service for a fee, to support applicants through the process of seeking assistance. This can include help with making applications, detailing the works required, getting necessary quotes, appointing contractors and monitoring work through to completion.

Housing assistance will be provided not only for eligible works but also necessary associated costs e.g. architect and other professional fees.

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

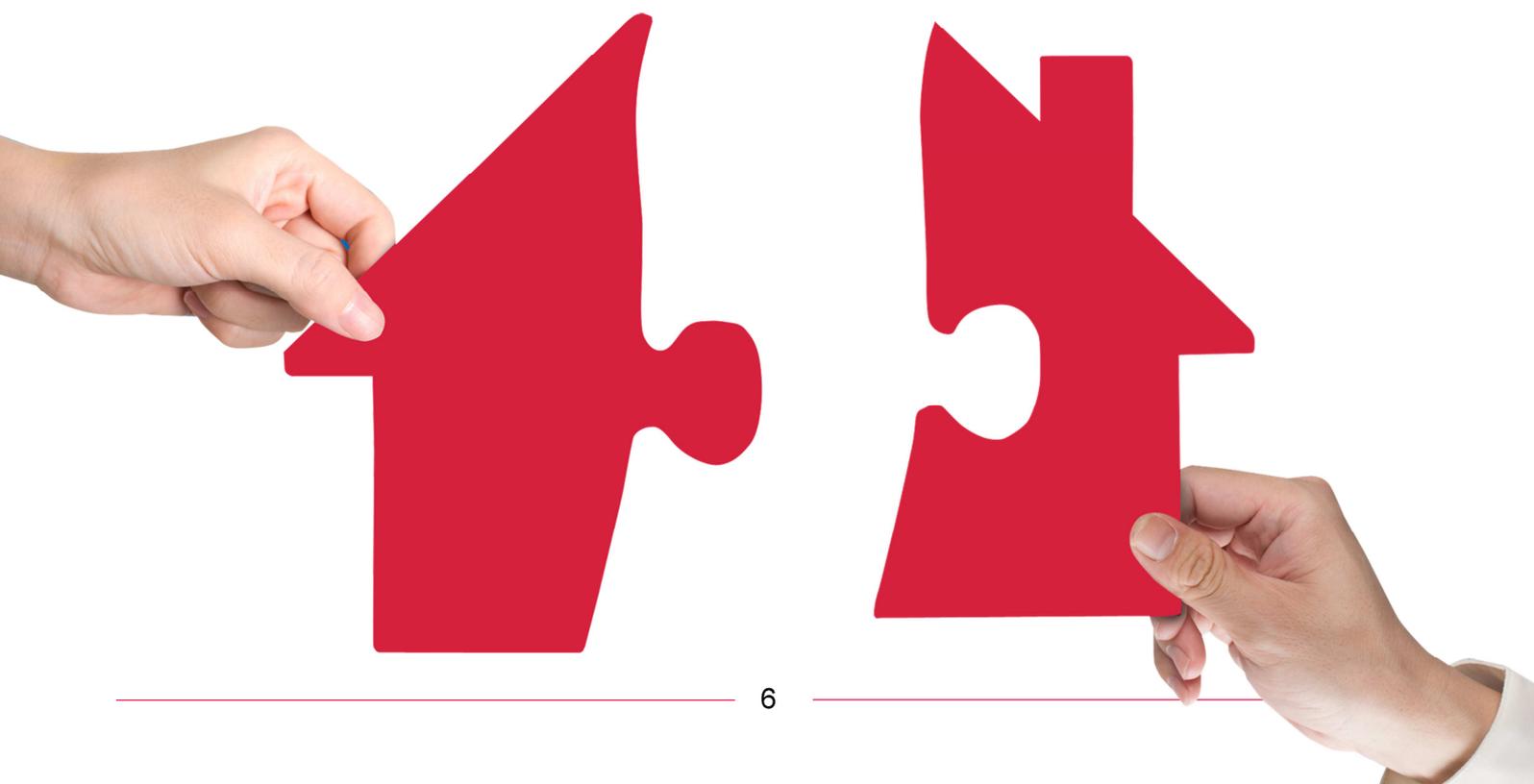
The Head of Housing and Planning Services, in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Economic Growth and Housing at Wychavon District Council and/or in conjunction with the Portfolio Holder for Sustainable Development and Infrastructure at Malvern Hills District Council may use their discretion to provide assistance for any other works at any time as deemed necessary and appropriate, based on the merits of the household circumstances. This includes service development / investment to ensure continual improvement in our services under this policy, investment of funding into new initiatives, acquisitions or to enable effective delivery to our customers. Expenditure over £50,000 will be subject to Executive Committee / Executive Board approval of the relevant council.

