

**Report to:** Cabinet

**Date of Meeting:** 8 January 2020

**Public Document:** Yes

**Exemption:** None

**Review date for release** None



**Subject:** **Devon Wide Housing Assistance Policy 2018 review and additions**

**Purpose of report:** To identify and include amendments following the 12 month review of the above policy by the Devon District Council's Private Sector Housing managers group and Devon County Council.

To identify and include the additions: a new Accessible Homes Grant called a Stair lift Grant, which has been piloted in Exeter, Mid Devon and Teignbridge.

**Recommendation:** To seek agreement to include the minor amendments to the policy and include the new Accessible Homes Grant called a Stair lift Grant so that these grants can be offered across East Devon.

**Reason for recommendation:** The amendments to the policy provide clarity and seek to make grants more inclusive. The addition of the Stair lift Grant has been successful in the pilot District Councils and would be of benefit to applicable customers in East Devon.

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**Financial implications:** There are no specific implications for EDDC General Fund as this report refers to the use of Grant monies. Details are contained in the report.

**Legal implications:** There are no legal implications highlighted. East Devon officers retain discretion to develop its own scheme above and beyond the policy.

**Equalities impact:** Low Impact

A full equality impact assessment was provided with the Cabinet report when this policy was agreed. No equality issues have been identified.

**Climate change:** Low Impact

This policy is about delivering adaptations and home improvements to help home owners and private tenants live better in their homes. It includes offering assistance to install energy efficiency measures so helping to reduce their energy bills.

**Risk:** Low Risk

There are no major risks associated with the policy. Not having a relevant policy does mean that the Council would be unable to utilise the BCF for anything other than the mandatory DFG. This may have an

impact on the Councils ability to help vulnerable households across the district.

Funding for this is via the Better Care Fund allocation from Devon County Council.

**Links to background information:**

- [Appendix 1 Devon Wide Housing Assistance Policy 2018 – 19](#)
- [Appendix 2 Amendments to text of policy](#)
- [Appendix 3 Devon Wide Housing Assistance Policy 2019 - 21](#)

**Link to Council Plan:** Continuously improving to be an outstanding council

## **Introduction**

- 1.1 In 2015 the Government introduced the Better Care Fund (BCF) in an attempt to bring health and social care together in an integrated way. The fund is a combination of government funding from the Department of Health and Social Care and the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government and includes the mandatory grant allocation for disabled facilities grants (DFG). The 2017-19 Devon County Council Integration and Better Care fund policy framework document lists the conditions that the Better Care Fund (BCF) must be used to address Health, Social Care and Housing Authorities working together and producing a jointly agreed plan.
- 1.2 The development of this Devon Wide Housing Assistance policy in 2016 responded to this condition. It allows each District Council to fully utilise the Better Care Fund allocation to meet specific needs across the county that may fall outside of the scope of the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).
- 1.3 The Better Care Fund provides funding to Devon over and above the mandatory DFG demands. This wider policy was needed to allow the Devon councils to spend the BCF on assistance that helps a wider range of households and meets more of the BCF objectives.
- 1.4 A task and finish group was set up in November 2016 involving representatives from North Devon DC, Mid Devon DC, Teignbridge DC and Devon CC. The aim of the group was to produce a common policy that could be adopted across the whole of Devon by reviewing existing policies and considering policies from other areas. The result of this group is the Devon Wide Housing Assistance Policy.
- 1.5 Prior to this policy being created and adopted, private sector housing financial assistance was included in the Private Sector Housing Renewal Plan, which is presently undergoing a refresh.

## **2.0 Main scope of the policy**

- 2.1 This policy aims to provide a consistent approach to the delivery of the Better Care Fund across Devon that satisfies the terms of the funding agreement.
- 2.2 The policy provides the flexibility and discretion for the councils to provide appropriate assistance to meet the following objectives:

**Objective 1** - Assist disabled residents to remain in their own homes through supporting the provision of adaptations (so far as this is necessary, appropriate and reasonably practicable) to prevent admissions to care and to assist with delayed transfers where possible.

**Objective 2** – Safeguard the health and well-being of vulnerable residents by removing unnecessary hazards to health and safety in the home to reduce avoidable emergency admissions

**Objective 3** – Provide adaptations that are suitable for the future by ensuring the scheme of works is dementia aware.

**Objective 4** – assist vulnerable people to afford to heat their homes through appropriate energy efficiency and heating measures.

2.3 These objectives meet the priorities detailed by the BCF and the district councils in Devon.

2.4 The Devon Wide Housing Assistance Policy was adopted in September 2018 by EDDC.

2.5 This report seeks agreement to adopt the updated wording revisions and the introduction of a specific stair lift grant. The funding of these stair lift grants changes from mandatory funds under the DFG to discretionary funds through the BCF allocation.

