

**AGENDA MANAGEMENT SHEET**

**Report Title:** Home Environment Assessment and Response Team (HEART) Housing Assistance Policy

**Name of Committee:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 18 September 2023

**Report Director:** Chief Officer - Communities and Homes

**Portfolio:** Communities, Homes, Digital and Communications

**Ward Relevance:** All

**Prior Consultation:** HEART Board and Portfolio Holder

**Contact Officer:** Michelle Dickson - Chief Officer Communities & Homes - michelle.dickson@rugby.gov.uk

**Public or Private:** Public

**Report Subject to Call-In:** Yes

**Report En-Bloc:** No

**Forward Plan:** Yes

**Corporate Priorities:** This report relates to the following priority(ies):  
 Rugby is an environmentally sustainable place, where we work together to reduce and mitigate the effects of climate change. (C)  
 Rugby has a diverse and resilient economy that benefits and enables opportunities for all residents. (E)  
 Residents live healthy, independent lives, with the most vulnerable protected. (HC)  
 Rugby Borough Council is a responsible, effective and efficient organisation. (O)  
[Corporate Strategy 2021-2024](#)  
 This report does not specifically relate to any Council priorities but

**Summary:** The report sets out proposed revisions to the current Housing Assistance Policy, adopted by the HEART partnership in 2018.

The proposed revisions will ensure that the availability of grants will be both adequate (in financial terms) and provided in a timely way to

reduce the likelihood of vulnerable disabled households falling into crisis due to the unsuitability of their existing home.

If agreed, the revised policy will become effective from 1 October 2023.

**Financial Implications:** These are summarised in section 5 of the report

**Risk Management/Health and Safety Implications:** These are summarised in section 7 of the report

**Environmental Implications:** An Environmental Impact Assessment has been conducted and forms appendix 1 to this report

**Legal Implications:** The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to help disabled people qualifying for home adaptations through Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's)

In addition, local authorities also have the general power under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (the RRO) to give assistance for home repairs, improvements, and adaptations for the purpose of improving living conditions in its area. The Housing Assistance Policy sets out the local arrangements for this.

The HEART partnership arrangements in place ensures that the Local Authority partners can meet their obligation to co-operate with Social Services authorities to assess need as per the requirements of the Care Act 2014.

**Equality and Diversity:** An equality impact assessment has been conducted and forms appendix 2 to this report.

**Options:**

1. That the proposed revised Housing Assistance Policy be approved for a go live date of 1 October 2023. This will ensure that vulnerable customers can access the more generous grant provisions at the earliest opportunity. At the time of writing, approval of the proposed revised policy, which has been written in compliance with legislative requirements, has been secured across the other Local Authorities within the partnership.

2. That any proposed revisions to the draft policy required by Council are submitted for the consideration of the other partners within HEART. This will cause inevitable delay to the planned go live and bring about a risk should not all parties achieve a consensus on proposed revisions.

**Recommendation:**

IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT -

- (1) the proposed revised Housing Assistance Policy (appendix 3 to this report) be approved; and
- (2) delegated authority be given to the Chief Officer – Communities & Homes to make any non-material amendments which shall include any such measures to ensure the Council's security is protected

**Reasons for Recommendation:**

The policy is legally compliant and is reactive to the current operating climate, where the cost of delivering property improvements have substantially increased, at a time when demand for the service has also increased.

Failure to address this in policy terms will leave the most vulnerable unable to live safely, independently and with dignity in their own homes.

**Cabinet - 18 September 2023**

**Home Environment Assessment and Response Team (HEART)  
Housing Assistance Policy**

**Public Report of the Chief Officer - Communities and Homes**

**Recommendation**

IT BE RECOMMENDED TO COUNCIL THAT -

- (1) the proposed revised Housing Assistance Policy (appendix 3 to this report) be approved; and
- (2) delegated authority be given to the Chief Officer – Communities & Homes to make any non-material amendments which shall include any such measures to ensure the Council's security is protected.

**1. Introduction**

- 1.1 The Home Environment Assessment and Response Team (HEART) is a shared service of the district and borough councils in Warwickshire, working closely with Warwickshire County Council, who also form part of the governance board. The partnership was established in March 2017 to improve the delivery of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) to provide adaptations for private householders in Warwickshire. The service also provides assessment recommendations for Council tenants in need of potential DFG's.
- 1.2 The overarching objective of HEART, which is hosted by Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council, is to deliver holistic home assessments and interventions to enable applicants to remain living independently, and with dignity, in their home. In April 2023 the partners unanimously agreed, through their individual governance arrangements, to extend the current Shared Partnership agreement for a further 5 years to 31 March 2028.
- 1.3 In addition to DFG's, Local Authorities also have the general power under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (the RRO) to give assistance for home repairs, improvements, and adaptations for the purpose of improving living conditions in its area.
- 1.4 District and Borough Councils set out their intentions for grant funding in their Housing Assistance Policy. This balances out the needs of residents against budget availability. Where budget is available, a Policy can be more generous than means tests and grant caps set out in the legislation. Since 2018 the HEART Partnership has had a single Housing Assistance Policy to deliver grant funding.

- 1.5 The draft policy attached at Appendix 3 of this report is the proposed revised, joint Housing Assistance Policy for HEART. It sets out a shared approach to providing housing assistance for improving the living conditions of residents.

## **2. Housing Assistance Policy**

- 2.1 The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to help disabled people qualifying for home adaptations through the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's). The allocation of grants must be "necessary and appropriate" to meet the needs of clients and be "reasonable and practical" given the age and condition of the property.

- 2.2 The mandatory Disabled Facility Grant arrangements set out in the legislation remain the basis of the Policy. However, grant levels in the national system have not changed for many years. The HEART Board is keen to have a Policy which:

- accounts for increased costs due to inflation,
- supports the wider health and social care system
- uses the opportunity of the sustained provision of Government grant to fund Disabled Facilities Grants.

## **3. Assessment of need**

- 3.1 The revised Policy provides for a more generous grant award system than is given in the legislation. This is allowed for (and encouraged) as part of the Regulatory Reform Order as it enables Councils to reflect local circumstances.
- 3.2 There is a requirement for a formal needs assessment to support the delivery of home adaptations or improvements. The HEART team includes suitably qualified and experienced assessment officers and Occupational Therapists to conduct these assessments.
- 3.3 In addition to the needs assessment, there is a legislative requirement for a means test to be applied for the grant application.
- 3.4 To allow for adaptations such as stair lifts to be delivered to more applicants and without delay the Policy allows for a cost of adaptation sum of £7,500 to be granted before a means test is undertaken.

## **4. Summary of the changes proposed in the revised policy:**

- 4.1 In some complex cases the grant allowance of £30,000 provided in the legislation is insufficient. The current policy allows for an additional £10,000 to be given to top up the national, mandatory grant. Recent price increases mean that for larger, more complex cases (for example the provision of through floor lifts and property extensions) the level of funding can be insufficient. The new Policy allows for both the grant and loan elements to be

£20,000, meaning that a total of £70,000 would be available for works and fees.

- 4.2 The current policy allows for a £500 non means tested grant to be given for small home improvement (e.g. grab rails, key safe, adjusting a step) following a home safety check visit. The revised Policy allows for £1,000 to be available to any resident over the age of 55 or who are disabled.
- 4.3 HEART also delivers a holistic assessment of the home environment. This means that an intervention can be to improve the home, for example with a new boiler for heating, as well as provide an adaptation. For the Warm and Safer Homes (WaSH) Grant the HEART Board is proposing a grant of £10,000 grant with a further £10,000 available as a 0% non-repayment loan which would be placed as an indefinite land charge against the property to be re-paid upon sale under all circumstances.
- 4.4 The majority of grant funded adaptations are stairlifts, level access showers and ramps. In 2022/2023 45 adaptations were delivered in the private sector. Social care equipment is also provided by the service. Home improvement services are delivered as part of the holistic home assessment service offer as well as home safety grants.

## **5. Financial**

- 5.1 Government continues to provide funding for Disabled Facilities Grants which meet the mandatory scheme. Councils can also provide discretionary grants as appropriate and set out in an agreed policy statement. The grant award for Rugby for 2023/24 is £717,000. In addition, the Housing Revenue Account provides a budget of £250,000 annually for adaptations required in the Council's own stock.
- 5.2 The grant provision is part of Government Better Together funding which is paid to the County Council. The mandatory grant is given directly to the Boroughs and Districts from the County Council and supports the provision of Disabled Adaptation Grants however it is not ring fenced entirely for that provision and, when a formal policy statement is agreed, it can be used for home improvement grants and to support hospital discharge arrangements. The joint Housing Financial Assistance Policy provides a clear framework for spending the grant. This has been reviewed by the Partnership and the intention is that it is to be implemented from October 2023
- 5.3 The requirements for the Better Care Fund are set out in the Government's "Integration and Better Care Fund planning requirements for 2017-19". Adherence to these requirements is overseen by the Health and Well Being Board.
- 5.4 The Council employs one member of staff (a Housing Assessment Officer) as part of the HEART structure.
- 5.5 The delivery of this assistance policy is tied closely with budget/ Government grant available to the Council. As a consequence, its policy objectives will be

kept closely under review in conjunction with the quarterly budget reports submitted to the HEART Board by the Host Authority.

## 6. Legal implications

- 6.1 The Housing Grants, (Construction and Regeneration Act 1996) states that a local authority *must* approve grants for adaptations to meet particular needs of those with disabilities if various provisions are met. These are:
- (a) that, in the case of an owner of a property, they have an interest in the property as an owner;
  - (b) that the relevant works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupier; and,
  - (c) that it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the works having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling, caravan, houseboat, or building concerned.

In determining point (b) above, the Council must consult the Social Services authority for the area concerned. This usually comprises an assessment by an Occupational Therapist or Social Worker who will make appropriate recommendations.

- 6.2 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 contains a broader power which may be available to undertake works where the conditions set out in paragraph 5.2.1 are not met. This power also allows the Council to incur expenditure to carry out such adaptations to its own properties when the tenant has a disability which requires such assistance.
- 6.3 Formal guidance on delivery was provided in March 2022 by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Department of Health and Social Care entitled '*Disabled Facilities Grant Delivery*' which local authorities must consider in exercising its functions under either of these powers.
- 6.4 The partnership arrangements also ensure that all the Local Authorities involved can meet their obligation to co-operate with Social Services authorities to assess need under the Care Act 2014 .
- 6.5 The wider HEART shared service provisions must comply with Section 101 of the Local Government Act 1972 and the Local Government (Arrangements for the Discharge of Functions) (England) Regulations 2012 specifically, in addition to any contractual arrangements between the authorities concerned, the Council must delegate the relevant functions to the host authority so that officers appointed to deliver the services may lawfully exercise those functions. Only Full Council may delegate functions to another local authority.
- 6.6 The "*Integration and Better Care Fund planning requirements document for 2017 -19*" explicitly states that the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 enables authorities to use specific funding for wider purposes and it invites Council to act to use the funding to improve delivery and reduce bureaucracy involved in the grant application process. The HEART arrangements and proposed revised Policy further that purpose.

