

CABINET

DATE	2 nd October 2019
REPORT OF	Councillor John Fenty, Portfolio Holder for Regeneration, Skills and Housing
RESPONSIBLE OFFICER	Clive Tritton, Interim Director for Economy and Growth
SUBJECT	Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy (HADAP)
STATUS	Open
FORWARD PLAN REF NO.	CB 10/19/02

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The recommendations in this report underpin the delivery of the Council's priorities: 'Stronger Economy and Stronger Communities'. The report aims, by contributing to the national independent living agenda, for residents in North East Lincolnshire (NEL) to enjoy improved health and wellbeing; this is via promotion of access to suitable housing and through encouraging residents to live in safe and decent accommodation, ensuring they are able to live independently in their own homes for longer.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The revised Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy (HADAP) is proactive and utilises changes in legislation to forge stronger links to the Better Care Fund, to provide wider and more appropriate housing assistance and adaptations solutions for residents of NEL than ever before. This improved offer of services under the revised policy ensures more effective and efficient use of adaptations funding so the Council can deliver better outcomes to more service users in the borough.

RECOMMENDATIONS

It is recommended that Cabinet:

1. Approves the revised Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy (HADAP).
2. Delegates authority to the Director of Economy and Growth to allocate and award Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) based on discretionary circumstances, as outlined in the policy and to take any other actions arising under the implementation of the policy.

REASONS FOR DECISION

This report seeks to utilise the Council's powers under the Regulatory Reform Order (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) 2002 (RRO) to assist eligible households to improve their housing and accommodation standards, by providing cost effective and, where required, accelerated service delivery to meet service users' needs.

Without Cabinet approval the Council risks a continuing budget underspend and prolonged delays in service delivery, which will increase budgetary and operational pressure on other health and wellbeing services and have an adverse effect on existing and future service users, damaging the councils reputation.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 All local authorities are required to have a HADAP. This policy sets out how local authorities intend to use their powers under the Regulatory Reform Order (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) (2002) to highlight the range of housing interventions that can promote independent living and well-being. The document sets out the assistance available for funding to applicants, enabling them to qualify for essential repairs, to reduce injury and accidents in the home, to help eligible homeowners live in a safe, warm and dry property and to facilitate independent living works, through a broad scope of adaptations that improve service users' independence, overall health and general wellbeing.
- 1.2 In 2008 the government relaxed the ring-fence on use of DFG monies so they could be used for purposes outside of the prescribed works contained within the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. In 2015, DFGs were tied directly in with the Better Care Fund, which recognised a more all-encompassing role for DFG funding. This shift has allowed greater flexibility and more innovative practice to be established when delivering services.
- 1.3 In 2017 the HADAP was formally reviewed, with Cabinet formally agreeing to some changes in policy that delivered greater flexibility, providing enhanced support for those with palliative care needs and those at end of life. Opportunities for cases by exception were also introduced, as well as additional financial support for landlords, to prevent properties from becoming empty as well as keeping them at an acceptable standard.
- 1.4 It was agreed that in addition to the Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations review there should also be a full review of the DFG pathway, which was aimed at removing the barriers to receiving a DFG. A workshop was held in September 2017 to scrutinise the referral process, assessment, allocation and delivery of DFG, looking at ideas and improvements for further development of the service.
- 1.5 The review highlighted a number of areas for development, including improvements in:
 - forecasting demand,
 - processes,
 - capacity to deliver all required functions,
 - joint working and communication,
 - speed of delivery,
 - financial planning and oversight,
 - performance monitoring,
 - flexible use of DFGs.
- 1.6 A robust action plan was developed and a DFG Steering Group established to develop a comprehensive delivery plan. This purpose of the plan was to deliver;

- Improvements to waiting times for the assessment, planning and delivery of a DFG due to the development of improved processes and procedures, better working relationships between professionals, and by having increased clinical, technical and contractor capacity.
- A 'whole person' overview during the DFG panel decision making process, by ensuring professionals on the panel have a full appreciation of health, care and housing needs.
- A mechanism whereby issues in the DFG pathway are identified and resolved efficiently due to having greater scrutiny and oversight of DFG performance.
- Improved use of DFG resources to meet users' needs, by ensuring greater financial monitoring and oversight.

It is expected the revised policy will enhance service delivery and meet the aims of the Steering Group.

- 1.7 Extensive consultation has taken place with community groups, health professionals, council members and the public. All key proposals outlined in the revised HADAP were supported overwhelmingly during the consultation period and therefore require no alteration.

The consultation did expose strong objections regarding means testing, and a desire to cease 'means testing' for DFG works funded by the Council.

Under the existing process, applicants should provide a financial contribution if they have savings over £6,000. Their benefit allowance is also considered and these both determine if they will pay a contribution, and the level of contribution (disability living allowance and income support are generally excluded from the calculation). There is no means testing for families of disabled children under 18.

