

REPORT TO:	HOUSING AND COMMUNITY SERVICES COMMITTEE	AGENDA ITEM: 10
DATE OF MEETING:	6th JUNE 2019	CATEGORY: DELEGATED
REPORT FROM:	STRATEGIC DIRECTOR (SERVICE DELIVERY)	OPEN
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SUBJECT:	COUNCIL HOUSE ADAPTATIONS POLICY	
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	All	TERMS OF REFERENCE:

1.0 Recommendations

- 1.1 The Committee adopts a revised Disabled Adaptations Policy for Council Tenants to replace the existing policy.
- 1.2 The Committee notes that a further report will be presented later in the year that introduces a new policy for the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants in the private sector.
- 1.3 The Committee notes that, a report will also be presented that considers the equity of funding and maintenance arrangements for Council tenants and householders in the private sector.

2.0 Purpose of the Report

- 2.1 The report seeks Committee approval to adopting a revised Policy for the provision of disabled adaptations for tenants of South Derbyshire District Council (SDDC) properties which replaces the existing policy. The draft report is attached at Appendix A.

3.0 Executive Summary

- 3.1 The revised Policy brings the provision of this service in line with the legislation that provides a mandatory right for all households to receive a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). To achieve this, the revised Policy provides an earlier opportunity for tenants to move to a more suitably adapted property.
- 3.2 An additional piece of work will be completed during this financial year to identify whether it is viable to cover the costs of the maintenance and repair of specialist equipment through an additional service charge for tenants and implementing a Test of Financial Resources to assess whether tenants can make a contribution to the cost of the initial works. This would be in line with adaptations carried out in private

sector homes under DFGs. A separate report will also introduce a Policy for the administration of DFGs in the private sector.

4.0 Detail

- 4.1 In the financial year 17/18 47 adaptations were carried out to Council properties at a cost to the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) of £221,544 at an average of £4713.70 per adaptation. In the financial year 18/19 79 adaptations completed at a cost of £277,380 to the HRA and an average cost of £3511.14 per adaptation. Details of the type of works completed are shown in the table below.

Type of Adaptation	Number 2017/18	Number 2018/19
Stair Lifts	11	16
Level Access Showers	18	38
Ramps	5	6
Through Floor Lift	3	0
Wash/dry toilets	4	10
Bath Installations	1	0
Door Widening & Internal Alterations	3	6
Extension	1	1
Hard Standing	1	0
Kitchens	0	1
Room Padding	0	1

Due to the nature of the works tenants can face lengthy waiting times from their initial application to the completion of the required works. For example, the average current waiting time for the provision of a level access shower is currently around 23 weeks.

- 4.2 Under the “Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, all owner occupiers, tenants including council and registered provider tenants are eligible for a disabled facilities grant”. Although the DFG framework and mandatory aspect of the grant applies across all tenures, funding for the provision of adaptations to the Council’s own housing stock is funded from the HRA

The maximum amount of a mandatory DFG is currently £30,000. With the exception of an application for a disabled child, the amount payable may also be subject to a deduction derived from a test of the financial resources of the disabled person and their partner. This maximum amount is applied to adaptations in Council owned properties. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England and Wales) Order 2002 enables housing authorities to give discretionary assistance, in any form, (e.g. grant, loan or equity release) for adaptations. The definition of a disabled person under the Act is that:

- Their sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired.

- They have a mental disorder or impairment of any kind.
- They are physically substantially disabled by illness, injury, impairments that have been present since birth or otherwise.

Generally the impairment of the applicant must have lasted or is likely to last for at least 12 months.

- 4.3 The revised Policy seeks to change a number of key areas of the existing Policy which are to:
- Identify earlier than currently, suitable alternative accommodation for tenants
 - Provide a greater incentive for tenants to move to more suitable accommodation
 - Facilitate and support the transfer of applicants to suitable accommodation
- 4.4 The new Policy seeks to provide tenants with an earlier response to their needs through the prompt offer of alternative accommodation after an initial assessment by the Housing Service. This will be facilitated through the existing Allocations Policy as a “direct let” after the completion of a Housing Application.

5.0 Financial Implications

- 5.1 The revised Policy retains the same financial limits on adaptations as those used for DFGs in the private sector with £30,000 being the maximum value of works to be agreed.
- 5.2 A further investigation will be carried out into the feasibility of covering the cost of ongoing maintenance and repair of specialist equipment installed. This investigation will also review the feasibility of Introducing a “Test of Financial Resources” for tenants in line with DFG recipients in other tenures. This will not affect any tenants who are already in receipt of Housing and other Benefits who would not be required to make any contribution to the cost of adaptation works.
- 5.3 The increased incentive payment will be taken from the HRA, however, this cost will be mitigated by savings to the HRA through not having to fund major and extensive adaptations prevented by the use of the transfer process.

6.0 Corporate Implications

Employment Implications

- 6.1 There are no employment implications arising from this report

Legal Implications

- 6.2 The possible legal implications around the equity of provision will be considered and addressed in further reports on Disabled Facilities Grants and the funding arrangements for this provision.

Corporate Plan Implications

- 6.3 One of the corporate objectives of the Council is to keep residents happy, healthy and safe. To assist in achieving this two key actions have been identified in the Corporate Plan;
- a. PE1. Provide an efficient and well targeted adaptation service (including Disabled Facilities Grants) and make better use of previously adapted dwellings
 - b. PE1. Improve the quality and make best use of existing Council housing stock to meet current and future needs.
 - c. The Asset Management Strategy (2016-2046) identifies 2"meeting the needs of older vulnerable and disabled applicants" as one of its six key priorities.

Risk Impact

- 6.4 This policy contributes to mitigating the Service Delivery Risk SD6 – Affordable housing delivery- Facilitate and deliver a range of integrated and sustainable housing and community infrastructure

7.0 Community Impact

Consultation

- 7.1 As there are no changes to tenants terms and conditions of tenancy there is no statutory requirement to consult with tenants on this matter. The outcome of further investigations into service charges and the test of Financial Resources will be discussed with tenants groups.

Equality and Diversity Impact

- 7.2 The Policy aims to provide options for people with a disability to enable them to remain in safe and secure accommodation.

Social Value Impact

- 7.3 This Policy contributes to the Sustainable Communities Strategy priorities for healthier communities by helping people to live in appropriate and sustainable homes ,thereby meeting the aim of people to have good quality of life, retain their independence for as long as possible.

Environmental Sustainability

- 7.4 The Policy aims to deliver a sustainable solution by making best use of existing adapted housing stock

8.0 Conclusions

- 8.1 That the existing Disabled Adaptations for Council Tenants Policy is fit for purpose and only requires minor amendments to bring it in to line with DFG processes.
- 8.2 Further investigation is required into the feasibility of recovering maintenance costs through service charges with a report to Committee on the findings of this investigation.
- 8.3 A separate policy for Disabled Facilities Grants in the private sector is required.

8.0 Background Papers

- 8.1 Existing Disabled Adaptations for Council Tenants Policy