## **7. Risk Management**

- 7.1 The Policy will be kept under review by the HEART Board to ensure that it is receptive to demands on the service and budget availability.
- 7.2 It can be reviewed whenever necessary but certainly annually in conjunction with the consideration of budgets for the service.
- 7.3 Minor changes to the policy may be approved in accordance with District and Borough governance requirements. This shall include changes to ensure that the Council's security is adequately protected.
- 7.4 Major changes to the policy will require the approval according to each of the partner authority's governance arrangements.
- 7.5 It is the intention that the policy remains consistent across the 5 districts of Warwickshire.

## **8. Conclusion**

- 8.1 This is an opportunity to ensure that the current policy, which is now five years old, is updated to reflect the increased costs of delivering property improvements and in doing so ensures resolutions, which are faster, and responsive for disabled households within the borough.



**Name of Meeting:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 18 September 2023

**Subject Matter:** Home Environment Assessment and Response Team (HEART) Housing Assistance Policy

**Originating Department:** Communities and Homes

**DO ANY BACKGROUND PAPERS APPLY**  **YES**  **NO**

**LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS**

<b>Doc No</b>	<b>Title of Document and Hyperlink</b>
App 1	Environmental Impact Assessment
App 2	Equality Impact Assessment
App 3	HEART Housing Assistance Policy

The background papers relating to reports on planning applications and which are open to public inspection under Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972, consist of the planning applications, referred to in the reports, and all written responses to consultations made by the Local Planning Authority, in connection with those applications.

---

Exempt information is contained in the following documents:

<b>Doc No</b>	<b>Relevant Paragraph of Schedule 12A</b>

# Rugby Borough Council

## Appendix 1 - Climate Change and Environmental Impact Assessment

### CONTEXT

In 2019 the UK Parliament set a commitment in law to reach net zero carbon emissions by 2050. Achieving this target will require considerable effort with public bodies, private sector organisations, the third sector and individuals working together to take action. Rugby Borough Council declared a climate emergency in 2019, in doing so committed to:

- To move the Council's operations towards Carbon Neutrality by 2030.
- To establish action to tackle climate change as a key driver of all decision-making.
- To provide community leadership in reducing the impact of Climate Change.
- To take action to mitigate the impact of climate change on a Borough wide basis and beyond, through adaptation.

The Council's Corporate Strategy (2021-2024) [link](#) sets ambitious outcomes in relation to Climate Change. These ambitions must now be progressed through the decisions which the Council makes.

It is therefore important that Rugby Borough Council gives due regard to climate change when making decisions. In the context of the Council's business, Climate Change includes carbon emissions, biodiversity, habitat loss and environmental destruction. When putting forward recommendations for decision, officers must assess how these recommendations are likely to influence our climate change commitments by completing the following Climate Change and Environmental Impact Assessment.

A copy of this Climate Change and Environmental Impact Assessment, including relevant data and information should be forwarded to the Deputy Chief Executive.

**If you require help, advice and support to complete the form, please contact Dan Green, Deputy Chief Executive.**

## SECTION 1: OVERVIEW

<b>Portfolio and Service Area</b>	Communities & Homes
<b>Policy/Service/Change being assessed</b>	HEART – Housing Assistance Policy (revisions to)
<b>Is this a new or existing Policy/Service/Change?</b>	It is an update to a policy that has been in place since 2018
<b>If existing policy/service please state date of last assessment</b>	N/a – pre dates EIA's
<b>Ward Specific Impacts</b>	All
<b>Summary of assessment</b> Briefly summarise the policy/service/change and potential impacts	<p>The report sets out proposed revisions to the current Housing Assistance Policy, adopted by the HEART partnership in 2018.</p> <p>The proposed revisions will ensure that the availability of grants will be both adequate (in financial terms) and provided in a timely way to reduce the likelihood of vulnerable disabled households falling into crisis due to the suitability of their existing home.</p> <p>If agreed, the revised policy will become effective from 1 October 2023.</p>
<b>Completed By</b>	Michelle Dickson
<b>Authorised By</b>	Dan Green
<b>Date of Assessment</b>	5 July 2023

## SECTION 2: IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Climate Change and Environmental Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner	Timescales
Energy usage	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	HEART delivers a holistic assessment of the home environment. This means that an intervention can be to improve the home, for example with a new boiler for heating, as well as provide an adaptation. Any new boilers will be high energy efficiency rated			
Fleet usage	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sustainable Transport/Travel (customers and staff)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Sustainable procurement	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Community leadership	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Biodiversity and habitats	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				
Adaptation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	There will be building regulation compliance issues for properties requiring more complex			

Climate Change and Environmental Impacts	No Impact	Positive	Negative	Description of impact	Any actions or mitigation to reduce negative impacts	Action owner	Timescales
				adaptations. The regulations make provision for enhanced standards of thermal performance.			
Impact on other providers/partners	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>				

### SECTION 3: REVIEW

Where a negative impact is identified, the proposal and/or implementation can be adapted or changed; meaning there is a need for regular review. This review may also be needed to reflect additional data and evidence for a fuller assessment (proportionate to the decision in question). Please state the agreed review timescale for the identified impacts of the policy implementation or service change.

<b>Review date</b>	N/a – no negative impacts identified
<b>Key points to be considered through review</b>	
<b>Person responsible for review</b>	
<b>Authorised by</b>	

# Appendix 2 - EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT (EqIA)

## Context

1. The Public Sector Equality Duty as set out under section 149 of the Equality Act 2010 requires Rugby Borough Council when making decisions to have due regard to the following:
  - eliminating unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation, and other conduct prohibited by the Act,
  - advancing equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not,
  - fostering good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not, including tackling prejudice and promoting understanding.
2. The characteristics protected by the Equality Act are:
  - age
  - disability
  - gender reassignment
  - marriage/civil partnership
  - pregnancy/maternity
  - race
  - religion/belief
  - sex/gender
  - sexual orientation
3. In addition to the above-protected characteristics, you should consider the crosscutting elements of the proposed policy, such as impact on social inequalities and impact on carers who look after older people or people with disabilities as part of this assessment.
4. The Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) document is a tool that enables RBC to test and analyse the nature and impact of what it is currently doing or is planning to do in the future. It can be used flexibly for reviewing existing arrangements but in particular should enable identification where further consultation, engagement and data is required.
5. The questions will enable you to record your findings.
6. Where the EqIA relates to a continuing project, it must be reviewed and updated at each stage of the decision.
7. Once completed and signed off the EqIA will be published online.
8. An EqIA must accompany all **Key Decisions** and **Cabinet Reports**.
9. For further information, refer to the EqIA guidance for staff.
10. For advice and support, contact:  
Minakshee Patel  
Corporate Equality and Diversity Advisor  
[minakshee.patel@rugby.gov.uk](mailto:minakshee.patel@rugby.gov.uk)  
Tel: 01788 533509

## Equality Impact Assessment

<b>Service Area</b>	<b>Communities and Homes</b>
<b>Policy/Service being assessed</b>	<b>HEART – Housing Assistance Policy</b>
<b>Is this is a new or existing policy/service?</b> <b>If existing policy/service please state date of last assessment</b>	Update of an existing policy which was originally adopted in 2018.
<b>EqlA Review team – List of members</b>	Mary Jane Gunn and Michelle Dickson
<b>Date of this assessment</b>	25 July 2023
<b>Signature of responsible officer (to be signed after the EqlA has been completed)</b>	

**A copy of this Equality Impact Assessment report, including relevant data and information to be forwarded to the Corporate Equality and Diversity Advisor.**

**If you require help, advice and support to complete the forms, please contact Minakshee Patel, Corporate Equality and Diversity Advisor via email: [minakshee.patel@rugby.gov.uk](mailto:minakshee.patel@rugby.gov.uk) or 01788 533509**



### Details of Strategy/ Service/ Policy to be analysed

<b><u>Stage 1 – Scoping and Defining</u></b>	
(1) Describe the main aims, objectives and purpose of the Strategy/Service/Policy (or decision)?	<p>The overarching objective of HEART, which is hosted by Nuneaton &amp; Bedworth Borough Council, is to deliver holistic home assessments and interventions to enable applicants to remain living independently, and with dignity, in their home. In April 2023 the partners unanimously agreed, through their individual governance arrangements, to extend the current Shared Partnership agreement for a further 5 years.</p> <p>In addition to DFG's, Local Authorities also have the general power under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (the RRO) to give assistance for home repairs, improvements, and adaptations for the purpose of improving living conditions in its area.</p> <p>District and Borough Councils set out their intentions for grant funding in their <b>Housing Assistance Policy</b>. This balances out the needs of residents against budget availability. Where budget is available a Policy can be more generous than means tests and grant caps set out in the legislation. Since 2018 the HEART Partnership has had a single Policy to deliver grant funding.</p>
(2) How does it fit with Rugby Borough Council's Corporate priorities and your service area priorities?	<p>Health and wellbeing: "Residents live healthy, independent lives, with the most vulnerable protected"</p>
(3) What are the expected outcomes you are hoping to achieve?	<p>The proposed amendments to the policy are legally compliant and are reactive to the current operating climate, where the cost of delivering property improvements have substantially increased, at a time when demand for the service has also increased.</p> <p>Failure to address these issues in policy terms will leave the most vulnerable unable to live safely, independently and with dignity in their own homes.</p>

(4) Does or will the policy or decision affect:

- Customers
- Employees
- Wider community or groups

The Housing Grants, (Construction and Regeneration Act 1996) states that a local authority *must* approve grants for adaptations to meet particular needs of those with disabilities if various provisions are met. These are:

- (a) that, in the case of an owner of a property, they have an interest in the property as an owner;
- (b) that the relevant works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupier; and,
- (c) that it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the works having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling, caravan, houseboat, or building concerned.

In determining point (b) above, the Council must consult the Social Services authority for the area concerned. This usually comprises an assessment by an Occupational Therapist or Social Worker who will make appropriate recommendations.