The Council re-coups approximately (up to) £27k per annum via means testing collections, however the means testing process is time consuming, challenging and impractical to administrate and police, i.e. it involves a full financial assessment through an electronic based assessment tool, which calculates the client's contribution. It is a question-based assessment, and photographic evidence is taken of supporting documents etc., but unprincipled applicants are able to negotiate around the audit if they are determined enough (reducing or eliminating their financial contribution).

Furthermore, the cost of managing the means testing process from inception to completion costs approximately the same per annum as to run and manage the scheme, so the net financial gain to the council is negligible.

Where DFG applications are aborted by the applicants (due to their unwillingness to be means tested or pay the excess fee), demand still exists for these adaptations. It is widely accepted any associated costs for meeting and delivering the outstanding resident's needs are simply shunted and moved around the health care system (for other health care services/providers to pick up) as the original need/demand for assistance does not disappear. Therefore, early intervention is fundamental in reducing long-term health care costs.

Thirdly, means testing does create unnecessary waste, inefficiencies and delays in the DFG pathway, therefore the report is keen to focus on overall outcomes of the service not just part of the process.

As a result of these findings, it is recommended that all DFG means testing is removed under the new policy.

1.7.1 The following changes to the existing policy include a wider range of discretionary powers, which will provide a greater level of assistance to those in need, especially for those residents who would otherwise not be eligible for a mandated DFG but still have real need.

These extended discretionary powers under the revised HADAP include:

Revised Discretionary Powers
Mandatory DFG top up - in exceptional circumstances, to provide a 'top-up' (max of £20,000) to the grant contribution, where costs exceed the normal maximum of £30,000. This situation based on recent evidence would be rare.
Existing adaptation replacement - allow for the replacement of existing adaptations where they reach the end of their lifespan and are still required to meet need. These could include the replacement of stair lifts, through floor lifts, step lifts, rise and fall baths and ceiling track hoists.
Assistance for people with shared care of a disabled child - in exceptional circumstances, where there is a shared care arrangement for a disabled child between those with parental responsibility and there is no 'main' property, then both homes can be adapted (enabling the disabled child to live across both homes).
Dementia friendly home assistance – to provide home aids / adaptations (up to the value of £5,000) to support people with dementia to manage their surroundings, retain independence and reduce feelings of confusion and anxiety, e.g. coloured flooring, improved signage, safety features within kitchens/ bathrooms.
Minor adaptations and handy persons' service – this will include the already existing minor adaptations service as part of the DFG funding.
Removal of means testing for all DFG applications as no financial gain/revenue is achieved through this activity.

1.7.2 The revised HADAP will also provide a wider, more innovative person centred approach, including but not limited to:

- An improved range of aids for daily living and minor adaptations, which, where the service user outcomes are met, remove or reduce the need for major adaptations to a person's home.
- Providing up to £7,000 towards heating and insulation for those with an eligible medical need who have no other means to fund the investment/repairs.
- Adapting social housing stock in partnership with social landlords, to ensure those on the home choice links register who have a need for an adapted property have access to a higher volume of suitable accommodation to meet their needs in order to live as independently as possible.
- Adaptation works to a selection of properties proposed in future housing development. This will ensure highly sort after, fully adapted properties are available within the market. This will provide flexibility for the unit, but also ensure higher need service users have improved housing options.

1.7.3 This policy will streamline the entire DFG process, enabling the more complex or exceptional cases to be dealt with more quickly, providing officers with the

authority to deliver innovative solutions as ‘business as usual’, which will save valuable time and resources and improve the customer journey.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

2.1 Risks include:

Description	Risk type	Risk level
Finances to fund discretionary grants and loans proposed within the policy are at the discretion of the council – in future, funding priorities may change. However, a proportion of funds are ring fenced through the BCF and via legal duties as imposed by government, so it should be possible to recoup loans via the courts if applicants refuse to repay monies.	Financial	Low
Capacity issues of the service are a possibility, since the HADAP offers easier access to support and faster delivery schedules. However, processes have been streamlined and additional capacity assured through better use of ENGIE for low level adaptations.	Operational	Low
Removal of means testing. A small revenue stream will be closed but overall costs for care and support should fall because providing preventative assistance earlier will benefit individuals and keep them in their homes for longer. The policy recommends that a local charge is placed on the property to protect council funding, thereby mitigating the financial risk.	Financial	Low
Funding via the energy efficiency loans scheme is via a grant, which requires repayment. Applicants might refuse to do this, which would reduce the funding pot for all HADAP schemes. However, the policy recommends that a local charge is placed on the property to protect council funding, thereby mitigating the risk.	Financial	Low

2.2 Opportunities include:

- Improved service user outcomes as those most vulnerable would have a wider range of housing opportunities to have their needs met/ supported.
- Health and care benefits to those in rented property, through funding of energy efficiency measures to reduce fuel poverty.
- Benefits to those who own empty properties, the council and renters in NEL, through implementation of a leasing scheme to bring these properties back onto the rental market.
- Improvements to the general DFG pathway (i.e. more efficient, effective and timely), ensuring service users receive appropriate adaptations more quickly via a less complex process. The speedier access to aids to live independently is directly linked to better long-term health outcomes and ensures additional care is not funded unnecessarily.
- Improved access options to DFGs by utilising discretionary powers, to provide a timely resolution where possible for service users.
- Greater joint working between health, care, housing and regeneration.
- A more accessible HADAP that is user friendly for the public.

3. OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

Other options that could be considered are:

3.1 Option 1 – Do nothing

The Council could choose not to implement the revised Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy. However, the council is required to have a policy in place, which details the entitlement for people living in the borough. This means that the policy currently in use would remain. However, this policy is limited and restrictive in parts, and does not meet the current and developing housing requirements in the NEL marketplace.

Doing nothing will generate increased costs in the wider health and care system since those who could not access support/early intervention are likely to develop increased dependency needs i.e. domiciliary care/ residential care. There is also an increased burden (health/wellbeing) on carers.

3.2 Option 2 – Propose partial acceptance of the policy

Partial acceptance of the HADAP would give a greater flexibility to meet need than currently exists and would improve access to grants and adaptations for those who are eligible; however, the full range of support could not be offered and this approach does not fully utilise DFG opportunities, meaning some service users' needs would not be fully met.

4. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

4.1 There are significant reputational implications for the council resulting from the decision to adopt the new HADAP; the revised policy enables the council to help more people who are in need by streamlining the service and removing barriers. The policy provides greater access, opportunity and availability to funding and enables the council to deal with more complex specialist cases in a controlled, organised and prompt fashion, saving both time and money.

The policy reflects a modern and efficient council, which caters and delivers to the needs of local people in a timely manner.

A communication plan has been agreed with the council's communications service, ensuring any external or statutory communications are dealt with accordingly.

5. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

The revised HADAP will be funded through the following council budgets:

- DFG – this grant is currently provided through the Better Care Fund (BCF), via monies allocated to adaptations. The BCF is a national policy initiative to drive better integration between care and health services; it urges councils to think differently about ways of using DFGs to improve people's ability to be less reliant on health and care services, with the aim of enjoying better support to live in their own homes for longer. The new discretions proposed will support the appropriate delivery of the budget envelope, and fulfil the aims of the Better Care Fund.
- Housing assistance – this funding is provided by the council through their own capital budget provision.

There are no revenue implications.

6. CONSULTATION

Consultation has been held with key stakeholders, the Leadership Team and the general public via the formal consultation process.

Portfolio holders for Adult Services and for Regeneration, Assets, Energy, Skills and Housing have been consulted.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

7.1 The revised policy will help ensure funds available are fully utilised towards providing efficient and effective housing assistance and adaptations solutions for a wider cohort of residents.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

8.1 The arising legal implications have largely been considered in the above report in that the Council is required to have clear and robust policies for the administration of grants of this nature.

9. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

9.1 There are no direct HR implications contained within this report.

10. WARD IMPLICATIONS

10.1 The policy affects all wards.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

11.1 The HADAP is attached for consideration by Cabinet.

12. CONTACT OFFICER(S)

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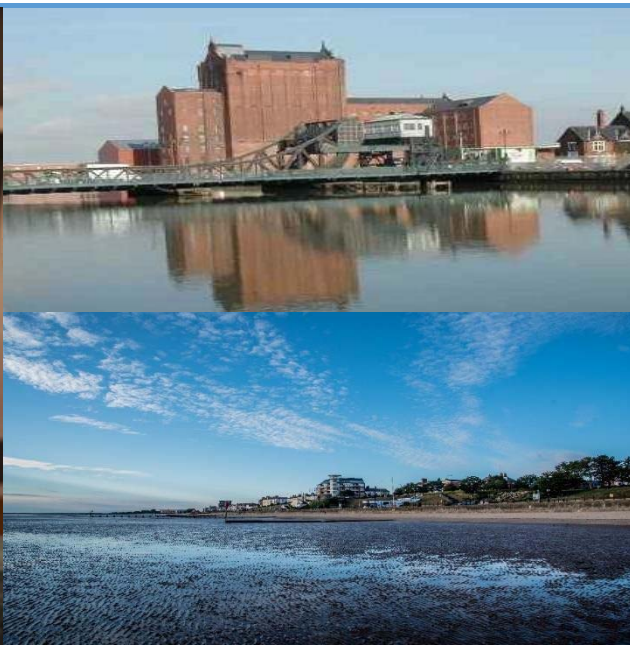
COUNCILLOR JOHN FENTY
DEPUTY LEADER AND
PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR REGENERATION, SKILLS AND HOUSING



HOUSING ASSISTANCE AND DISABLED ADAPTATIONS POLICY

(The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) [England and Wales] Order 2002)

August 2019



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Appendices

Appendix 1 – Definitions of Terms



1. Introduction

1.1 This policy sets out how North East Lincolnshire Council 'the council', intends to use its powers under the Regulatory Reform Order (2002) to introduce a wider range of housing interventions to promote independent living and well-being. It sets out the assistance available for funding essential repairs to reduce injury and accidents in the home, to help eligible homeowners live in a safe, warm and dry home and to facilitate independent living through a broad scope of adaptations to improve clients' overall health and wellbeing.