# Where Assistance will be Restricted

The following will not be eligible for assistance:

1. Where ownership of property is disputed
2. Where the owner(s) has a statutory duty to carry out the necessary works and it is reasonable in the circumstances for them to do so.
3. The councils will not consider an application for assistance in respect of premises built or converted less than 10 years prior to the date of the application, except where:
  - (i) the application relates to means of escape from fire and other fire precautions for Houses in Multiple Occupation.
  - (ii) the application is for a Disabled Facilities Grant.
4. No assistance will be given in respect of properties owned by Statutory Authorities or trusts. This includes properties owned by Registered Social Landlord, NHS Trusts and Police Authorities except in the case of a Disabled Facilities Grant.
5. Where the residence is not regarded as permanent.
6. The councils will assess whether the scope of works are reasonable and eligible, in particular having regard to the age and condition of the property.
7. Discretionary housing assistance will not normally be provided for works covered by insurance. Where, before a grant or assistance is approved, it is found that an applicant can make an insurance claim, the insurance company will be requested to confirm in writing the level of their liability, if any. The level of housing assistance will be reduced by an amount equivalent to the insurance company's liability. Where housing assistance is approved, a condition will be imposed requiring the applicant to pursue any relevant claim against an insurance company or third party for:
  - (i) claims for personal injuries where works are required under the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant.
  - (ii) claims on the applicant's property insurance or on a third party where the application is in respect of works for which financial assistance has been given and to repay the financial assistance provided out of the proceeds of such a claim.
8. No assistance will normally be given for work started before formal approval of an application, except that:
  - (i) The councils may in exceptional circumstances exempt an application from this condition for example where a defect may present a serious risk to health and safety.
  - (ii) The councils may, with consent of the applicant, treat the application as varied to exclude any works that have been started before approval.
9. Assistance will not be given in respect of works for which a grant under other sections of this policy has been approved or is pending approval.
10. In the case of common parts or group repair we will only consider assistance for the reasonable sum or proportion relating to the applicant's liability. The applicant will prove a repairing responsibility.
11. Assistance will not be given to repair any shed, outbuilding or appurtenances.

12. The councils may refuse any application for assistance lacking the required information.
13. Should the councils be dissatisfied with the status of a housing assistance application or a disabled facilities grant application, it will use its discretion to cease or refuse assistance.
14. The councils will assess whether prices given by contractors meet value for money. In determining this, the officer will give consideration to similar jobs priced within the last year. The officer will liaise with the relevant body or contractor to check the specification and any estimates, as part of the procurement procedure.
15. In the event that the officer believes the price for contracts are too high and identifies an appropriate price for this work (which is lower), then they will advise the client that the total eligible assistance will be the lower amount. The client is under no obligation to use the cheaper priced contractor but must be aware that the councils will only make a grant or assistance payment up to the value of the lower price.
16. If the applicant is the owner of a dwelling in respect of which Housing Assistance has been approved and ceases to be the owner before the works are completed he/she will repay to the councils on demand the total amount of Housing Assistance that has been paid.
17. Where a grant condition imposes a liability to repay the Housing Assistance, the condition will be registered by the councils, as a local/legal land charge.
18. The councils may seek to recover immediately any payments made together with interest accruing from the date of payment.
19. The councils may, where financial and operational demands dictate, defer payment of a disabled facility grant for a period not exceeding 12 months. Any deferment will be detailed within the grant approval notice.
20. The councils will recover assistance monies in full if the relevant conditions are not met, where appropriate a local land charge will be entered against the property for the purpose of debt recovery.



# Eligibility for Housing Assistance

All available options will be explored with applicants. Only if assistance through other means is not reasonably available or practical will the Councils consider offering housing assistance.