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 200 contains a broader power which may be available to undertake works where the conditions set out above are not met. This power also allows the Council to incur expenditure to carry out such adaptations to its own properties when the tenant has a disability which requires such assistance.

Formal guidance on delivery was provided in March 2022 by the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities and Department of Health and Social Care entitled 'Disabled Facilities Grant Delivery' which local authorities must consider in exercising its functions under either of these powers.

The partnership arrangements also ensure that all the Local Authorities involved can meet their obligation to co-operate with Social Services authorities to assess need under the Care Act 2014 .

The "Integration and Better Care Fund planning requirements document for 2017 -19" explicitly states that the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 enables authorities to use specific funding for wider purposes and it invites Council to act to use the funding to improve delivery and reduce bureaucracy involved in the grant application process. The HEART governance arrangements and proposed Policy further that purpose.

<b><u>Stage 2 - Information Gathering</u></b>	As a minimum you must consider what is known about the population likely to be affected which will support your understanding of the impact of the policy, e.g. service uptake/usage, customer satisfaction surveys, staffing data, performance data, research information (national, regional and local data sources).
(1) What does the information tell you about those groups identified?	<p>As set out in the body of the report, the Housing Grants, (Construction and Regeneration Act 1996) states that a local authority must approve grants for adaptations to meet particular needs of those with disabilities if various provisions are met. These are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) that, in the case of an owner of a property, they have an interest in the property as an owner;</li> <li>b) that the relevant works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupier; and,</li> <li>c) that it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the works having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling, caravan, houseboat, or building concerned.</li> </ul> <p>In determining point (b) above, the Council must consult the Social Services authority for the area concerned. This usually comprises an assessment by an Occupational Therapist or Social Worker who will make appropriate recommendations</p>
(2) Have you consulted or involved those groups that are likely to be affected by the strategy/ service/policy you want to implement? If yes, what were their views and how have their views influenced your decision?	No - the policy applies to the determination of applications that will be received in the future.
(3) If you have not consulted or engaged with communities that are likely to be affected by the policy or decision, give details about when you intend to carry out consultation or provide reasons for why you feel this is not necessary.	The proposed changes are positive, rather than negative and have been generated off the back of lessons learned in respect of service delivery and the analysis of performance.

<b>Stage 3 – Analysis of impact</b>			
<p><b>(1) Protected Characteristics</b> From your data and consultations is there any positive, adverse or negative impact identified for any particular group, which could amount to discrimination?  If yes, identify the groups and how they are affected.</p>	<b>RACE</b>  No	<b>DISABILITY</b>  Yes – positive	<b>GENDER</b>  No
	<b>MARRIAGE/CIVIL PARTNERSHIP</b>  No	<b>AGE</b>  No	<b>GENDER REASSIGNMENT</b>  No
	<b>RELIGION/BELIEF</b>  No	<b>PREGNANCY MATERNITY</b>  No	<b>SEXUAL ORIENTATION</b>  No
<p><b>(2) Cross cutting themes</b> (a) Are your proposals likely to impact on social inequalities e.g. child poverty, geographically disadvantaged communities? If yes, please explain how?  (b) Are your proposals likely to impact on a carer who looks after older people or people with disabilities? If yes, please explain how?</p>	<p>a) The availability of both the mandatory and discretionary grants extend to meeting the needs of dependent children with particular needs relating to disability.</p> <p>b) Yes – positively. The provision of aids and adaptations is all about enabling independence as far as is practicable within the home environment. This will lead to reduced physical stress on people with caring responsibilities, for example, if the correct equipment is on hand to enable independent bathing and getting up stairs.</p>		
<p><b>(3) If there is an adverse impact, can this be justified?</b></p>	N/a		
<p><b>(4) What actions are going to be taken to reduce or eliminate negative or adverse impact? (this should form part of your action plan under Stage 4.)</b></p>	N/a		

(5) How does the strategy/service/policy contribute to the promotion of equality? If not what can be done?	The “Integration and Better Care Fund planning requirements document for 2017 -19” explicitly states that the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 enables authorities to use specific funding for wider purposes and it invites Council to act to use the funding to improve delivery and reduce bureaucracy involved in the grant application process. The HEART governance arrangements and proposed Policy further that purpose.
(6) How does the strategy/service/policy promote good relations between groups? If not what can be done?	It does not – by its definition and scope it is focused on people with disabilities. That said, the client group may also share other protected characteristics.
(7) Are there any obvious barriers to accessing the service? If yes how can they be overcome?	No – the legislative requirements define who is eligible to access the service.

<b><u>Stage 4 – Action Planning, Review and Monitoring</u></b>																														
<p>If No Further Action is required then go to – Review &amp; Monitoring</p> <p>(1) Action Planning – Specify any changes or improvements that can be made to the service or policy to mitigate or eradicate negative or adverse impact on specific groups, including resource implications.</p>	<p>EqlA Action Plan</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="875 1098 2119 1324"> <thead> <tr> <th data-bbox="875 1098 1122 1173">Action</th> <th data-bbox="1122 1098 1368 1173">Lead Officer</th> <th data-bbox="1368 1098 1615 1173">Date for completion</th> <th data-bbox="1615 1098 1861 1173">Resource requirements</th> <th data-bbox="1861 1098 2119 1173">Comments</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td data-bbox="875 1173 1122 1209"></td> <td data-bbox="1122 1173 1368 1209"></td> <td data-bbox="1368 1173 1615 1209"></td> <td data-bbox="1615 1173 1861 1209"></td> <td data-bbox="1861 1173 2119 1209"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="875 1209 1122 1246"></td> <td data-bbox="1122 1209 1368 1246"></td> <td data-bbox="1368 1209 1615 1246"></td> <td data-bbox="1615 1209 1861 1246"></td> <td data-bbox="1861 1209 2119 1246"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="875 1246 1122 1283"></td> <td data-bbox="1122 1246 1368 1283"></td> <td data-bbox="1368 1246 1615 1283"></td> <td data-bbox="1615 1246 1861 1283"></td> <td data-bbox="1861 1246 2119 1283"></td> </tr> <tr> <td data-bbox="875 1283 1122 1319"></td> <td data-bbox="1122 1283 1368 1319"></td> <td data-bbox="1368 1283 1615 1319"></td> <td data-bbox="1615 1283 1861 1319"></td> <td data-bbox="1861 1283 2119 1319"></td> </tr> </tbody> </table>					Action	Lead Officer	Date for completion	Resource requirements	Comments																				
Action	Lead Officer	Date for completion	Resource requirements	Comments																										

(2) Review and Monitoring  
State how and when you will monitor policy  
and Action Plan

The review of the policy will fall under the wider governance arrangements of the HEART shared service.

Please annotate your policy with the following statement:

**'An Equality Impact Assessment on this policy was undertaken on (date of assessment) and will be reviewed on (insert review date).'**

# Appendix 3- Housing Assistance Policy 2023-2026

Date of Issue :	24 April 2023	Next Review :	April 2024	
Last Reviewed by				
Policy Owner	Partner Local Authorities / HEART Management Board			
Approval Date				
Author				
Version Control				
Document ID.				

## Version History

Version	Author	Date	Changes
1.0	Foundations (Rachel Frondigoun)	31/10/2022	Initial Draft shared for consultation
2	Angela Coates	29/11/2022	Revised Draft for consideration by HEART Board
3	Angela Coates	5/1/2023	Revised draft to share with Private Sector Managers
4	Angela Coates	20/2/2023	Revised Draft for consideration by HEART Board
5	Angela Coates	17/3/2023	Revised Draft for Shared Service Agreement
6	Angela Coates & PC	20/4/2023	To incorporate Paul Hughes feedback
7	Angela Coates	3 May 2023	Final draft agreed by Board

## Contents

1.0	Introduction .....	3
2.0	Context.....	3
	Legal Context .....	3
	Local Strategic Context .....	4
3.0	General Principles of Assistance .....	4
4.0	Resident Feedback .....	5
5.0	Equality and Diversity .....	5
6.0	Priorities and capital resources.....	6
7.0	Summary of Types of Assistance available .....	6
	7.1 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants .....	6
	7.2 Additional Discretionary Support for Mandatory DFG Applicants including:.....	6
	7.3 Other Assistance .....	6
8.0	How assistance is delivered .....	10
	Option 1 – HEART Managed application process.....	10
	Option 2 – Customer Contractor process.....	10
	Option 3 – Customer Managed process .....	10
9.0	HEART Contractors .....	11
10.0	Fees and Ancillary charges .....	11
11.0	Prioritisation .....	12
12.0	Complaints .....	14
13.0	Service standards, Key Targets.....	14
14.0	Review of the policy .....	14
15.0	Special Cases Panel .....	15
16.0	Key definitions, references, and abbreviations.....	15
17.0	Appendices .....	18
	Appendix A. Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant and amendments .....	18
	Appendix B. Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance .....	23
	Appendix C. Discretionary Contribution Support Grant.....	25
	Appendix D. Warm and Safer Homes (WaSH) Grant .....	28
	Appendix E. Hospital Discharge Scheme .....	29
	Appendix F Home Safety Check Scheme .....	30
	Appendix G. Energy Efficiency Support.....	32
	Appendix H – Signatories and Key Dates.....	33



## 1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy is a shared housing financial assistance policy for all the districts and boroughs within Warwickshire, namely, North Warwickshire Borough Council, Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council, Rugby Borough Council, Warwick District Council and Stratford on Avon District Council (known as ‘the authorities’ for the purpose of this policy). It sets out their shared approach to providing housing assistance for improving living conditions for residents. The policy has been developed in Partnership with Warwickshire County Council, as the Care Authority, and aims to support some of the most vulnerable people in the County by providing a framework for financial assistance under the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. This policy seeks to make the best use of available resources and achieve added value wherever possible that demonstrates improvements in residents’ health, safety, and wellbeing at home.
- 1.2 The authorities that are partners in the Home Environment Assessment and Response Team (HEART) will deliver the support outlined within this policy. This service has delegated powers to act on behalf of the authorities with respect to the delivery of support under this policy and therefore, unless stated otherwise, any reference to ‘the authorities’ is the HEART partnership.
- 1.3 This policy updates and replaces all previously published policies and has been reviewed following changes in both national guidance, the Government social care White Paper publications and changes in the operational landscape (including increases in costs and funding available).
- 1.4 The policy will be reviewed annually by the HEART Management Board and if appropriate amended with approval sought by the District and Boroughs as required.
- 1.5 The Councils can publish a separate policy or addendum to this policy to incorporate other forms of financial assistance for delivery within their own areas by other teams or services.