A key aim of the policy is to provide greater flexibility on how the funding is used, to help deliver wider strategic projects that keep people warm, safe and well at home while reducing bureaucracy in the grant's administration. The policy also supports bringing empty homes back into use, to provide much needed quality housing to support families in need.

This policy is underpinned and informed through a number of key policies and legislation, most notably:

- The Care Act 2014
- The Housing and Regeneration Act 2008
- The Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015
- The Children and Families Act 2014
- The Housing Act 2004
- The Disability Discrimination Act
- The Equality Act 2010

1.2 The council will be helpful to all potential applicants, providing appropriate guidance and advice regardless of whether they are eligible for financial assistance. During periods of heavy demand, the council will be obliged to prioritise the workload and may have to operate waiting lists.

To be directed to detailed information on the application process for any specific grant / loan, **please call: 01472 326296 then press option:**

3	4	5
for housing improvement grants and loans queries	for adaptations grants queries	for heating grants/energy efficiency queries

Alternatively, you can email homeimprovementservice@nelincs.gov.uk for information.

2. Policy implementation and review

2.1 This policy will remain in force until it is reviewed in 2020.

2.2 The policy will be available on the council's website; a summary document will also be available at www.nelincs.gov.uk. The policy is subject to funding and annual review, in accordance with the Better Care Board, who oversee funding decisions related to Housing and the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). This timescale will only change if legislation / local policy changes in such a way as to affect the contents of this policy. In this case, a review will be undertaken in order to refresh the policy contents.

3. Summary of grants and loans available under the Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy

3.1 The list of available grants and loans under this policy are:

- Relocation assistance (enabling independent living).
- Safer homes scheme (to support residents receiving hospital / respite care who are prone to burglary).
- Safe, warm and dry emergency repair grant (available for repairs to eligible housing and adequate heating).
- Home appreciation loan (available for repairs to housing for eligible homeowners).
- Energy repayment loans (available for repairs / improvements helping to support living in a warmer home).
- Empty homes leasing scheme (available to bring empty homes back into use).
- Disabled facilities grant – major adaptations (enabling independent living).
- Disabled facilities further assistance (discretionary assistance, enabling independent living).
- Innovative person centred projects relating to discretionary DFG.
- Innovative area based regeneration schemes to improve inner urban areas and bring empty homes back into use.

3.2 Please note:

- Grants may be subject to repayment – please see section 4 below.
- Funding to carry out essential repairs is only available to owner-occupiers. Residents living in rented accommodation who have outstanding essential repairs in their home should contact the property owner and inform them about the repair requirements.

If the property owner fails to carry out the work, residents are advised to contact the council via email (homeimprovementteam@nelincs.gov.uk) or by calling **01472 326296 (option 3)**.

Further information can be found at <https://www.nelincs.gov.uk/homes-and-property/private-rent/how-to-report-repairs-to-a-private-landlord>

- Funding cannot be provided for work already started.
- All grants and loans under this policy are subject to eligibility.

3.3 Relocation assistance

A grant of up to £4,000 can be provided to contribute towards relocating to a new home that will better suit the disabled applicant's needs. A move can reduce under-occupation, a situation where the applicant is often faced with large maintenance and fuel bills.

3.4 Safer Homes Scheme

Assistance for eligible households, where residents have been admitted to hospital or are receiving respite care, to support works to carry out security measures to a property. The assistance will be subject to availability of funding and based on reports of an increase in burglaries in a specific high crime area. Funding assistance is up to £500.

3.5 Safe, warm and dry emergency repair grant

A grant of up to £5,000 for emergency works, which can be used to quickly remedy urgent situations for vulnerable owner-occupiers.

3.6 Home appreciation loan

Loan assistance of up to £20,000 (with repayment conditions on the sale of the house) to remedy hazards (see appendix 1) and serious disrepair, in exceptional circumstances.

3.7 Energy repayment loans

Loan assistance up to £4,000, to cover the cost of energy efficiency repairs, replacements or installations.

3.8 Empty Homes Leasing Scheme

Repayable funding available to owners of empty property, who are unable / unwilling to bring a property back into use. The scheme is subject to available funding and can help redevelop local areas, in conjunction with other schemes aimed at regeneration. Leasing to the council will be either voluntary or regulatory, and based on provisions within the Housing Act 2004 (Empty Dwelling Management Orders).

3.9 Disabled facilities grant

Grants of up to £30,000 for adaptations to homes for people with disabilities, to ensure that the disabled person can access their home. Examples include adapting suitable washing / bathing facilities, facilitating the preparation of food / cooking in the kitchen and improved heating / lighting controls. Please note, in NEL all DFGs will be 'discretionary' as means testing has been removed.