Any person who makes an application for Housing Assistance must:-

- (i) be over 18 years of age at the date of the application, and
- (ii) live in the dwelling as his/her only main residence (except where the applicant is a landlord who intends to let the dwelling or where the housing assistance is in relation to an empty property), and
- (iii) have an owner's interest in the dwelling (other than an interest by virtue of being a Registered Social Landlord under Part 1 of the Housing Act 1996 or being eligible for such registration), or be a tenant or licensee of the dwelling, alone or jointly with others but not being a member of the landlord's family, with a tenancy or license permitting occupation of the dwelling for a minimum period of 12 months after approval of the housing assistance, and
- (iv) have the power or duty to carry out the works and where appropriate have the owner's consent in writing to carrying out the works, and
- (v) satisfy such test(s) of resources as the councils may from time to time have in place
- (vi) not be ineligible, by virtue of the Housing, Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, regulations made under the Act or any other enactment.
- (vii) homeowners have the primary responsibility for ensuring their homes are properly maintained but we will assist eligible, vulnerable homeowners to make sure they have the opportunity for achieving the correct property standards.



# Applying for Assistance and Making an Application

All applications must be on a form provided by the councils and must include the following original documentation:-

- (i) Where the estimated cost of the works exceeds £10,000, three quotations are required to be set out on the schedule of grant works/housing assistance provided to the councils. If the estimated works is below £10,000 then two quotes will be required. However, if the work is coordinated through Care & Repair Worcestershire then the procurement frameworks approved by the councils will be used.
- (ii) Particulars of the work to be carried out including where appropriate plans, specifications and specialist reports.
- (iii) Details of any professional fees or charges relating to the work and for which assistance is being sought.
- (iv) Detailed costing of works.
- (v) Proof of ownership of all land and buildings pertaining to the application from a solicitor or mortgagee, or copies of the title deeds/land certificate, or copy of the tenancy agreement or licence to occupy.
- (vi) Proof of occupation and/or tenancy.
- (vii) Financial documentation from all relevant persons e.g. income details, savings etc
- (viii) Proof of receipt of benefits as required.
- (ix) Full details of income from tenants and boarders.
- (x) Permission of co-owners and landlords.
- (xi) VAT exemption form.
- (xii) Where the application is the owner or landlord, a signed undertaking to repay the Housing Assistance, will be imposed if the conditions set out in this policy are not met with regard to future occupation, letting or ownership.
- (xiii) If required, permission under any act of parliament or statutory instrument in particular.
  - Planning Permission
  - Building Regulation Approval
  - Party Wall Act 1966, etc.

Applications relating to the disabled or infirm will require consultation with the medical profession.

The application will only be considered complete or valid when the council has all the information it needs to be able to make a decision on the application.

Persons wishing to pursue housing assistance or a disabled facilities grant where a test of resources applies, will be asked to complete a means test assessment to confirm whether they are eligible and or need to make a contribution. After the assessment, the councils or the Care & Repair Agency will give an initial indication of the assistance likely to be available before the applicant decides if they wish to proceed further with an application.

Where a person decides to continue with an application, then an inspection of the property will be carried out and where appropriate proceed to having a schedule of works drawn up. The schedule will specify the works to be carried out as a requirement for financial assistance and will be used by the applicant to obtain quotations from builders and/or specialist suppliers.

The councils will include in any housing assistance provided, an agency fee for the Care & Repair Worcestershire, the Agency who assists eligible persons with their applications etc.

The applicant may then submit a formal application along with a priced schedule and any other documentation required (such as plans, building and planning consents, specialist reports, etc). Once approval has been given; the agent/applicant has until 12 months from the date of approval to complete the works unless otherwise stated.

# Conditions

The councils reserve the right to impose additional conditions when making a grant/assistance approval. These may include but are not restricted to:

- (i) A contribution to the cost of the assisted works by the applicant.
- (ii) Housing accommodation being maintained in repair after completion of the assisted works.
- (iii) The right of the council to recover specialised equipment when no longer needed.
- (iv) The council will recover grant monies in full if the relevant conditions are not met, where appropriate a local/legal land charge will be entered against the property for the purpose of debt recovery.

# Breach of Undertakings

- Where an owner occupier has given a signed undertaking to occupy a property as his/her principal residence after completion of the assisted works for a period of time, and if they cease to do so during that time, they will repay on demand to the councils the total amount of assistance paid out.
- Where a landlord (or owner) has given a signed undertaking that the property will be available for letting for a period specified after completion of the assisted works, and if the landlord ceases to make the relevant property available for letting during the specified period then the landlord will repay on demand to the councils the total amount of Housing Assistance paid out.
- Where the councils have the right to demand repayment but extenuating circumstances exist, the councils may determine to waive the right to repayment or to demand a sum less than the full amount of Housing Assistance.