## Context

### Legal Context

- 2.0 The **Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996** (the 1996 Act) places a statutory duty on Local Authorities to help qualifying disabled people for home adaptations. These works (called eligible works) must be considered “necessary and appropriate” to meet their needs and “reasonable and practical” regarding the age and condition of the property. These are called Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).
- 2.1 As well as these mandatory grants, Local Authorities also have the general power under the **Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002** (the RRO) to give assistance for home repairs, improvements, and adaptations for the purpose of improving living conditions in its area.
- 2.2 Capital grant funding is passported to local housing authorities from the Better Care Fund (BCF) which combines money from health, social care and housing budgets to deliver health and care services. Any assistance provided from this fund must only be used for the specific purpose of funding adaptations for disabled people who qualify

for a Disabled Facilities Grant made under the 1996 Act or for other forms of assistance provided to any persons under the RRO that meet agreed objectives.

- 2.3 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 home adaptations.
- 2.4 The **Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970** places a duty to assist disabled children and young people 'in arranging for the carrying out of any works of adaptation in [their home] or the provision of any additional facilities designed to secure [their] greater safety, comfort or convenience' (Section 2). This duty arises where the authority has assessed the need for the specific adaptations.
- 2.5 In addition, **National guidance** (Safeguarding Disabled Children –Practice Guidance (2009) and Working Together to Safeguard Children - A guide to inter-agency work safeguard & promotes the welfare of children (2010)) also informs practice in respect of a local authority's duty to safeguard and promote the welfare of children and young people.
- 2.6 Under the **Housing Act 2004**, Local Authorities have a duty to keep housing conditions under review, including having regard to and taking action to reduce hazards that might be dangerous or prejudicial to health.
- 2.7 The **2022 DFG Guidance** jointly published by the Department for Levelling Up Housing and Communities (DLUHC) and the Department for Health and Social Care (DHSC) provides new guidance on developing a adaptations and RRO policy. It has been considered whilst writing this Housing Financial Assistance Policy.

### Local Strategic Context

- 2.8 Each individual local housing authority has its own strategic objectives which are reflected in the priorities for this assistance policy. The policy also seeks to support the County-wide shared objectives of the Better Care Fund (BCF) Plan. The BCF plan states that "*Creating a home environment that supports people to live safely and independently can make a significant contribution to health and wellbeing, and is an integral part of our integration plans, and strategic use of the DFG can support this.*"
- 2.9 The authorities are working collaboratively through this policy to deliver services to support vulnerable residents to remain living safely in their homes for as long as possible.

## 3.0 General Policy Principles

- 3.1 The principle of the policy is that all residents in the County should have access to a safe and warm home, free from major hazards that meets their needs. The primary responsibility to maintain private homes lies with the owner. The Authorities will support owners in fulfilling this responsibility by providing advice, support, and assistance to enable them to make use of their own resources to fund repairs and improvements. They will only provide financial assistance where this is not possible or practical or where it is a statutory requirement. The Council will assist residents who are owners and tenants to remain living independently within their homes within the scope of this policy.
- 3.2 Applicants for assistance must:

- be aged 18 or over, although applications for grants can be made on behalf of children under the age of 18 by a parent or guardian, and
  - be a UK citizen, and resident in the County.
- 3.3 Funding calculations are based on what is considered by the authorities to be a reasonable price for necessary work (known as the eligible expense). Eligible expense will always exclude labour where works are carried out by the applicant, or a member of their family as set out in the Act. This applies to works provided under the RRO.
- 3.4 Where financial assistance is provided, the eligible expense will include necessary associated costs such as building and planning fees, Architect, private Occupational Therapist and other professional fees and agency advice service costs as detailed in the legislation and applies across these policy interventions.
- 3.5 Ongoing maintenance and repair of home improvements, adaptations and equipment provided through this policy will become the responsibility of the applicant, owner or landlord.
- 3.6 Payment will only be made if acceptable invoices are submitted upon completion or throughout the work.
- 3.7 Financial assistance cannot be given retrospectively. Applicants are strongly advised not to start any eligible work before their application for assistance is approved.
- 3.8 Payment will normally be made direct to the main contractor(s) not their sub-contractors or grant applicant(s) though HEART reserves the right to pay the appropriate person where disputes occur.
- 3.9 Where the applicant decides to apply directly to the Council without using the HEART service the Authority reserves the right not to process and application in accordance with the legislation placing the onus on the applicant. Once approval has been given the applicant has 12 months from the date of the approval in which to complete the works, unless otherwise stated.
- 3.10 A fee is charged when HEART manage the delivery of the adaptation. The fee is agreed by the HEART Board, is kept under review and published on the HEART website information.

## 4.0 Customer Feedback

- 4.1 Customer feedback is collected to inform the service. To support this Policy customer experiences will be shared with the HEART Management Board so that concerns and observations about the effectiveness of the policy can be assessed.

## 5.0 Equality and Diversity

- 5.1 The authorities are committed to fulfilling their roles as an employer, service provider, purchaser of goods and services and community leader without discrimination. This policy will be applied 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 authorities must seek to eliminate discrimination and promote equality and good relations between all groups. The Authority's equality information can be found on the individual authority's websites.
- 5.2 This policy is particularly relevant for anyone who has a disability or long-term condition. Its aim is to ensure that people have a safe and suitable home so that they can live independently in their current home for as long as is possible.
- 5.3 The Authorities will record and consider data where supplied to gain insight on the impact of this policy on diverse customers and help improve operational processes

## 6.0 Priorities and capital resources

- 6.1 Since 2015 the Disabled Facilities Grant allocation has been paid by Government to local authorities through the Better Care Fund to support integration between health, social care and housing services.
- 6.2 The importance of the DFG has been recognised by increased budget allocations to a county-wide allocation of £5,124,786 (2022) annually. This level of funding has been confirmed for 2023/2024.
- 6.3 The grant allocation is used to fund the assistance set out in this policy. The HEART Management Board receive budget reports quarterly and keep demand and spend under review. Annually the Board agrees the budgets for the forthcoming year.

## 7.0 Summary of Types of Assistance available

The following assistance is available through this policy:

### 7.1 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants

Grants that local authorities must make available to residents who meet the required qualification criteria as set out in the 1996 Act, and the accompanying regulations and subsequent amendments.

### 7.2 Additional Discretionary Support for Mandatory DFG Applicants:

The following grants are discretionary and are offered subject to Council funding and resources available at the time:

- 7.2.1 Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance
- 7.2.2 Discretionary Contribution Support Grant

Where a discretionary element is being applied to top up a Disabled Facilities Grant it will be included on one approval notice.

### 7.3 Other Assistance

The following grants and assistance are discretionary and are offered subject to Council funding and resources available at the time:

Warm and Safer Homes (WaSH) Grant



Hospital Discharge Grant  
Home Safety Grant  
Energy Efficiency Support & Referral

As part of this Policy, following an assessment, funding is made available to cover the likely costs of stairlifts and ramps without the requirement for a means test.

Additional forms of assistance may be developed and added to a revised policy at a future date.

Further details of the assistance types are within the appendices to this policy. The table below provides a summary of the assistance available through this policy.

<b>Additional Discretionary Support for Mandatory DFG Applicants</b>				
<b>Grant</b>	<b>Max Amount</b>	<b>Is a Financial Means Test Required?</b>	<b>Who is Eligible?</b>	<b>How is Eligibility assessed?</b>
<p><b>Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance</b></p> <p>To top-up a mandatory DFG where cost of eligible work exceeds the maximum grant (currently £30,000)</p> <p>The grant can be used to pay fees.</p> <p>The assistance can be used to support applicants to move where their home is unsuitable for adaptations</p>	<p>£20,000 Grant</p> <p>And up to</p> <p>£20,000 Loan</p>	<p>No additional means test to that carried out in addition to the Mandatory DFG means test</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled applicants who are owner-occupiers, private/ housing association tenants.</li> <li>• Parents/guardians applying on behalf of children under 19 years old.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant has been assessed as eligible for a mandatory DFG and the cost of the DFG eligible works is in excess of the maximum DFG grant.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Discretionary Contribution Support Grant</b></p> <p>Please refer to flow chart at Appendix C</p> <p>This helps applicants who may otherwise would not be able to proceed because of the means tested contribution. This supports wider social care &amp; health objectives.</p>	<p>£30,000</p>	<p>No additional means test to that carried out for the Mandatory DFG</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Disabled applicants who are owner-occupiers, private or housing association tenants.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The applicant has been assessed as eligible for a DFG.</li> <li>• The first £7,500 of any assessed contribution will automatically be eligible for funding. It is anticipated that this will cover the cost of stairlifts and ramps in most cases and other adaptations up to this amount can be considered.</li> <li>• Where the eligible works are likely to be below £7500 then no means test will be carried out.</li> <li>• Unforeseen works will be funded without a further means test.</li> </ul>

<b>Other Assistance</b>				
<b>Grant</b>	<b>Max Amount</b>	<b>Is a Financial Means Test Required?</b>	<b>Who is Eligible?</b>	<b>How is Eligibility assessed?</b>
<b>Warm and Safer Homes (WaSH) Grant</b>	£20,000	The qualifying financial criteria are at Appendix D	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eligible owner-occupiers</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The applicant must be an owner occupier and must meet the financial eligibility criteria</li> <li>Only 1 grant will be awarded in any 5 year period</li> <li>The applicant must have owned the property for 5-years prior to grant award</li> </ul>
<b>Hospital Discharge Grant</b>	£10,000	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Eligible disabled or vulnerable residents as assessed by the referrer and HEART team members</li> </ul>	<p>The works must be required to :</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Enable faster discharge from hospital</li> <li>Reduce the risk of re-admission</li> <li>Address significant difficulties in providing safe and dignified home-based care</li> </ol>
<b>Home Safety Grant Scheme</b>	Home Safety matters considered and up to £1,000 for works.	No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Any resident aged 55 years or over</li> <li>Any household which includes a disabled person</li> </ul>	The Home Safety Check is available to all eligible residents. Preventative works will be funded to where no Care Act need has been identified

## 8.0 How assistance is delivered

### Option 1 – HEART Managed Process

8.1.1 By agreement the HEART Service can fully assist the customer with the application process. The Team will work with the customer to do an assessment of circumstances and complete an application as well arrange for the delivery of the eligible works. For many customers this can be the easiest option.