3.10 Disabled facilities further assistance (discretions)

The scheme provides further discretionary assistance to ensure people can remain independent in their own homes; it can be used to top up a DFG or to assist those who are ineligible for a DFG (within the boundaries of the discretionary criteria and assessment). Currently the council offer the following discretions (see section 4 for full details):

- Thermal warmth scheme.
- "Top up" of a DFG.
- Replacement of existing adaptations when they reach their end of life.
- Assistance for people with shared care of a disabled child.
- End of life speed tracked service.
- Dementia friendly home assistance.
- Minor adaptations and handy persons service.

3.11 Innovative person centred / community focused projects

The scheme provides discretionary assistance to projects which are innovative and support the council's wider objectives. Such projects could include:

- Projects that support the purpose of a DFG. Such projects could;
 - The improvement of existing housing stock, to ensure a range of housing options are available in the borough which are fully accessible
 - Enhancing new build projects i.e. extra care housing developments to ensure an enhanced level of accessibility for those with disabilities.
 - Utilising other methods/technology to meet need that is less invasive/restrictive to the person/s with disabilities.
- Projects that support communities and improve our inner urban areas.
 - Improve existing housing
 - Bring empty homes back into use

- Provide street based improvements
- Provide energy efficiency improvements

4 Detailed breakdown for grants and loans

Where the below refer to “appropriate” and / or “necessary” adaptations, each case is based on a clinical judgement of those unique circumstances. Where something needs to be “reasonable” and / or “practicable”, this refers to application of the housing policy by housing staff against the applicant’s unique circumstances. Therefore, required adaptations should be **necessary** and **appropriate** (as determined **clinically** by **social services**) to meet the needs of the disabled person, and it must be **reasonable** and **practicable** (as determined by the **housing department**) for the relevant works to be carried out (see Appendix 1).

	Purpose of grant/loan	Eligibility	Conditions and additional comments
Relocation assistance (independent living)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Assistance to enable a disabled person to move to a more suitable dwelling (inappropriate original dwelling for current and future needs and cannot be adapted) Relocation property will be fully suitable for current / probable needs or adaptable to be so Eligible costs include professional fees (e.g. legal or estate agency fees), rental deposit (minimum 12 month assured short hold tenancy), removal costs, contribution towards redecoration and floor coverings costs Costs must be approved in advance Maximum available is £4,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Owner occupier / Tenanted (intend to purchase) Both the existing (currently residing in) and the proposed (to buy) properties must be in NEL. Applicant must be eligible for a DFG and have DFG panel approval; however the current property is not suitable to adapt Home Assistance Team to determine that the dwelling is not suitable for adaptations or it is not reasonable and practicable to carry out the works Subject to a financial assessment to work out how much the applicant can repay monthly. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Costs for aborted moves will not be considered There will be no retrospective payments made All payments will be for reasonable costs and evidence value for money Loans are repayable, according to the amount identified in the financial assessment. The maximum loan repayment period is 5 years
Safer homes scheme (funding to provide security measures)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To help secure properties where occupants are admitted to hospital or a care home for respite care for more than 2 weeks Funding of up to £500 is available The scheme is in partnership with Humberside Police and based around increase in crime of this nature in a particular area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Household is in a high crime area, where the occupant is at increased risk of being burgled Occupant has been / will be admitted to hospital or a care home (for respite care) for a minimum of 2 weeks 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Non-means tested No payback required The handy person service will install measures
Safe, warm and dry emergency repair grant (available for repairs to housing and adequate heating)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A grant of up to £5,000 for emergency works, which can be administered quickly to remedy an urgent situation Eligible works are emergency repairs, defined as making the property safe and secure (Category One Hazards) No more than two grants up to the value of £7,000 can be given in a period of 5 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants must: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Be able to prove owner occupation for a minimum of 2 years Meet the defined criteria for being vulnerable (see Appendix 1) Applicants will only be eligible for a grant if an Energy Repayment Loan / Home Appreciation Loan application has been declined 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Repayment of the grant is required if the property is sold / changes ownership within ten years of the grants completion date Applicants requiring works that will improve the thermal efficiency of a property must apply for an Energy Repayment Loan
Home appreciation loan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This is an equity release loan 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicant must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently an owner occupier, and for a minimum period of 2 years 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Loan to house value must be no greater than 70%