# Death of Applicant

- If the applicant should die before the Housing Assistance is approved, the application will be treated as withdrawn.
- If the applicant should die after approval of the Housing Assistance or whilst the approved works are in progress, the councils may at its discretion agree to completion or making good of the works and pay the Housing Assistance in full or, an appropriate proportion of the Housing Assistance.
- Where an applicant dies after completion of the works but before the expiry of the local land charge, the councils will seek repayment of the Housing Assistance from the applicant's estate if a disposal by sale or a change in ownership / tenure takes place.

# Supervision of Works

In the absence of any agency agreement with the councils or Care and Repair Worcestershire, the responsibility for supervision of the works rests with the applicant or with any suitably qualified and indemnified building professional or agent acting on the applicant's behalf and not with the councils.

All work will be undertaken;

- a) In accordance with manufacturers recommendations and best practice.
- b) In accordance with and to the satisfaction of the councils and be wholly completed within 12 months from the date of formal approval.
- c) In accordance with current Health and Safety regulations.

Payment of grant/assistance will be made, in whole or by part payment, on receipt of contractors invoice following satisfactory completion of the eligible works.

# Decision, Notification and Redeterminations

- The councils will notify applicants in writing when their application has been approved or refused. The decision will be notified as soon as reasonably practicable and in any event no later than six months after receipt of a valid application which includes all required supporting documentation.
- If the application is approved, the notification will specify the works that are eligible for assistance, the value of the assistance, the form the assistance will take and the builder/contractor who will carry out the works.
- The councils may, where financial and operational demands dictate, defer payment of disabled facility grant for a period not exceeding 12 months. Any deferment will be detailed within the grant approval notice.
- If the application is refused, the councils will give the reasons for the refusal and also confirm the procedure for appealing against the decision.
- Where the councils are satisfied that because of circumstances beyond the control of the applicant which could not have reasonably been foreseen, the cost of the assisted works has either increased or decreased, the councils may at their discretion re-determine the assistance given in accordance with the grant/assistance framework set out in this document and notify the applicant accordingly.
- Additional works carried out without prior approval of the councils will not result in increased financial assistance being provided and would be the responsibility of the applicant to fund.

## Review of the Councils Decision

Any person having made a valid application to the councils for a mandatory Disabled Facility Grant or Discretionary Housing Assistance may request a review of the decision, not to consider or to refuse an application.

You must inform the councils of your intention to request a review with 21 days of the date of the decision letter. The review should be made in writing and addressed to Head of Housing & Planning Services (working across both Malvern Hills and Wychavon District Councils) at the Wychavon District Council address. Requests for review will only be considered if the applicant clearly sets out their reasons.

The review will be considered by a senior officer who will notify the customer of the outcome in writing. The following decisions may be given:

- Uphold the decision
- Vary the assistance
- Overturn the decision

If, after having requested a review by the councils, you are still not happy with the outcome, you may register a formal complaint under the formal complaint system operated by either Malvern Hills or Wychavon District Council depending on where you live. If still not satisfied with the outcome, you may refer your complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman.

# Payment of Assistance

The Housing Assistance will only be paid if

- (i) the assisted works are completed within twelve months from the date of approval (for empty homes assistance this will be 6 months) unless the delay was caused by the councils.
- (ii) the assisted works are carried out in accordance with the specifications set out in the formal approval or as varied with the prior agreement of the relevant council.
- (iii) the assisted works are carried out to the satisfaction of the relevant council and the applicant.
- (iv) the councils are provided with an invoice, demand or receipt for payment in an acceptable format.

Invoices must be addressed to the applicant c/o the relevant council and must have enough detail for the council to identify in full, the works carried out and the price charged and must not be provided by the applicant or a member of his/her family.

The Housing Assistance may be paid in one lump sum on satisfactory completion of the works or in instalments ("stage payments") as the work proceeds. Stage payments will only be made where the councils are satisfied the value of the work completed exceeds the value claimed. Payment of grant/assistance will be made, in whole or by part payment, on receipt of contractor's invoice following satisfactory completion of the eligible works.