8.1.2 The Team will:

- Carry out a needs assessment of person and property
- Where applicable, assess the applicant's financial circumstances in accordance with the statutory **means test or local financial criteria** which will identify any contribution to be paid towards the cost of the works or whether the applicant qualifies.
- Discuss how the adaptations / eligible works can be provided in the home and what building works or alterations are required to provide them.
- Agree the eligible works and arrange an Architect to design extensions and seek planning permission or building regulations approval if required.
- Assist in the completion of the application process for the DFG.
- Arrange contractors and seek quotes and specifications.
- Help to oversee the works on site on behalf of the applicant.
- Consider unforeseen works for additional grant assistance.
- Agree payments with the customer and ensure the customer receives appropriate certificates and guarantees.

### Option 2 – Customers own Contractor Process

8.2 This option is where an applicant may wish to use the services of the HEART service to assist with their application for DFG or other assistance. An Architect may be appointed to provide drawings and consider planning permission requirements from HEARTS framework. However the customer can seek their own architectural services.

8.3 The customer is responsible seeking at least 2 quotes from contractors sourced by themselves and for managing the works. Advice and guidance can be provided.

### Option 3 – Customer Managed Process

8.4 This option is where an applicant may wish to complete all elements of the application, supporting information and sourcing professional and contractor services themselves. An applicant can use their own Architect or draftsman and contractors to plan, develop or build a preferred scheme that meets the needs identified by the local authority. Any grant provided will be on the basis of meeting the assessed needs only and at a basic level of design fixtures and fittings.



## 9.0 HEART Contractors

9.1 The HEART service maintains a framework of contractors that undertake grant funded works. The procurement arrangements accord with the HOST authority Contract Standing Orders.

HEART has several types of contractors and specialist services within its supply chain. These include

- Architects
- Asbestos surveying companies
- Stair lift manufacturers and installers
- Bathroom installers
- Ramp installers

9.2 HEART effectively links contractors and suppliers with applicants that receive a grant and the contractual relationship is set out in the terms of the HEART agreement document signed by customers. Nonetheless there is a relationship between the contractor and HEART / HOST authority in conjunction with the applicant and HEART will work with customers and contractors to try to resolve issues that arise from HEART sourced contractors.

9.3 Each job that is intrusive to the building fabric will be subject to an asbestos survey to determine if specialist removal or precautions are necessary to complete the job. This survey will be paid from the capital grant irrespective of whether work progresses as will other specialist survey or design works where the grant works do not progress.

## 10.0 Fees and Ancillary charges

10.1 The Council will consider reasonable fees for financial assistance. The following fees will be eligible for financial assistance if they have been properly incurred in making and processing an application or delivering the eligible works.

- 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)
- Activities associated with contractors and the obtaining of estimates
- Consideration of tenders
- Liaison between customer and contractor regarding the relevant works and troubleshooting.
- Framework contract management
- Disconnection and reconnection of utilities where necessitated by relevant works

- Payment of contractors

10.2 Where the above services are provided by HEART they are included within the service fee which will be levied at the percentage rate agreed by the HEART Management Board.

10.3 Fee's will be paid in addition to the financial assistance limits but will not be levied on grants with a non-time limited land-charge so they do not become repayable.

## 11.0 Prioritisation of Case Types

11.1 For most cases the Council will prioritise cases in in chronological order of receipt of enquiry.

11.2 If appropriate the team will instigate a triage process to escalate an urgent case. The triage process has regard to the criteria outlined in the 2022 DFG Guidance<sup>1</sup>

- Coming out of hospital and at risk
- Living alone and deemed at significant risk
- Severe cognitive dysfunction and at risk
- Living with a carer who is elderly or disabled
- Living without heating or hot water and at risk
- Limited life expectancy,
- The property subject of the enquiry is in such a condition as to present an immediate and significant danger to the occupants or visitors.

11.3 Cases which are consulted on with other agencies will be dealt with as required as there is often a long lead in period e.g. home suitability cases or children's adaptations. Where a property, case, customer, or category of assistance is to be considered outside of chronological order when not deemed an urgent case, the HEART Team Manager / Private Sector Housing Manager will sanction the action and a written record will be retained on file in justification of that decision. Where a case can be delivered at the initial enquiry stage for example a home safety provision of equipment or minor adaptations then these will be directly issued by the duty team to remove undue delays for straightforward solutions.

---

<sup>1</sup> <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-facilities-grant-dfg-delivery-guidance-for-local-authorities-in-england>

11.4 All enquiries will be allocated a priority of 'Standard' or 'Urgent' upon assessment and applicants may request a review of their priority by the Assessing Officer if they believe their needs to have changed at any time in the process. To meet the needs of certain cases HEART has triage process so that urgent cases can be escalated. The following list is not exhaustive. It is intended to provide guidance as to when an enquiry could be considered urgent. The target date for completing an urgent assessment is 2 weeks.

- Life limiting condition – e.g. Motor Neurone Disease, Huntington's disease.
- End of life where an adaptation or repair is required
- Palliative diagnosis where an adaptation or repair is required
- High risk to health / safety / wellbeing
- High risk of informal / formal carer breakdown
- High risk to informal / formal carer health and safety
- The condition of the property results in a high risk
- No fixed form of heating from November to March
- No hot water supply in the property
- Works are necessary to facilitate discharge from hospital or nursing or residential care
- An adaption is required to facilitate an essential aspect of care / treatment. e.g. a ramp is required to facilitate wheelchair access in and out of the property for regular hospital treatment such as dialysis.
- Severe cognitive dysfunction that results in a high-risk situation
- Unable to access some essential facilities and lives alone, no formal / informal support
- Adaptations required to enable a care package to commence and there is no other alternative, this could result in a risk of hospital admission
- Some safeguarding matters, depending on nature

## 12.0 Complaints

- 12.1 The HEART Partnership Agreement provides for the HOST's complaints procedure to be used in the first instance. If the customer is not happy with the response given the Local Authority providing the grant funding will be involved in considering the first stage of the complaint and will respond independently at stage 2 of the procedure. The complaints procedure is shown on Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council's website or can be obtained from their customer services team.

## 13.0 Service standards, Key Targets

- 13.1 There is no national standard for the services provided through this policy excepting a statutory requirement for Councils to determine valid and fully made applications for mandatory DFG within six months. This does not account for pre-application activities such as the screening process and the 'application support' and administration including occupational therapy assessment, means testing, producing specifications, finding contractors. Some delays may be caused by documentation not being provided or decisions made by the applicant.
- 13.2 Legislation requires that works be completed within 12 months of any DFG grant approval being issued, but this can be extended by negotiation if there are valid reasons to do so, such as the customer receiving care, occasional changes in contractor or specification, complex snagging etc.
- 13.3 Locally, the service aims to apply the funding it receives fully each year with minimal waiting lists whilst maximising the outcome for customers.
- 13.4 The HEART Team is committed to ensuring good quality customer service and the performance measures used are based around measuring and improving the quality of service and customer outcomes as well as ensuring improvements in the speed of service delivery.

## 14.0 Review of the policy

- 14.1 The Policy may be reviewed whenever necessary but certainly annually in conjunction with the consideration of budgets for the service. Minor changes to the policy may be approved in accordance with District and Borough governance requirements. Major changes to the policy will require the approval using the partner Authority's governance arrangements. It is the intention that the policy remains consistent across the 5 districts of Warwickshire.

## 15.0 Special Cases Panel

- 15.1 The Special Cases Panel will consist of senior officers from HEART. At least one of them should be the Head of Home Environment Services or the HEART Manager.
- 15.2 The Panel will meet as required to review complex cases requiring additional funding and applications for specific additional discretionary assistance.
- 15.3 This Panel will also review all cases where applicants wish to appeal a decision regarding their case if they believe that their circumstances are not fully reflected within the scope of this policy and how it is implemented.
- 15.4 Residents can appeal where if their particular circumstances are not adequately reflected through the existing policy. The claim can only be successful if they establish to the satisfaction of the Panel that their case falls within the following criteria:
- Failure to carry out works will place the applicants or existing family's health and safety at immediate risk;
  - The applicant or member of their family has a specific and serious medical condition or disability – including mental health – which is being aggravated by the existing condition of the property and the provision of assistance would significantly improve the condition;
  - The condition of the house will imminently prevent the ability of the existing family to continue to live together;
  - The condition of the property will lead to the intervention of other statutory services, thereby causing additional expenditure from other public sources e.g. children being taken into care;
  - The work would be of wider benefit than to the applicant and their family e.g. where other properties are affected.
- 15.5 In all the above cases:
- The applicant has no means by which they could reasonably be expected to fund the work, either privately or with 'welfare' assistance, and
  - The assisted works must significantly reduce the problems under the above criteria, described by the applicant or identified by the Council
- 15.6 Where an appeal is successful the assistance offered may be one of the types contained within this policy or a variation.

## 16.0 Prioritisation of Assistance

This policy includes both mandatory and discretionary assistance. It also helps remove housing hazards that local authorities have a statutory duty to take action to help reduce the risk from. Capital resources to fund the assistance within the policy are limited and at times it may be necessary for the provision of discretionary assistance will need to be curtailed or suspended when budget forecasts suggest that mandatory grants will need to be prioritised to ensure they are funded.



Under the delegated responsibilities from each Local Authority it has been agreed that for budgetary reasons the responsible officer within the authority can suspend the discretionary assistance in consultation with the relevant Board Member. This will be in the form of a delegated officer decision and will be published on the Councils' website.

The priority hierarchy is as follows:

- 1 Mandatory DFG
- 2 Discretionary DFG
- 3 Warm and Safer Homes Grants
- 4 Hospital Discharge Grants
- 5 Home Safety Grant
- 6 Contribution Support Grant

## 17.0 Key definitions, references, and abbreviations

RRO – Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/1860/article/3/made>

The 'Act' (1996) – Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996  
<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/53/contents>

The 'Guidance' (2022) – National DFG Guidance published March 2022 by Government  
<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-facilities-grant-dfg-delivery-guidance-for-local-authorities-in-england>

DFG – Disabled Facilities Grant.

DDFA – Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance

BCF – Better Care Fund

WCC – Warwickshire County Council

NBBC – Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council

NWBC – North Warwickshire Borough Council

RBC – Rugby Borough Council

SoADC – Stratford on Avon District Council

WDC – Warwick District Council

HEART – Home Environment Assessment and Response Team

DLUHC – Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities

HHSRS – the Housing Health & Safety Rating System, the prescribed system under the Housing Act 2004 for measuring hazards associated with housing conditions

ECO – Energy Company Obligation

Certified Date – the date certified by the service on behalf of the Council as that on which the execution of eligible works is completed to the Councils (HEART) satisfaction. In this instance being the works completion date.