<p>(available for repairs to housing)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The loan is to carry out essential home repairs to achieve decency, by removing Category 1 or high Category 2 Hazards (see Appendix 1) • A loan of up to £20,000 is available, to fund works which are assessed as an immediate risk to the health • This loan can be used to top up a DFG • The loan can be used to top up a DFG, where the service user is designing their own scheme • The loan can be used to fund Occupational Therapist approved adaptations where the service user is not eligible for a DFG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Intending to continue residing in the property ◦ Aged 60+, or disabled, or in receipt of a means tested benefit or otherwise vulnerable (see Appendix 1) ◦ Ineligible for a DFG ◦ Unable to access mainstream lenders • The applicant must have sufficient equity in the property, for example all secured borrowings (mortgage / secured personal loans) and the Home Appreciation Loan should not amount to more than 70% of the value of the property • The scheme must include all the elements within the Occupational Therapist's recommendation and be approved by the Occupational Therapists and the Home Assistance Team • Must be adaptations that would normally be funded through a DFG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Home Appreciation Loans will only be offered in exceptional circumstances • Loans are repayable on sale or change of ownership • For further information on the home appreciation loan, visit www.nelincs.gov.uk
<p>Energy repayment loan</p> <p>(available for repairs to housing and adequate heating)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding is available to provide energy efficiency measures including insulation, or repairs / replacement or installation of a heating system • Funding can be used to top up Affordable Warmth / HHCRO assisted schemes • Available for owner occupiers who wish to upgrade their existing boiler or increase insulation measures to improve the energy efficiency of their home • Available to landlords to bring their property up to the Minimum Energy Efficiency Standard (MEES) on a change of tenancy or to meet current legislative requirements • £300 to £4,000 is available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants must be able to prove owner occupation for a minimum of 2 years. • Applicants must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Aged 60+ years or disabled, or in receipt of a means tested benefit or is otherwise vulnerable ◦ Financially assessed to ensure they can repay the loan • Properties will be ineligible where there is current informal / formal enforcement activity • Landlords accessing the scheme must be accredited (subject to the availability of an accredited landlord scheme) • The loan is subject to a satisfactory credit check. Applicants must demonstrate the ability to pay the required monthly payments as calculated 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Repayment of the loan is required. Monthly payments must be made by direct debit • Fees charged can be incorporated in the loan or paid up front • Voluntary full or part lump sum payments can be made at any time • A legal charge remains in place until the loan is fully paid • For further information on the energy repayment loan, visit www.nelincs.gov.uk
<p>Empty homes leasing scheme</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding assistance where owners of empty homes (vacant in excess of 6 months) are unable / unwilling to bring a property back into use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicant must be an owner of empty property, and be either unable or unwilling to bring the home/s back into use 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Loan is repayable, through rental income received during the period of the loan • The assistance will be in line with the Housing Act 2004, Part 4,

<p>(bringing empty homes back into use)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scheme will fund works to bring the property up to decency standards, with floor coverings • The property will be leased (voluntarily or otherwise) for a period of up to 7 years to the council, who will arrange for the property to be let • Funding will be prioritised to areas with high levels of empty property, complementing other schemes aimed at improving the area 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The scheme will target areas blighted by high numbers of empty homes, in conjunction with other schemes / interventions 	<p>Chapter 2 – Empty Dwelling Management Orders (EDMO – see Appendix 1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Priority will be given to properties located in areas experiencing low housing demand and high levels of empty homes • Where an owner fails to bring a property back into use, the council reserves the right to take formal action to bring the property back into use • The scheme can be voluntary / mandatory, using legislative powers available.
<p>Disabled facilities grant</p> <p>(independent living)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • To meet the council’s statutory obligation to assist disabled residents to live independently in their homes • Generally the adaptations are to provide access to essential facilities within the dwelling, including accessing and egressing the property (independent living), i.e. stair lifts, wet rooms, ramps, widening doors, works to enable the applicant to bathe, cook, sleep and access and exit the home • If the property is sold within ten years of the grant completion, the cost of the adaptation will be recovered • The grant limit is £30,000 • Works to be completed within 12 months of grant approval 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applications considered from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Disabled home owners ◦ Disabled tenants (both in the private and social sectors) ◦ Disabled persons living at home with their family ◦ Parents or guardians of a disabled child / young person ◦ Landlords • Applicants must be referred by an Occupational Therapist and meet the eligibility criteria for a mandatory DFG • Adaptation will only be completed on homes which are a permanent / main residence 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Works will be costed on a value for money basis and only those works approved by the panel will be authorised • The grant limit is £30,000 • DFGs in NEL are non-means tested • The council has charges placed upon the person’s property where the grant exceeds £5,000; this means the estate may be charged up to a limit of £10,000, should the property be sold or change ownership within 10 years (from completion of the adaptation). Children will not be charged
<p>Disabled facilities further assistance (discretions)</p>	<p>General: Subject to the availability of funding, the council reserves the right to use its discretion under the Regulatory Reform Order to provide further works under a DFG that may otherwise not be eligible for assistance. See options below.</p>		
	<p>1. Thermal warmth scheme provides up to £7,000 towards heating and insulation for those with a medical need</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Available to owner occupiers • Referrals have to be made by a suitable medical clinician who can confirm that the project is required to address the client’s condition and 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Non-means tested • No repayment required