The councils will not enter into any Form of Contract with a builder or contractor and, in the absence of any Care & Repair Agency agreement with the applicant; it is a matter for the applicant to agree any contract with the builder or contractor.

# Security and Repayment of Assistance

Where a grant condition imposed a liability to repay the Housing Assistance, the condition will be registered by the councils as a local land charge.



# Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant

These grants are mandatory under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and are subject to statutory means test.

These grants are awarded to enable applicants to have access to and around their homes, or to use essential facilities in the home to enable them to live independently. Mandatory Disabled Facility Grants can only be given for purposes set out in this Act.

Ongoing maintenance and repair of adaptations and equipment provided under the grant will become the responsibility of the applicant or landlord as relevant.

Whilst it is recognised that a Disabled Facility Grant is a mandatory grant, it is the Council's intention where possible to investigate all housing options, in the most cost effective and suitable way. This could include moving to more suitable and or adapted accommodation that may be available to the applicant before awarding a grant.

The maximum amount of the mandatory Disabled Facility Grant is £30,000. Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance for costs above £30,000 may be considered however this will only be made in accordance with this policy.

Where the cost of a major adaptation exceeds the maximum of a Disabled Facility Grant (£30,000) discretionary assistance can be provided up to £10,000 above the mandatory limit, subject to funding from other sources being unavailable or being very resource intensive.

If considered to be unreasonable given the age and condition of the property, alternatives including the following will normally be considered;

- a) Referral to Social Services for their consideration of providing additional resources.
- b) Alternative schemes of work.
- c) Assistance to enable a move to alternative accommodation, with funding for adaptations to the new accommodation.

# Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

To improve the timescales for the high demand standard adaptations (works less than £10,000) the Councils have introduced a shorter more streamlined process, under our powers to provide Discretionary Housing Assistance. Any works over £10,000 will be considered as a Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant.

## Eligible Applicants

- Any applicant registered or capable of being registered under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and requires adaptations to be provided.
- Any disabled person, as described by Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, s100. applicants can be property owners or tenants, some landlords may apply on behalf of tenants.

## Qualifying Criteria

- A referral from a Community Occupational Therapist (COT) via Social Services confirming that the works are 'necessary and appropriate' is required. This referral will recommend works.
- Entitlement to a Disabled Facility Grant is mandatory but before approval the Council has to be satisfied that the relevant works are both necessary and appropriate for the disabled person, and also that it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the works.
- A permanent and legal residence including dwellings, mobile homes, caravans and houseboats.

## Conditions

Works must qualify as described in s23 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended).

- Works must be recommended by an Community Occupational Therapist and be necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant.
- The works must be reasonable and practicable to carry out having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling or building.
- Subject to a financial assessment of resources.
- The councils will consult, in all cases, for the purpose of determining grant eligibility, with Worcestershire County Council or other agency appointed for that purpose.
- The councils will use their powers to place a local land charge against the property where the DFG exceeds £5,000. Repayment of the grant up to a maximum of £10,000 will be required if the property is sold or changes ownership within 10 years of the grant being awarded. This will be applied on grants up to the maximum £30,000 ceiling for a mandatory Disabled Facility Grant.
- A means test will not be applied to parents where adaptations are required for a disabled child.
- Proof of title is required.
- Landlord consent would be required were applicable.
- Conditions relating to the recovery of equipment in specified circumstances are applied.
- Ongoing maintenance and repair of adaptations and equipment provided under the grant will become the responsibility of the applicant or landlord as relevant.
- Common parts or group repair – The reasonable sum or proportion relating to the applicants liability. Written permission must be obtained from all parties affected by the adaptation.

## Maximum Grant

- £30,000

# Discretionary Assistance

Discretionary assistance will only be considered when all other financial assistance has been exhausted. It is also subject to availability of funding.

Except in the case of Disabled Facilities Grant, Discretionary Top Ups and Home Move, no assistance will be given if the applicant or relevant person(s) are tenant(s) or licensee(s) of a Local Authority, or if the applicant or relevant person(s) are tenant(s) or licensee(s) of a Registered Social Landlord.

## Discretionary Top Ups

These are discretionary assistance and subject to available resources.

**Top Up for Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants** - The council will consider providing a top up, capped at £10,000, where a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant exceeds the £30,000 ceiling and funding from other sources is unavailable or very resource intensive. The council will use its powers to place a lifetime charge against the property as a condition of any top-up. A local land charge will be placed on the property for the total amount of top-up, this is in addition to any local land charge required under the policy for a mandatory Disabled Facility Grant. This discretionary assistance will be repayable in full to the councils should the property be sold, or there is a change of ownership.