Dwelling – a building or part of a building occupied or intended to be occupied as a separate dwelling, together with any yard, garden, outhouse and appurtenance belonging to it or usually enjoyed with it.

Exempt disposal – a disposal or transfer of the whole or part of the premises to a person whose main residence is the property and who is (a) one of the joint owners of the dwelling, or (b) the wife, husband or partner (including same sex) of the owner or one of the joint owners of that property.

Relevant disposal – a conveyance of the freehold or an assignment of the lease, or the granting of a long lease (one of over 21 years, otherwise than at rack rent)

Member of family – a person is a member of the applicant's family if they are the spouse of the applicant or living together as partners, or is the grandparent, parent or dependent child

of the applicant or their spouse or partner (inclusive of same sex partners, step-children, adopted and foster children).

Owner-occupier – whilst this term is self-explanatory, where appropriate it will include certain tenants with repairing type leases (sometimes called FRI or Full Repairing and Insuring Leases, of a suitable duration) who would otherwise be unable to insist their ‘superior landlord’ undertake renovations. Repairing lease tenants would qualify for DFG in their own right, with permission.

## 18.0 Appendices

### Appendix A. Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant and amendments

This is included for context and information purposes and includes locally agreed amendments.

The Council will award mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) according to the governing legislation – principally the 1996 Act and subordinate Regulations and Orders as amended - and guidance issued by central Government, and which details amongst other matters the types of work that are to be funded, the maximum grant payable (currently £30,000), and the test of financial resources where applicable.

#### *Qualifying Criteria*

All owner-occupiers and tenants, licensees or occupiers who can satisfy the criteria in sections 19-22 of the 1996 Act are eligible to *apply* for DFG, but applicants must be aged 18 or over (this does not apply to the disabled person, who may be younger). Tenants of Private Social Housing Providers and private landlords are also eligible to apply. Council tenants will be referred to their Housing Authority Landlord after initial assessment by HEART which will consider the adaptation in the context of their housing management policies. Being eligible to apply does not automatically confer approval – some cases will not meet statutory tests as described below, and others may have significant means tested contributions that will affect their decision making.

As a part of the application process, the Authorities will require certificates relating to property ownership and future occupation and will request permission from the owner. The Authorities would reasonably want to ensure the tenant has the right to carry out the works and that the landlord would not object.

#### *Qualifying Works*

Those works eligible for mandatory DFG are set out in section 23(1) of the 1996 Act, as amended. These are;

- i. facilitating access by the disabled occupant to and from the dwelling, qualifying houseboat, or qualifying park home, (now including the garden) or
- ii. making the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or qualifying park home safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with them;
- iii. facilitating access by the disabled occupant to a room used or usable as the principal family room;
- iv. facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room used or usable for sleeping;
- v. facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a lavatory, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;



- vi. facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a bath or shower (or both), or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
- vii. facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a wash hand basin, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
- viii. facilitating the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant;
- ix. improving any heating system in the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or qualifying park home to meet the needs of the disabled occupant or, if there is no existing heating system or any such system is unsuitable for use by the disabled occupant, providing a heating system suitable to meet their needs;
- x. facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of one or more means of access to or control of that source or by providing additional means of control;
- xi. facilitating access and movement by the disabled occupant around the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or qualifying park home in order to enable them to care for a person who is normally resident and is in need of such care;
- xii. facilitating access to and from a garden by a disabled occupant; or making access to a garden safe for a disabled occupant.

### *Local amendments to DFG*

#### *Council Tax*

Council Tax reduction is eligible as a passporting benefit.

#### *Warranty Provision*

The Authorities will include as part of the mandatory DFG the cost of a maintenance agreement for a period of five (5) years (where available) from the certified date for stair lifts, through-floor lifts, Clos-o-mat type toilet, step-lifts and similar equipment installed with the assistance of that grant. Where maintenance agreements of 5-years are not available through the Manufacturer the Council will fund the maximum warranty that is available. Where installing a reconditioned stair lift, any unspent warranty will be increased to the full 5 years if possible.

#### *Necessary, Appropriate, Reasonable & Practicable*

A DFG will only be made if the works are both 'necessary and appropriate' and 'reasonable and practicable'. Where an applicant prefers a different scheme of works to that approved by the Council, the Authority may offer to 'offset' the value of the original scheme towards those greater works with appropriate safeguards. This is at the discretion of the Authority.

Works which have been started prior to the approval of an application will not be eligible for financial assistance.

Unexpected works which arise during the carrying out of eligible works will be considered for assistance if the works could not have been reasonably foreseen and if they are vital to the completion of a safe and effective adaptation.

Unforeseen works carried out without prior approval of the Authority will not be eligible for assistance. Where unforeseen works are necessary these will be added to the grant up to the specified maximum for mandatory DFG. Costs above the mandatory grant maximum may be supported as discretionary DFA in accordance with this policy. Care must be taken when agreeing to schemes of works on third-party property such as tenanted accommodation, that the property owner is fully engaged with the decision process. This is also particularly important

where an architect or similar is acting on the customers behalf, and where issues such as planning permission, building control and other regulation are involved.

### *Contractors*

The DFG award is for a sum of funding only and is not inclusive or exclusive of using particular contractors or products. Customers may specify and choose their own contractors, agent, products and design – but take responsibility for those choices, as long as the contractors are suitably qualified, and the result meets the HEART Service and Occupational Therapist's requirements. Contractors will need to be insured and appropriately regulated where appropriate.

### *Financial Assistance*

Mandatory DFG will be subject to a means test in accordance with the regulations made under the 1996 Act, as amended. The maximum mandatory DFG award is currently £30,000 minus any contribution required by a 'means test' (test of financial resources). Successive applications may be awarded for those persons whose condition is degenerative, or they develop additional needs. If the maximum grant limit is changed by statute then the maximum available DFG award by the Authorities will reflect this.

Where successive applications are awarded, the applicants' assessed contribution to the first grant award will be taken into account if within the time period of the contribution originally calculated (10 years if owner, 5 years if tenant).

*NOTE: where an applicant is in receipt of a recognised, qualifying, means tested benefit they will not be further means tested and they will have no calculated contribution to make. Where works are for the benefit of a child or young person of 19 years of age or younger at the date of application – they too will be exempt from a means test.*

### *Order of processing applications*

DFG applications or recommendations will usually be processed in chronological order, in line with any approved priority system, excepting in emergency circumstances at the discretion of the Authority.

### *Recovery of assistance awarded*

Some mandatory DFG may be recoverable in accordance with permitted values. Where the customer is an owner-occupier and not a tenant, a sum of up to £10,000 may be recovered for works more than £5,000. This sum would only be recovered if the property were sold or title otherwise transferred within 10 years of the certified (completion) date of works, subject to the Council's discretion to reduce or waive in the case of financial hardship. All recoverable costs would be registered as a land charge against the property.

*NOTE: this is separate and different to the potential repayment of grant in the event of a breach of occupancy conditions or detected fraud. Also, Councils are entitled to recalculate grant awards in limited circumstances, such as for example if any relevant insurance claims are pending, and to cease making payments and to seek repayment in some cases as detailed in sections 40-42 of the 1996 Act.*

### *Conditions relating to Contractors, Standard of Works and Invoices*

In approving an application for financial assistance, the Council will require as a condition that the eligible works are carried out in accordance with any specification it has decided to impose.

The eligible works must be carried out by the contractor(s) upon whose estimate the financial assistance is based, or if two estimates were submitted, by one of those contractors. The Council's consent must be obtained prior to the works if a contractor who did not submit an

estimate is to carry out the works, and if an agreement is given, an estimate from the new contractor must be submitted to the Council (this does not automatically convey a difference in revised grant award – any additional costs must be separately financed by the client).

An invoice, demand or receipt will not be acceptable if it is given by the applicant or a member of the applicant's family. Where works are carried out by the applicant or a member of their family, only the cost of materials used will be eligible for financial assistance.

It is a condition of the financial assistance that the eligible works are carried out within 12 months of the date of approval of the application. This period may be extended by the Council if it thinks fit, particularly where it is satisfied that the eligible works cannot be completed for good cause – requests for additional time must be made in writing before the 12-month period ends and approved extra time will be confirmed in writing by the Council.

The payment of the financial assistance to the applicant will be dependent upon the works being carried out to a standard that is satisfactory to the Council and upon receipt of a satisfactory invoice, demand, or receipt for the works and any preliminary or ancillary services or changes.

The Council will usually make payments direct to the contractor on behalf of the client, and not usually to the applicant. Where the applicant disagrees with a payment made direct to a contractor, no payment shall be made until any dispute is resolved. Where the dispute is not resolved the Council reserves the right to make payment to the contractor. Legislation permits the Council to make payment by delivering to the applicant an instrument of payment in a form made payable to the contractor, OR by making payment direct to the applicant in accordance with information provided prior to grant approval.

*NOTE: Contractors receiving direct payment may be required to provide sufficient information to be set up on the Council's financial systems – BUT this should not frustrate the client's choice, as the mandatory DFG grant (only) is an award of funds and not an award tied to a specific contractor with additional financial conditions.*

#### *Future occupation of the dwelling*

It is a condition of the grant that throughout the grant condition period (that is 5 years from the date of certification) the dwelling is occupied in accordance with the intention stated in the certificate of owner occupation or availability for letting or intended tenancy.

#### *Customer Own Schemes (COS)*

Customers who meet the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) eligibility and are therefore entitled to a grant allocation may wish to 'top-up' the DFG funding. The DFG recommendation by the Occupational Therapist will be for the most cost-effective solution which meets all identified needs and will look to adapt an existing property. Where a customer wishes to pursue a different scheme, they will be responsible for the difference in costs between the DFG 'Mandatory Scheme' and the final cost of the works, including unforeseen costs.

It is the responsibility of the customer to clearly define what is privately funded works and specifications and provide an itemised costing for those works. The Council will only fund the assessed DFG element of the works and customers will be responsible for unforeseen works and contingency funding where these are not clearly associated with the assessed works.

The HEART surveyor and Occupational Therapist will work with the customer, their architect and builders as applicable, to ensure that the final scheme meets the disabled person's needs and where applicable planning and building control regulations have been adhered to.

Where a customer is progressing along this route there will be additional responsibilities for the customer to comply with all legal requirements including construction legislation and the grant

legislation. The customer will be responsible for any additional funding beyond the grant award, for any contingency and for management of the contractors and service providers. Payment of grant will only be made once the appropriate facilities have been provided.

HEART will have guidance to assist customers.