(enabling independent living)	<p>Works provided include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Heating provision or repair ○ Condensation control ○ Damp proofing ○ Double glazing in main habitable rooms ○ Roof repairs to prevent damp ingress 	<p>their conditions are exacerbated by living in a cold and / or damp environment AND, the project will support the achievement of improved health and wellbeing outcomes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The health condition must be significantly affected (health condition directly impacted or cold / damp in the property is a main contributory factor) 	
	<p>2. DFG top up: In exceptional circumstances, provide a 'top-up'(max of £20,000) to the grant contribution where costs exceed the normal maximum of £30,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Owner occupiers, who need to top up DFGs for aids and adaptations 	
	<p>3. Existing adaptation replacement: The replacement of existing adaptations where they meet the end of their lifespan. These could include the replacement of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Stair lifts ○ Through floor lifts ○ Step lifts ○ Rise and fall baths ○ Ceiling track hoists 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Adaptations will only be replaced if they have reached their natural end of life (as determined by maintenance / manufacturers advice) ● Adaptations needing replacement owing to misuse or purposeful destruction will not come under this discretionary assistance
	<p>4. Shared care for a disabled child: In exceptional circumstances where there is shared care for a disabled child between those with parental responsibility and there is no 'main' property, then both homes can be adapted to support the disabled child to live across both homes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Properties must be in the NEL area. 	
	<p>5. End of Life speed tracked service: The assistance is to aid the applicant to live well during their final journey, i.e.:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Temporary shower cubicles ○ Stair lifts ○ Toileting facilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● People are 'approaching end of life' when they are likely to die within the next year. This includes those whose death is imminent (expected within a few hours or days) and those with: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ advanced, progressive, incurable conditions ○ general frailty and co-existing conditions that mean they are expected to die within a year 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The items originally placed can be removed under the grant and items such as the original bath or W.C. replaced ● The grant does cover making good the area, but does not cover costs towards redecorating areas that may be disturbed

	<p>The scheme provides a speed tracked service to help households get assistance quickly (the process is less invasive than a traditional grant and can be completed in a matter of weeks not months)</p> <p>The grant also contributes to costs removing the provision and making good where necessary</p> <p>The grant provides up to £5,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ existing conditions, if they are at risk of dying from a sudden acute crisis ○ life-threatening acute conditions caused by sudden catastrophic events ○ A DS1500 ○ A cancer diagnosis, where they are no longer receiving active medical intervention because it has been deemed ineffective ○ The advanced stages of a progressive, incurable condition such as MND ○ A life limiting and progressive, incurable condition, where the individual has a medical crisis e.g. respiratory condition, cardiac event or cerebral vascular event ○ A palliative diagnosis 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-means tested
	<p>6. Dementia friendly homes assistance provides home aids / adaptations to support people with dementia to manage their surroundings, retain independence and reduce feelings of confusion and anxiety, e.g. coloured flooring, improved signage, safety features within kitchens / bathrooms</p> <p>Maximum assistance is £5,000, inclusive of adaption service fee</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Any person is eligible who: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Has a clinical diagnosis of dementia and ○ Has been referred to Social Services with a prescribed need ● Works / adaptations / aids must be recommended as necessary and appropriate to manage the person's surroundings, retain their independence and reduce feelings of confusion and anxiety 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-means tested ● No repayment required
	<p>7. Minor adaptations and handy persons service: Reasonable adaptation of the home, where adaptations do not alter the fundamental structure of the home (i.e. can easily be removed - grab rails, bannister rails, half steps, etc.)</p> <p>The adaptation will enable vulnerable older people and disabled individuals to remain in their own homes, living as independently as possible, for as long as is reasonably practicable</p> <p>Work must total less than £1,000</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● For all owner-occupiers, tenants (private / registered provider) ● The applicant must be: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Registered disabled or chronically sick ○ Unable to access aspects of their home independently without assistance ● The service is available through a referral via the Occupational Therapy Service ● Requires agreement from property owners to commence service ● Only in exceptional circumstances will this be available to Lincolnshire Housing Partnership tenants 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Non-means tested ● No repayment required ● The handy persons service should not be used in place of a DFG application

5 How we can help you

5.1 For information on any of the schemes listed, please email www.homeimprovementservice@nelincs.gov.uk or call: **01472 326296** then press **option:**

3 for housing improvement grants and loans queries	4 for adaptations grants queries	5 for heating grants/energy efficiency queries
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5.2 The council will be able to offer help and assistance with:

- Completing an initial application.
- Providing updates on your application upon request.
- Ensuring, with your consent, that any identified health and care elements requiring additional support (i.e. to promote independence and wellbeing) are highlighted to relevant colleagues to take forward outside of the Housing Allocations process.
- Drawing up plans and schedules of work.
- Securing quotations / estimates from appropriate builders / contractors.
- Liaising with Building Control / Planning and neighbours where necessary.
- Ensuring builders:
 - Start work when they say they will.
 - Keep the site clean.
 - Work in a safe manner.
 - Are respectful and polite.
 - Complete the work to a satisfactory standard.
 - Adhere to appropriate safeguarding standards.
- Resolving disputes with builders / contractors.

6 Timescales

6.1 The applicant has up to 12 months for the works to be completed and can choose to delay the works within this period, if they require.