**Top Up for Minor Adaptations / Handyperson Services** – The council will consider providing a top up to minor disabled adaptations provided by the AgeUK Handyman Service, for homeowners and private tenants. Any work that exceeds £1,000 will be topped up to a maximum cost of £2,000.

This prevents these cases having to be taken through the mandatory DFG process which can be lengthy and costly. A local land charge is not applicable in these cases; however there will be a restriction of only one application per household in any 5 year period.

# Discretionary Standard Adaptations Assistance

Works undertaken as Discretionary Standard Adaptations Assistance, under the value of £10,000, can now be delivered through a shorter process. This is a discretionary assistance and subject to available resources.

There is no means test associated with this assistance however in the event the Councils or Care & Repair Worcestershire become aware that the applicant has sufficient funds to make a contribution at pre-approval stage then their application will be processed as a Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant and the means test required through that process will be applied.

## Eligible Applicants

- Any applicant registered or capable of being registered under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and requires adaptations to be provided.
- Any disabled person, as described by Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, s100. Applicants can be property owners or tenants, some landlords may apply on behalf of tenants.

## Qualifying Criteria

- A referral from a Community Occupational Therapist (COT) via Social Services confirming that the works are 'necessary and appropriate' is required. This referral will recommend works.
- Entitlement to Discretionary Standard Adaptations Assistance is discretionary and before approval the Councils have to be satisfied that the relevant works are both necessary and appropriate for the disabled person, and also that it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the works.
- A permanent and legal residence including dwellings, mobile homes, caravans and houseboats.

## Condition

- Works must qualify as described in s23 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended).
- Works must be recommended by an Occupational Therapist and be necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant.
- The works must be reasonable and practicable to carry out having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling or building.
- The Councils will use their powers to place a local land charge against the property where the DFG grant exceeds £5,000 up to a ceiling of £5,000. Repayment of the assistance up to a maximum of £10,000 will be required if the property is sold or changes ownership within 10 years of the assistance being awarded.
- Proof of title is required.
- Landlord consent will be required where applicable.
- Conditions relating to the recovery of equipment in specified circumstances are applied.
- Ongoing maintenance and repair of adaptations and equipment provided under this assistance will become the responsibility of the applicant or landlord as relevant.
- Common parts or group repair – The reasonable sum or proportion relating to the applicant's liability.
- Written permission must be obtained from all parties affected by the adaptation.

## Maximum Grant

- £10,000

# Home Repair Assistance

The aim of providing this discretionary assistance is to ensure that vulnerable people remain safe, warm and healthy in their homes. It is available for households that do not have the financial resources to pay for necessary works to their home. Assistance will be given for works considered to be a serious hazard, as well as direct referrals from GP's.

This is a discretionary assistance and subject to available resources. A life time charge is placed on a property receiving Home Repair Assistance.

## Eligible Applicants

Owner-occupiers or private tenants with a repairing responsibility having savings of less than £16,000 and in receipt of one or more of the following means tested benefits:-

- Income Support.
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing/Council Tax Support.
- Pension Guarantee Credit (not pension saving credit).
- Jobseekers allowance (JSA) (income based only).
- Employment Support Allowance (ESA) (income related)
- Universal Credit.

## Qualifying Criteria

- A permanent and legal residence.
- Property in need of essential repairs as determined by the Housing Act 2004 as a 'Category 1 Hazard' or significant 'Category 2' hazard, in order to make the property safe, warm and healthy. Assistance may be prioritised based upon the hazard score or circumstances of the applicant and may in exceptional circumstances include works in default as part of enforcement action.
- The Council will not consider an application for assistance in respect of premises built or converted
- less than 10 years from the date of application.

## Condition

- Only one application for assistance will be considered up to a maximum of £10,000 within any 5-year period. (This condition is at the discretion of the Housing Services Manager and will be relaxed only in exceptional circumstances).
- Assistance repayable in full to the councils should the property be sold or changes ownership. A local land charge will be placed on the property.
- Must have lived at the relevant property for at least 12 months.
- Once approval has been given, the applicant has until 12 months from the date of approval to complete the works.
- Common parts or group repair – The reasonable sum or proportion relating to applicant's liability.