### **3.0 Summary of the existing Assistance contained in the existing adopted policy.**

#### **Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) (mandatory)**

3.1 The delivery of the disabled facilities grant programme is mandatory and a statutory function of the local housing authority (Private Sector Housing Team). The delivery of this function is governed by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

#### **Accessible Homes Grant (AHG) (discretionary)**

3.2 The Accessible Homes Grant enables an enhanced offer in addition to the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant subject to available funding.

3.3 This grant is available in the following circumstances:

- Where a mandatory grant has been approved but the cost of the work exceeds £30,000
- Where there are works that may not be covered by the DFG in relation to adapting the home and making it safe.
- Where the means test identifies that a contribution is required.
- Where moving house more appropriate than adapting the existing property.

#### **Healthy Homes grant (HHG) (discretionary)**

3.4 The Healthy Homes grant is a flexible grant to provide urgent/essential repairs to the home to ensure the health, safety and welfare of the occupier. The grant is only available where a loan is unavailable (see below).

#### **Home Improvement Loan**

3.5 Wessex Resolutions CIC currently administers loans within the requirements of this policy and the local policies of each district council within Devon. The Home Improvement Loan is a flexible product that can be used for the following purposes:

- Home repairs and improvements
- Adaptation works where grant is not available
- To cover a client contribution to a grant
- To cover the cost of the work over the grant maximum.
- To bring empty homes back into use

- For landlords to carry out repairs or improvement to rented accommodation
- For energy efficiency improvements

### **ECO flex top up**

- 3.6 This grant is to provide top up funding for energy efficiency measures where Energy Company Obligation (ECO) Flex funding and ECO top ups (HHCRO) have been provided by energy providers but the available funding does not cover the full cost of the work.
- 3.7 The eligibility for ECO Flex funding itself is subject to a separate Statement of Intent issued by each Local Authority setting our local criteria. ECO funding is not provided by the Local Authority and is accessed by installing contractors directly under the national Energy Company Obligation scheme.

## **4.0 New Accessible Homes Grant – Stair lift Grant (discretionary)**

- 4.1 This grant provides internal straight track or curved track stair lifts without a means test for the applicant.

### **Eligibility**

To be eligible for this grant the following must be in place:

- A referral or statement of need must be received from a social services OT or from an NHS OT.
- Where additional works are required to install the stair lift these will be covered as part of this grant.
- Where a client requires multiple adaptations in addition to the stair lift, the stair lift will be provided through this grant and the other adaptations through the DFG or accessible homes grant where the client is eligible.

### **Conditions**

1. The applicant must have permission from the owner of the property for the work to be carried out. The council will require an owners certificate if the property is rented.
2. The applicant agrees to live in the property as the only or main residence for the period of 5 years or for a shorter period as health or other relevant circumstances permit.
3. The contractor must be sourced from the stair lift company determined by the Devon Framework agreement. Where the Council does not use the framework it should be sourced in a manner determined by them.
4. Only the works agreed by the Council will be covered by the grant.
5. If the grant is approved there are 8 weeks to complete the works.
6. The works must be completed by the contractor stated on the approval document
7. No grant works should proceed until the grant application has been processed and all relevant planning, Building Regulation or landlord approval has been obtained.
8. Unforeseen and additional costs will only be paid for where they are necessary to complete the adaptation and must be agreed by the council before they are undertaken.
9. Applicants who are successful in their application for assistance will be required to maintain the stair lift and have it regularly serviced.
10. The contract for the works is the responsibility of the applicant.

11. The grant will be paid direct to the stair lift contractor.

12. No grant will be paid until a satisfactory invoice has been received and the works have been carried out to the satisfaction of the client and Council.

## 5.0 Finance and Performance

5.1 Amount of funds allocated to East Devon for mandatory DFG's and Discretionary Better Care Fund grants 2019 – 20:

DFG £467,213

BCF £453,301

5.2 Performance and Expenditure figures for 2018/2019

2018 19		
DFG	Number	£
applications received for adaptations	182	
applications approved	82	
grants completed	64	
Approved		424,758
Expenditure		373,972
BCF		
Expenditure		4154
Commitment		29,930

## 6.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 copy of the adopted Devon Wide Housing Assistance Policy Document 2018 - 2019.

Appendix 2 provides details of the minor wording amendments to the policy document.

Appendix 3 copy of the revised Devon Wide Housing Assistance Policy Document 2019 - 2021.