

# Revised Housing Assistance Policy 2023

Cabinet Member for Housing, Ecology and Climate Change

Date: 27<sup>th</sup> March 2023

Agenda Item:

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Key Decision? **YES**



**CABINET MEMBER  
DECISION**

## 1. Executive Summary

1. This report seeks approval of an updated Housing Assistance Policy 2023. It replaces the previous Housing Assistance Policy 2021 and will apply to all new applications from 1 April 2023. The policy sets out how Lichfield District Council (the Council) will offer financial help for improving and adapting homes in the district, together with the conditions and eligibility criteria associated with each type of assistance. Its aim is to support residents to improve their health and wellbeing by addressing problems with unsuitable homes that do not meet their needs. The main changes are:
  - Increasing the value of Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant Assistance to £30,000
  - Inclusion of a second residence grant
  - Amendments to the Discretionary Contributions Grant criteria to bring them in line with social care funding eligibility criteria.
  - The introduction of a defined mechanism through which exceptional cases which exceed the policy-based funding might be considered, in line with best practice as outlined in the DFG Guidance 2022<sup>1</sup>.

## 2. Recommendations

- 2.1 To approve the revised Housing Assistance Policy 2023 **Appendix 1**.

## 3. Background

- 3.1 The previous Housing Assistance Policy was approved in April 2021 and included discretionary top-up assistance of £15,000. However, since that time the cost of building works, both materials and labour, has increased significantly and several adaptations have either not been able to be completed due to a lack of available funding or have taken considerably longer than would be considered appropriate whilst alternative funding was found. This has left vulnerable and disabled residents in inadequate housing conditions or with adaptations that have not fully met their needs. The funding will be awarded for tenant applications only where the landlord is also contributing towards the works.
- 3.2 When the DFG legislation was introduced in 1996 it stated that DFG funding could only be used for the main residence of an individual. Today, where more families live in separated homes this presents significant challenges and can result in contributing to relationship breakdowns where children are unable to spend time with both parents due to a lack of funding to adapt both homes. This was acknowledged in the 2022 DFG Guidance published by Government as an area that local grant awarding authorities should consider including discretionary support. Therefore, the updated policy includes a grant of £30,000 to adapt the home of a parent or guardian where there is a court order in place specifying that the disabled

<sup>1</sup> DFG Guidance 2022 : <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/disabled-facilities-grant-dfg-delivery-guidance-for-local-authorities-in-england>

child should live with both households. The conditions of award include a consideration regarding the percentage split to ensure that appropriate adaptations are made to facilitate the level of contact or residency required. Each case would be considered individually as these are circumstances which often require sensitive consideration. As this is a discretionary grant the full cost of the works would be placed as a 10-year land charge against the property where possible. This would mirror the timescale of the Mandatory DFG land charge but for the full value of the works/grant award.

3.3 The eligibility criteria for contribution assistance have been amended to mean that those with below the social care capital threshold of £23,250 would be automatically eligible for £5,000 support towards any assessed contribution. Those with savings above this level or where works cost more than this would be considered on a case-by-case basis.

3.4 The policy follows the Best Practice outlined in the 2022 DFG Guidance to include a mechanism by which exceptional cases can be considered and how that funding would be approved and who is eligible for it.

<b>Alternative Options</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>To not increase the Discretionary DFG. This would result in significant delivery challenges for the new DFG Support service operated by LWMTS from April 2023 due to the increased and continued increasing costs of building works.</li> <li>To not introduce a Second Homes Grant which would result in the Service and the Council having to individually consider each application without a policy mechanism through which to fund the works which would be time consuming.</li> <li>To not amend the contribution assistance grant criteria, which would mean that fewer people would be eligible for support than is currently proposed.</li> <li>To not include an exceptional cases funding award mechanism. However, the Council would still have a duty to consider these and therefore this would result in the Service and the Council having to individually consider each application without a policy mechanism through which to fund the works which would be time consuming.</li> </ul>
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<b>Consultation</b>	Internal consultation only as only minor updates have been done.
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<b>Financial Implications</b>	<p>The implications for each amendment are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Increase in discretionary top-up grant from £15,000 to £30,000: anticipated to assist circa 5 applicants per year, so a maximum impact of £75,000 additional spend.</li> <li>The introduction of a second homes grant: there has been only 1 situation of this within the SILIS partnership area in the last 12 months (none in Lichfield district) therefore this is anticipated to have minimal financial implications but will be there to assist households if the situation arises.</li> <li>The amendments to the contribution assistance grant: will enable faster processing of these grant through simplified criteria, with an expected financial implication of less than £50,000 per year.</li> <li>The exceptional cases funding mechanism impact is currently unknown and will depend on individual cases and market costs but will be within the control of the Council to determine.</li> </ul>
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Better Care Fund	2022/23	2023/24	2024/25	2025/26	2026/27
Opening Balance -	(978,692)	(1,087,886)	(386,886)	(28,886)	(28,886)

	<b>unspent</b>						
	Grant Received	(1,109,194)	(914,000)	(914,000)	(914,000)	(914,000)	(914,000)
	Spend	1,000,000	1,615,000	1,272,000	914,000	914,000	
	<b>Closing Balance - unspent</b>	<b>(1,087,886)</b>	<b>(386,886)</b>	<b>(28,886)</b>	<b>(28,886)</b>	<b>(28,886)</b>	
Approved by Section 151 Officer	Yes						

Contribution to the Delivery of the Strategic Plan	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. The service will support people to remain living independently at home for as long as it is safe for them to do so which will support the objectives of “Enable people to help themselves and others and also to live healthy and active lives” by reducing the barriers they face in their homes.</li> <li>2. The service will be able to support local businesses through the contractor supply chain which will ‘encourage economic growth’.</li> <li>3. Through specifying the works and working with newer technologies as they are developed in adaptations, the service will be able to support the Council to ‘keep it clean, green and safe’ as well as ensuring that the historic characteristics of the district are retained.</li> <li>4. The new service will be ‘responsive and customer focussed’ which is another objective of the strategic plan and will enable us to support our most vulnerable residents effectively.</li> </ol>
Approved by Monitoring Officer	Yes

Equality, Diversity and Human Rights Implications	The client group of this service are adults and children with a disability. The use of a means test directs grant funding to residents on a low income who are otherwise unable to afford to adapt their home.
EIA logged by Equalities Officer	Yes An Equalities Impact Assessment has been completed for the revised policy. No negative impacts identified.

Crime & Safety Issues	There are not anticipated to be any impacts from the revised policy.
Environmental Impact (including Climate Change and Biodiversity).	There are not anticipated to be any impacts from the revised policy.

GDPR / Privacy Impact Assessment	This has been completed for the new DFG service.
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	Risk Description & Risk Owner	Original Score (RYG)	How We Manage It	Current Score (RYG)
A	Excess demand from the new assistance measures, exceeding available funding	Likelihood: Yellow Impact: red Severity of	All funds are discretionary and demand will be actively monitored by the DFG Service management and reported at the Quarterly monitoring meetings with LDC. Assistance can	Likelihood: Green Impact: Yellow

Risk: Yellow	be 'removed' if demand for mandatory DFG increases above the available funding.	Severity of Risk: Green
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Background documents

Housing Assistance Policy approved by Cabinet 13th April 2021

<https://democracy.lichfielddc.gov.uk/documents/s10510/Housing%20Assistance%20Policy%20Review.pdf>

Relevant web links:

DFG guidance 2022

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

Better Care Fund

<https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/part-rel/transformation-fund/better-care-fund/about-the-better-care-fund/>

Social Care White paper 2021.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform-white-paper>