### *Repayment*

Where a charge (repayable grant) is due for recovery, on receipt of a written request from the responsible person the individual Authorities will consider the options to reduce or waive repayment in particular circumstances to be determined in accordance with the following criteria;

- the extent to which the recipient of the grant would suffer financial hardship were they to be required to repay all or any of the grant;
- whether the disposal of the premises is to enable the recipient of the grant to take up employment, or to change the location of their employment;
- whether the disposal is made for reasons connected with the physical or mental health or wellbeing of the recipient of the grant or of a disabled occupant of the premises;
- whether the disposal is made to enable the recipient of the grant to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or infirm and in need of care, which the recipient of the grant is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the recipient of the grant is in need by reason of disability or infirmity.
- Whether the adaptation was completed in order to facilitate a foster placement and any reasons why the property may now be being sold.

All recoverable charges will be recorded as local land charges.

The land charge will be placed in accordance with 2008 General Consent<sup>2</sup> which enabled local authorities to place a local land charge for the portion of the grant over £5,000. The charge can be up to £10,000 and applies if the owner wants to sell the property within 10 years of the certified (completion) date.

Worked examples of the charge are given below:

	<b>Total Grant Awarded</b>	<b>Exempt Amount</b>	<b>Remaining Value of Grant</b>	<b>Charge Placed</b>
<b>Example A</b>	£12,000	£5,000	£7,000	£7,000
<b>Example B</b>	£15,000	£5,000	£10,000	£10,000
<b>Example C</b>	£25,000	£5,000	£20,000	£10,000

### *Second Residencies*

In cases where families separate, and a court order provides that residency of the subject disabled child is split between two households, the Authority may consider the award of DFG funding to provide adaptations in a second home, which is not the primary residence of the disabled individual, but which facilitates access to the second household with whom residency is shared.

Cases would be considered individually by the Special Cases Panel and must be able to demonstrate through the provision of Court Orders, or equivalent Residency agreements

<sup>2</sup>

[https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment\\_data/file/7811/generalconsent2008.pdf](https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7811/generalconsent2008.pdf)

that residency is shared and the lack of provision in the second home means that the child is not able to live as expected.

Where relevant professionals are supporting the family their involvement with the application should be considered.

## Appendix B. Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance

### *Purpose of the assistance*

The purpose of this assistance is to help the vulnerable members of the community where the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is insufficient to cover the full cost of the works or where the works are out of scope of the legislation but by completing them there would be demonstrable savings to the wider public purse and clear benefits to the applicant and/or their family/carers. It is also available to support residents whose properties are unable to be adapted or where a move to an alternative home may be more appropriate.

### *How will it be funded?*

The grants would be funded from the DFG Budget as resources allow. Mandatory Grants will have priority. The HEART Management Board will be kept informed of relevant spending patterns and pressures.

### *Who will it help?*

Those who have been assessed as eligible to apply for Mandatory DFG assistance and towards the mandatory designed scheme to meet identified needs where a home is being adapted.

It will be available to those assessed as eligible for Mandatory DFG assistance but whose property is either unsuitable for adaptation to meet their needs or where a move to an alternative home is considered more appropriate.

### *Will it be means tested?*

There will be no additional formal means test as all applicants for this assistance will have been means tested for mandatory DFG prior to applying for this grant and that assessment would be used to confirm eligibility.

### *How much funding might be available?*

Funding under this scheme is available in two parts.

A maximum of £40,000 is available under this scheme.

### *Will there be a charge against the property?*

The first £20,000 paid under this scheme will not be subject to a local land charge.

For works or costs which exceed the initial £20,000 paid under this scheme any amount provided will be placed in full as a local land charge against the property. This land charge will not be time limited and therefore will be repayable when the property is sold.

Note – this is a separate land charge to the £10,000 recoverable DFG land charge which expires at 10 years from the certified date.

### *Conditions attached to the grant*

Works must not have been started or completed if they are to be considered eligible for funding under this provision. Unless they are as a result of unforeseen increased costs of a

mandatory DFG whilst on-site which increases the cost of the works above the mandatory DFG funding limit.

#### Moving Costs

Where funding is requested to support moving and house purchase costs these will be reviewed on a case-by-case basis and will be determined by:

- The tenure and location of the original and new properties
- The residual equity and any increased mortgage debt and whether this is affordable without financial assistance from the Council
- Whether moving within the District/Borough or the County, or beyond
- Whether the original property is unadaptable, unaffordable or poor value to adapt
- Whether moving is required due to a landlord refusal to permit an adaptation
- Whether the move is an occupier preference rather than a necessary requirement

#### Other conditions

The person must be a permanent resident of the District/Borough they are applying for funding from and the property must be their permanent address.

Conditions restricting future use and ownership of the property – the following additional conditions will apply where the Council has made an award of DDFA;

- The owner will notify the Council in writing if a relevant disposal of the property is proposed.
- The owner of the property will provide, within 21 days of a written notice from the Council, a statement confirming the ownership and occupancy of the dwelling. If the property has been sold or transferred the statement will include the date of transfer of ownership.
- DDFA may be registered as a charge against the property and will be repayable on sale or transfer of the property, subject to exempt sales. The charge will be binding on successors in title.
- It is a condition of DDFA that where an owner makes a relevant disposal of the dwelling, other than an exempt disposal, the DDFA shall be repayable subject to above.
- If the property is transferred, or the sale price does not reflect the market price, the Council will have the right to seek an independent valuation of the market value, which will be binding on both parties, in order to recover the grant repayable.

If the applicant for DDFA is a tenant then the Council will liaise with the appropriate landlord to explore whether alternative funding options, such as funding from the landlord and/or moving to alternative suitable accommodation is an option, before approving DDFA.

Applications for DDFA will be considered for Top-Up once works have already been started and unforeseen costs arise, if the scheme is a Mandatory Scheme.

A maximum of one application for DDFA will be considered in any 5-year period.

#### *How to apply*

Through the HEART Service and funding will be considered on a case-by-case basis as outlined above.

## Appendix C. Discretionary Contribution Support Grant

### *Purpose of the assistance*

The means test, as set out in the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 has remained unchanged since the introduction of DFGs in 1996. It is widely accepted as being out of date and does not consider the outgoings of a household when assessing a contribution towards DFG. Results can occur which mean vulnerable people are unable to proceed with the adaptations they need to help them live at home due to an unaffordable contribution level. The 2018 DFG Review recommended that the means test be overhauled, and this is currently proposed in the Social Care White Paper 2021, but until changes are made it is proposed that discretionary contribution assistance is provided.

The aim of this scheme is to help the vulnerable members of the community where the applicant is unable to proceed with adaptations because of a means tested contribution which means that they are at significant risk in their home and/or the failure to complete adaptations will result in increased costs to the wider Social Care budgets. It gives the Council the ability to pay these contributions from discretionary funding therefore enabling works to go ahead and the applicant to remain living in their home.

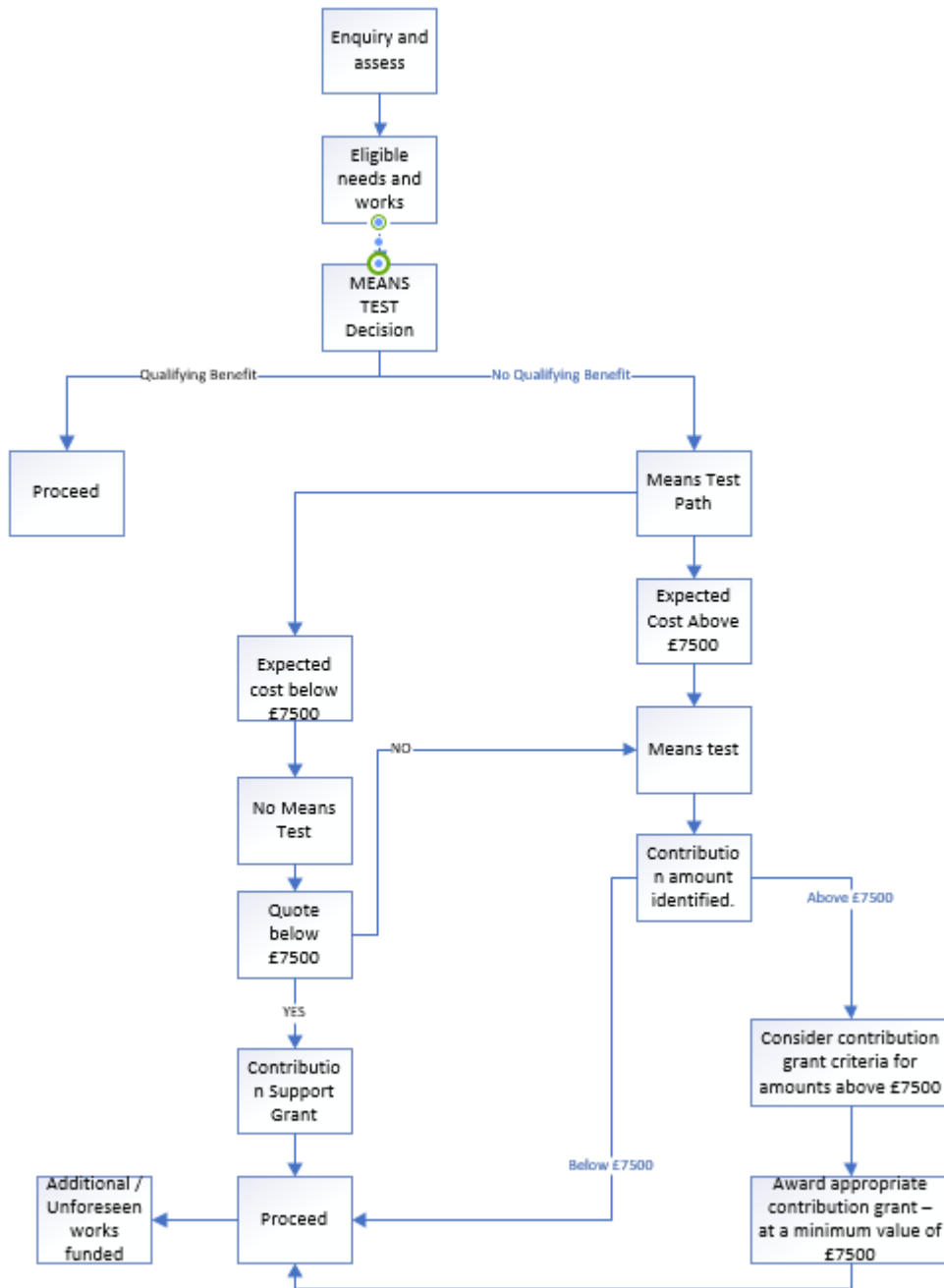
### *How will it be funded?*

The grants would be funded from the DFG Budget as resources allow. Mandatory Grants will have priority. The HEART Management Board will be kept informed of relevant spending patterns and pressures.