## Maximum Assistance

- £10,000

# Empty Homes Assistance

Empty Homes Assistance will be provided to assist the councils in encouraging the re-occupation of empty properties. This will enable us to make the best use of the existing housing stock by returning empty homes back into much needed homes and therefore reduce the burden on the statutory housing waiting list.

The councils may use this funding to provide assistance for owners and landlords to help them bring empty properties back into use as set out below.

## Eligible Applicants

- Owners and Landlords who can demonstrate that alternative funding options are not financially viable and have savings of less than £16,000.

## Qualifying Criteria

- The property is a permanent and legal residence.
- The applicant must prove that the property has been empty for over 6 months.
- Assistance will only be available for essential works as deemed appropriate by the council, to enable the property to become habitable.
- The council will not consider an application for assistance in respect of premises built or converted less than 10 years from the date of application.

## Condition

- If the owner does not intend to occupy the property, the council will work with the owner to let the property to meet local housing need.
- Completion of the works must be carried out within 6 months of approval.
- Occupation of the property must be carried out within 6 months of completion of works; otherwise the financial assistance will be repaid in full.
- Assistance amount secured as a local land charge against the property.
- Assistance repayable in full if the property is sold or changes ownership.
- Common Parts – The reasonable sum or proportion relating the applicant's liability.

## Maximum Assistance

- £15,000

# Home Move Assistance

To enable people to move to more suitable accommodation to meet their needs, where this is considered more beneficial than providing a Disabled Facilities Grant for adaptations to their existing home.

## Eligible Applicants

- Any disabled person, as described by Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, (as amended).
- Applicants can be owner occupiers or tenants.

## Qualifying Criteria

- The property is a permanent and legal residence.
- Eligible costs – legal and ancillary fees, estate agent fees, removal costs, carpets and curtains.

## Condition

- The assistance will only be approved on a strict case by case assessment and will be subject to available funding.
- The existing home will be released into the housing market to meet the needs of other households.

## Maximum Assistance

- £3,000 (once only)

# Hospital Discharge Assistance

This assistance will prevent admission to and aid discharge from hospital.

## Eligible Applicants

Recognised disabled persons, as described by Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, (as amended) and in receipt of one or more of the following means tested benefits.

- Income Support
- Working Tax Credit
- Housing/Council Tax Support (doesn't include single person or disabled person discount).
- Pension Guarantee Credit (not pension saving credit)
- Jobseekers Allowance (JSA) (income based only).
- Employment Support Allowance (ESA) (income related)
- Universal Credit

## Qualifying Criteria

- The property is a permanent and legal residence.
- Urgent minor adaptations that qualify under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, (as amended).

## Condition

- All works must relate to the applicant's medical needs.
- Assistance only available where a delay in provision of the necessary adaptations will cause and unreasonable delay to the release of a patient from primary care, or where an unreasonable delay in provision of the necessary works will cause a relevant person to be admitted to primary care.

## Maximum Assistance

- £5,000

# Warm and Healthy Homes Assistance

The aim of providing this discretionary assistance is to ensure that vulnerable residents with long term health conditions remain warm and healthy in their homes. It is available for households that do not have the financial resources to access or pay for necessary energy works to their home by any other means.

The Head of Housing & Planning Services will have discretion to consider applications which fall outside of the normal criteria, where 'exceptional circumstances' apply.

## Measures

### Condensing boilers

- To replace low efficiency boilers (F or G rated)
- To replace boilers broken beyond economic repair
- Repairs to efficient boilers (outside of warranty)
- Associated works
- Appropriate heating systems where these are not already present
- Heating controls
- Heating system insulation (cylinder, pipes)
- Cavity wall insulation
- Loft Insulation
- Draught proofing
- To replace old, inefficient, rotten, damaged single glazed windows to thermally efficient double glazed units, also replacement inefficient timber front and rear doors (where appropriate) to double glazed UPVC or composite insulated doors.\*

NB: Where appropriate, works will include an Energy Performance Certificate to be provided

## Eligible Applicants

This assistance is subject to available resources. Owner-occupiers or private tenants with a repairing responsibility having savings of less than £16,010 and in receipt of one or more of the following means tested benefits:-

- Income Support.
  - Working Tax Credit
  - Housing/Council Tax Support.
  - Pension Guarantee Credit (not pension saving credit).
  - Jobseekers allowance (JSA) (income based only).
  - Employment Support Allowance (ESA) (income related).
  - Universal Credit
- Or**
- Household income below threshold after tax, depending on household composition, as per table below:\*

### Income Chart 1 – Gross Household income (annual)

	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	4 or more Children
Single Adult	£13,200	£17,400	£21,600	£25,800	£39,000
Two Adults or more	£19,800	£24,000	£28,200	£32,400	£36,600

\* These figures amended February 2017.