Stage 1 – Initial enquiry to be triaged with recommendations being made by adaptation delivery service on the appropriate delivery route.

Stage 2 – OT recommendation to approval of scheme (grant approval or issue of works contract / order).

Stage 3 – Approval of scheme to completion of works.

Duration	Urgent (working days)	Non-Urgent (working days)
Stage One	5	28
Stage Two	30	50
Stage Three	20	80

6.2 The above targets are for guidance only. Where demand for the service is greater than the amount of resource available, waiting times for an adaptation may be affected.

6.3 Situations exist that are outside the control / influence of the service. For example:

- Sudden increase in demand and activity in the service.
- Delays in documentation being returned.
- Delays in the planning application process.

In such circumstances, waiting times for the service will be unavoidably affected.

7 Applications outside the policy

7.1 Whilst it is legitimate for the council to refuse assistance outside of this policy, all applications will be considered on their merit. This means that in exceptional circumstances the council may use its discretion to provide assistance that meets the aims and objectives of this policy. Applications must prove beyond reasonable doubt that all other options have been considered prior to application.

7.2 The Council is committed to finding innovative ways of using its powers under the Regulatory Reform Order (2002) to ensure that the most vulnerable in NEL are supported to live independently, safely and in the best possible health. The council may explore options through this policy (where appropriate) to meet the needs of the client by investing in the client's home or through removal of barriers preventing a move to more appropriate housing. For more information / advice, please email homeimprovementteam@nelincs.gov.uk, or call the council on **01472 326296 (option 4)**.

8 Compliments / complaints about the policy and its implementation

8.1 Residents who have a compliment / complaint relating to the policy or about the level of service they have received will be able to use the council's corporate feedback system, to have their compliment / complaint dealt with. Details of how to make a compliment / complaint are available from either a through the councils Customer Access Points (01472) 313131 or through the council's website www.nelincs.gov.uk.

Appendix 1 – Definitions of Terms

Term	Definition
Affordable Warmth and HHCRO	Affordable Warmth and Home Heating Cost Reduction Obligation (also known as the Affordable Warmth Obligation) offers support to eligible applicants to enable them to reduce the cost of their heating through the installation of energy efficiency measures. The Electricity and Gas (Energy Company Obligation) Order 2014, as amended by the Electricity and Gas (Energy Company Obligation) (Amendment) Order 2017, sets out the schemes criteria. Further information can be found in the following guidance. https://www.energysavingtrust.org.uk/scotland/grants-loans/energy-company-obligation
Category 1 and 2 hazards	The Housing Health and Safety Rating System is a method of calculating what level of risk, disrepair can have on the occupant and/or their visitors. Further details can be found in the in the Housing Act 2004, Supplementary Guidance. https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7853/safetyratingsystem.pdf
Decent Homes Standard	The Decent Homes Standard sets out the minimum expectations a property should meet. Further details can be found in the following guidance. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7812/138355.pdf
DFG	Disabled facilities grant – see section 4 grid
EDMO	Empty Dwelling Management Order – is a provision within the Housing Act 2004. Further details can be found in the Housing Act 2004, Guidance. https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/empty-dwelling-management-orders-guidance
MEES	Privately Rented “Minimum Energy Efficient Standards” set minimum standards for letting domestic property. Further guidance can be found in the operation of Part Three of the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) Regulations 2015 (“the Regulations”) in relation to domestic property, as amended by the Energy Efficiency (Private Rented Property) (England and Wales) (Amendment) Regulations 2019. https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/794253/domestic-prs-minimum-standard-guidance.pdf
Vulnerable person	The Government defines a ‘vulnerable’ person as someone who is in receipt of the following state benefits: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • universal credit; • disability living allowance and or personal independence payment; • war disablement pension (including constant attendance allowance); • pension credit guarantee; • attendance allowance; • working tax credit, which includes a disability element and where recipient has a relevant income of less than £15,050 gross.
Appropriate	Each case will be based on a clinical judgement of the applicant’s set of unique circumstances, and must meet the needs of the disabled person. The clinical judgement will be provided by social services.
Necessary	Each case will be based on a clinical judgement of the applicant’s set of unique circumstances, and must be required to meet the needs of the disabled person. The clinical judgement will be provided by social services.
Reasonable	The request must be “reasonable” when referenced against the limits of the housing policy, i.e. it will be within the scope of the policy as determined by the Housing department of the council.
Practicable	The request must be “practicable” for the situation when referenced against the limits of the housing policy – the Housing department of the council will determine this.
CCG	Clinical Commissioning Group - clinically led statutory NHS body responsible for the planning and commissioning of health care services for the local area.
OT	Occupational Therapist - help people of all ages to improve their ability to perform tasks in their daily living and working environments. They work with individuals who have conditions that are mentally, physically, developmentally, socially or emotionally disabling.
Adaptation Delivery Service	On receipt of a referral, the Adaptation Delivery Service will process from support to complete the application, through to completion of the final works to adapt the home.