### *Who will it help?*

Those who have been assessed as being eligible to apply for Mandatory DFG assistance.

The following pathway indicates how HEART considers customers for discretionary disabled facilities assistance:



***Will it be means tested?***

There will be no additional formal means test.

***How much funding might be available?***

Discretionary Contribution Support Grant (DCSG), up to a maximum of £30,000 may be awarded.

Applications for this grant will be considered and approved as follows:

£1 to £7,500 – will be approved under the scheme of delegation





£7,500 to £10,000 – will be considered on a case-by-case basis and the eligibility criteria for funding at this level would be savings of less than £15,000 for a single person and less than £25,000 for a couple. Evidence will be required. Approvals will be under the scheme of delegation.

Contributions above £10,001 would be reviewed individually by the Special Cases Panel to ensure that households with the means to fund their contributions, do so. Whilst also ensuring that those households who are assessed as having a contribution due to a working spouse are not disadvantaged. Customers will need to prove why they cannot fund the contribution through commercial loan or income.

#### *Will there be a charge against the property?*

DCSG will be registered, **in full**, as a local land charge against the property for a period of 10 years and will be recovered on the sale or transfer of the property, subject to rules regarding exempt sales.

Note – this is separate to the £10,000 recoverable DFG which expires at 10 years from certification of works completion and separate to the DDFA land charge

Any DCSG awarded will be detailed on the approval notice for DFG

#### *Conditions attached to the grant*

The person must be a permanent resident of the District/Borough to whom they are applying for funding and the property must be their permanent address.

Conditions restricting future use and ownership of the property – the following additional conditions will apply where the Council has made an award of DCSG;

- The owner will notify the Council in writing if a relevant disposal of the property is proposed.
- The owner of the property will provide, within 21 days of a written notice from the Council, a statement confirming the ownership and occupancy of the dwelling. If the property has been sold or transferred the statement will include the date of transfer of ownership.
- DCSG will be registered as a charge against the property and will be repayable on sale or transfer of the property, subject to exempt sales. The charge will be binding on successors in title.
- It is a condition of DCSG that where an owner makes a relevant disposal of the dwelling, other than an exempt disposal, the DCSG shall be repayable subject to above.
- If the property is transferred, or the sale price does not reflect the market price, the Council will have the right to seek an independent valuation of the market value, which will be binding on both parties, to recover the grant repayable.

A maximum of one application for DCSG will be considered in any 10 year period.

#### *How to apply*

Applications will be considered through the HEART team as part of an application for Mandatory DFG assistance if a contribution is identified through the means test.

## Appendix D. Warm and Safer Homes (WaSH) Grant

### *Purpose of the assistance*

The purpose of this grant is to eliminate Category One hazards as identified by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System within owner-occupied homes in the County. In certain circumstances, as the HEART Management discretion the elimination of Category Two Hazards may also be included in eligible works if they are identified as having the potential to deteriorate and become Category one hazards if not remedied.

### *How will it be funded?*

The grants would be funded from the DFG Budget as resources allow. Mandatory Grants will have priority. The HEART Management Board will be kept informed of relevant spending patterns and pressures.

### *Who will it help?*

Funding will be available subject to the following eligibility criteria:

- The applicant must be the owner-occupier of the property
- The applicant must have owned the property for a minimum period of five years
- The applicant must meet one of the following financial criteria:
  - Be in receipt of:
    - Income Support
    - Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
    - Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
    - Support under Part IV of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
    - The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
    - Child Tax Credit (as long as there is no entitlement to Working Tax Credit and the household income does not exceed £20,000 as assessed by HM Revenue and Customs). This amount will be reviewed and published on the HEART website information.
    - Universal Credit
    - Council Tax Support (not single person reduction)
  - The applicant is aged 55 years or over and/ or has a disability and their income level is below the income tax threshold
- Works required must not be eligible for funding from any other sources, such as insurance policies.

### *Will it be means tested?*

There is no formal means test to assess a contribution, but applicants must meet the financial criteria set out above.

### *How much funding might be available?*

Funding under this scheme is available in two parts.

A maximum of £20,000 is available under this scheme.

### *Will there be a charge against the property?*

The first £10,000 paid under this scheme will not be subject to a local land charge.

For works or costs which exceed the initial £10,000 paid under this scheme any amount provided will be placed in full as a local land charge against the property. This land charge will not be time limited and therefore will be repayable when the property is sold.

### ***Conditions attached to the grant***

Only a single award of this grant will be available in any five-year period.

For works or costs which exceed the initial £10,000 paid under this scheme any amount provided will be placed in full as a local land charge against the property. This land charge will not be time limited and therefore will be repayable when the property is sold.

### ***How to apply***

Through the HEART team. An assessment of hazards within the property will take place using the HHSRS system methodology to establish if there are qualifying hazards present.

## **Appendix F. Hospital Discharge Scheme**

### ***Purpose of the assistance***

The purpose of this assistance is to:

- 1 Enable faster discharge from hospital
- 2 Reduce the risk of re-admission
- 3 Address significant difficulties in providing safe and dignified home-based care.

### ***How will it be funded?***

The grants would be funded from the DFG Budget as resources allow. Mandatory Grants will have priority. The HEART Management Board will be kept informed of relevant spending patterns and pressures.

### ***Who will it help?***

It will support residents who are requiring discharge from hospital or where the provision of adaptations will reduce the risk of hospital readmission or enable safe and dignified home-based care.

Works may include adapting the home to accommodate a disability, remedying defects including safety hazards, security issues and thermal comfort measures.

### ***Will it be means tested?***

There will be no formal means test.

### ***How much funding might be available?***

A maximum of £10,000 may be available

### ***Will there be a charge against the property?***

There will be no land charge placed against the property.

### ***Conditions attached to the grant***

The works must be deemed as necessary to meet one of the three purposes for which funding is available.

Assessment for this funding may be prioritised over other caseload, at the discretion of the HEART management.

### ***How to apply***

Applications for this assistance will be referred by professionals in a Social Services, Acute or Primary Care Trust setting as being necessary to facilitate a hospital discharge or identified through routine work where circumstances indicate this is an appropriate solution.



Assistance will be managed by the HEART service.

## Appendix G. Home Safety Grant

### *Purpose of the assistance*

The purpose of this assistance is to offer free home safety interventions to all qualifying residents who are assessed by HEART staff for other services, or who approach requesting this assistance as a stand-alone request or referral.

The funding available under this assistance is to support preventative works where no qualifying Care Act need has been identified. If a qualifying Care Act need is identified, then work would be carried out under a qualifying scheme or a referral made to an appropriate service provider.

### *How will it be funded?*

The grants would be funded from the DFG Budget as resources allow. Mandatory Grants will have priority. The HEART Management Board will be kept informed of relevant spending patterns and pressures.

### *Who will it help?*

This check is available for:

- Any resident aged 55 years or over
- Any household which includes a disabled person

Funding for works is available for the above residents who do not have an identified qualifying Care Act need but where preventative works are strongly indicated as being a recommendation from the home safety assessment.

### *Will it be means tested?*

There is no means test for this service or funding assistance.

### *How much funding might be available?*

The home safety assessment is free of charge.

The maximum funding available for completing works is £1,000

### *Will there be a charge against the property?*

There will be no charge placed against the property.

### *What will the assessment include?*

The assessment will include identification of potential hazards within the home such as:

- Falls Prevention; Advise on safe clear floor pathways, ill-fitting carpets, trailing electrical wires, uneven floors, furniture obstructions, garden paths and shed / garage access, access to main doors (front, side, rear), bins etc.
- Mobility and use of facilities; Freedom of movement within home, identify ill-fitting doors and windows, stair & grab rails, steps, lighting, switches and sockets, changing a lightbulb, putting up or adjusting curtains / blinds and fittings,
- Hazards from hot surfaces and materials; Radiators, gas fires, hot water cooker arrangements,



- Warm Home Assessment; Identify damp & mould, insulation (cavity & loft), lack of central heating, draught proofing, water cylinder jacket, fuel poverty assessment, tariff/supplier choice, meter position and readability
- Security checks; Window & door locks, fitting key safes,
- Fire Safety; Smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors.

#### *What works might be carried out?*

The remedial works funded through this grant may include:

- Grab rails
- Stairs rails
- Internal ramps (half steps)
- Refitting and/or easing doors
- Easing windows
- Key safes
- Fit smoke alarms
- Door safety chains
- Access to property (minor trip hazards)
- Change & fit light bulbs
- Tack loose fitting carpets
- Re-route trailing wires
- Fixing loose floor boards (or refer on to others)
- Relocate small items of furniture
- Remove minor slip trip or fall hazards within the home or garden.

#### *Conditions attached to the grant*

There is no limit on the number of applications a household can make but the maximum funding available to complete works is £1,000 in any 3-year period.

Funding is based on households not individuals.

Eligible HEART fees for the delivery of the works will be paid.

Works can be carried out by an 'approved' Handyperson scheme or directly purchased by or on behalf of the resident if suitability is agreed.

Funding is available for both labour and materials costs.

#### *How to apply*

Through the HEART team.

## Appendix H. Energy Efficiency Support

### *Purpose of the assistance*

The authorities intention is to support residents wherever possible to improve the energy efficiency of their homes and support works that will reduce fuel poverty. Where existing schemes apply e.g. through local authorities or national criteria, HEART will make referrals or signpost to relevant organisations.

### *How will it be funded?*

Where resources allow the authorities will work with HEART and other providers to source funding to support measures and engage with partners to attract funding for schemes as it becomes available.

### *Who will it help?*

Schemes will be developed based upon the funding criteria as schemes become available.

### *How to apply*

As funding opportunities become available, if successful bids are made via the HEART partnership then HEART will manage any available schemes and promote them accordingly.



## Appendix I – Signatories and Key Dates

This document has been ratified by each partner Housing Authority by its own process, and duly minute as agreed and adopted. The effective date of the policy is that of each partner Authority.

Minute reference number ..... Date .....

Representing (organisation) **Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council**

Minute reference number ..... Date .....

Representing (organisation) **North Warwickshire Borough Council**

Minute reference number ..... Date .....

Representing (organisation) **Rugby Borough Council**

Minute reference number ..... Date .....

Representing (organisation) **Stratford on Avon District Council**

Minute reference number ..... Date .....

Representing (organisation) **Warwick District Council**