## 2 – Households in receipt of Universal Credit – Net earned Income (monthly)

	0 Children	1 Child	2 Children	3 Children	4 or more Children
Single Adult	£1,100	£1,450	£1,800	£2,150	£2,500
Two Adults or more	£1,650	£2,000	£2,350	£2,700	£3,050

### Qualifying Criteria

- A permanent and legal residence.
- The council will not consider an application for assistance in respect of premises built or converted less than 10 years from the date of application.

### Conditions

- Only one application for assistance will be considered up to a maximum of £5,000 within any 5-year period. (This condition is at the discretion of the Housing Services Manager and only in exceptional circumstances).
- Must have lived at the relevant property for at least 12 months.
- Once approval has been given, the applicant has until 12 months from the date of approval to complete the works.
- Common parts or group repair – The reasonable sum or proportion relating to applicant's liability.
- Call out fees will not be included in the assistance, if it is found that it is an operational issue, rather than a repair or replacement.
- Listed Building Consent is necessary for all works, both inside and out, which affect the character and appearance of the building, including small changes to such features as doors, windows, staircases and fireplaces, even if those items are not considered to be original. It is a criminal offence to alter, extend or demolish a listed building without the necessary consent. Unauthorised works can lead to the prosecution of the owner and the person carrying out the works and enforcement action requiring their correction. You are advised to contact the Council's Conservation Officers to discuss how your proposed works may affect the listed building and what permissions may be required.

In normal circumstances you do not need planning permission to replace existing windows with like for like UPVC windows. However if you are putting in a UPVC Bay window that extends out from the Principal (generally front) elevation of the dwelling, planning permission will be required. Also if the property lies within an area where an Article 4 Directive has been served, generally in a Conservation Area, you may need planning permission. In such circumstances you should check with the Council's Conservation Officer who can advise accordingly.

### Maximum Assistance (other than windows)

- £5,000

### Maximum Assistance (Windows)\*

- £7,500

# Dementia Dwelling Grant

This assistance will be non means tested. It will provide aids and adaptations in the home, designed to enable people with memory loss or a diagnosis of dementia to manage their surroundings, retain their independence and reduce feelings of confusion.

This is a free service which is run by AgeUK and provides a range of aids and adaptations.

## Eligible Applicants

The grant is subject to available resources and is based on assessment of individual need

- A referral from the Early Intervention Dementia Team Service (EDTS), or AgeUK Dementia Team.
- The grant offer will be a combination of standard and bespoke products based around an individuals need.

## Qualifying Criteria

To apply for this grant, you will need to:

- Have been diagnosed with dementia or suffering with recognised memory loss affecting day to day independence.
- Be referred by a Worcestershire GP, OT, EDTS, AgeUK or any Dementia Carers Association, to Care & Repair Worcestershire, regardless of tenure.
- Live at home

If the answer is yes to all three, contact AgeUK on 0800 008 6077 or 01905 740950 and a member of the Dementia Advice Service will be in contact to discuss the service further and book an appointment to visit you.

The Dementia Advisor will talk through the service with either yourself, member of your family or a carer, asking some more questions relating to your diagnosis and circumstances and then carry out a survey of your home to determine which adaptations would help you. Some of the adaptations might be left with you, but some might need installing by one of AgeUK handypersons. If this is the case, AgeUK Independent Living Service will call you.

## Conditions

- All works must relate to the applicants dementia/memory loss needs
- Assistance only available where it will aid the person to remain in their home independently for a longer period.
- Only one application for assistance will be considered up to a maximum of £750.00 within any 2 year period. This condition is at the discretion of the Housing Services Manager and only in exceptional circumstances, can more than one application be accepted.
- Once approval has been given, the applicant has until 12 months for the date of approval to complete the works

## Maximum Assistance

- £750.00

**This grant assistance was added to the policy in April 2017.**