

Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy

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1. Introduction

This Policy has been developed in relation to the application and approval process for DFGs (Disabled Facilities Grant) in accordance with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (the 1996 Act) and to provide greater flexibility and streamlined housing assistance in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

This ensures Gravesham Borough Council achieves consistency in the level of assistance provided to households within the Borough.

Gravesham Borough Council uses a portion of the DFG and Better Care Fund (BCF) funding to deliver additional support to vulnerable and elderly residents to maintain a standard of living in their own homes as noted in section 6 of this policy. The BCF spans both local government and NHS to encourage a joined-up approach to improve outcomes across health, social care and housing by supporting people in their own homes.

All assistance is assessed on the client needs, with DFG cases being assessed by an Occupational Therapist prior to referral to the council.

This policy has been developed to improve living conditions and enable independent living for our residents with the assistance of our approved Home Improvement Agency (Town & Country Housing)

We aim to make the best use of public funds by providing a customer focused, cost effective and efficient service to our residents.

This policy does not cover the process for council tenants requiring adaptations which is covered under the Discretionary Disabled Adaptations policy.

2. Strategic Alignment

The Housing Assistance Policy will enable Gravesham Borough Council to meet the aspirations set out in the authority's Corporate Plan by creating resilient families and communities that are healthy and active and providing appropriate housing through adaptations and assistance throughout the borough.

Gravesham Borough Council works alongside local social and healthcare partners such as Darent Valley Hospital and Kent County Council (Occupational Therapy Service) to contribute to the fulfilment of the aims and objectives of the health care service.

3. Evidence of Need

As referenced in the Gravesham community profile 2021 (available in full on the Gravesham website):

- An estimated 2.4% of Gravesham residents are aged over 85 years old
- 7.9% of the Gravesham population are in receipt of disability benefits
- 81.2% of Gravesham residents with a disability are in active employment (the highest rate in Kent)
- 7.4% of the Gravesham population are claiming unemployment benefits

The above statistics were accurate at the time the original document was written.

4. Policy Priorities

The priorities of this policy are to ensure the best use of Disabled Facility Grant (DFG) & Better Care Funding (BCF) for improved housing. To enable accessibility, safety, and comfort. To prevent unnecessary admissions and timely discharge from hospitals

This policy directly links to the Council's Corporate Plan to safeguard residents by putting in place a package of housing measures and creative intervention that support the most vulnerable.

To meet this priority, the policy aims to focus on the following areas:

- i) Assist disabled residents to remain in their own homes through supporting the provision of adaptations
- ii) Promote affordable warmth through improving energy efficiency in private sector homes
- iii) Safeguard the health and well-being of vulnerable residents by removing unnecessary hazards to health in the home, thus preventing unnecessary hospital admissions (although the responsibility to maintain private property rests firmly with the owner).
- iv) To enable an integrated approach with the NHS to reduce the waiting time for a hospital discharge and consider the long-term needs of vulnerable residents.

Housing is a key determinant of health and by promoting good quality housing, this policy will contribute to reducing health inequalities for Gravesham residents.

5. Funding

The Council currently receives an annual government BCF (DFG) allocation. The level of funding has increased over the last five years based on the government's appreciation of the vital role DFG's play in providing a person-centred integrated care service, linking support from the local authority and health and social care to enable older and vulnerable people live healthy, fulfilled, independent and longer lives.

It is important to note that the council has a statutory obligation to administer DFG and therefore mandatory grants are not reliant on funding being available at the time of application, however discretionary grant funding and other areas covered in this policy are.

More information on each grant is provided in sections 7 and 8 of this policy. This will be reviewed and amended as required in line with commitments and funding availability at the time.

The eligibility requirements, scope of works and the general requirements governing mandatory DFG's are prescribed, and the council is unable to deviate from these. The grant limit is £30,000 and cannot be exceeded.

6. Summary of Assistance

The assistance available under this policy includes (see appendix 1 for further details and eligibility criteria): Mandatory Disables Facility Grants

The following grants are discretionary and can be withdrawn at any time: Discretionary DFG, Fast Track DFG, Relocation Grant, Hospital Discharge Grant / Enablement Service, DFG Heating Grant, Energy Efficiency top up grant, Specialist Assistance Grant (Motor Neurone Disease), Minor Repairs Grant, Alzheimer and Dementia Grant

The key outcome of these grants will be that residents are able to remain in their homes longer. Ensuring safer, warmer homes and independent living wherever possible.

6.1. How to Apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant

A referral for a mandatory grant for a disabled person is made by Kent County Council Occupational Therapy Team. All persons making enquiries will be asked to contact the occupational therapy team for an assessment. The Occupational Therapist (OT) will assess the person's needs and identify any suitable equipment to meet those needs, as this is their area of expertise. The referral from the OT will state which adaptations are required and that the adaptations are necessary and appropriate to meet the person's assessed needs

On receipt of a referral, a Preliminary Test of Resources may be required to assess the entitlement of the grant. The client will be asked to complete a Provisional Test of Resources form. Details of income and savings will be requested, and all details will be required to be verified when the full application is made with evidence provided for each.

A standard approach issued by central government is used to carry out the means test. This test enables the Council to determine if the client is eligible for a grant and / or if the client may have a financial contribution to pay towards the cost of the works.

The client will then be advised of any contribution but detailing that this may change if their circumstances change when the full application is made.

This preliminary test will be processed within 7-10 working days and the client will be informed of the approximate value of grant which may be available on the basis of the information given

For information on passported benefits and the effects of being in receipt of these on a grant application please see section 16

The works for each DFG application must fulfil two eligibility elements to progress. The works must be deemed necessary and appropriate by the OT (this is not a legal requirement) but will distinguish between what is desirable and what is actually needed. The council will determine what is reasonable and practicable.

6.2. Necessary and Appropriate

The OT will arrange a visit to assess the client's needs and will forward any recommendations to the DFG Officer. Only necessary and appropriate works will be identified.

6.3. Reasonable and Practicable

If the OT demonstrates that it is necessary and appropriate for a client to apply for a DFG, a referral is made to the DFG Officer. The DFG Officer will then determine whether it is reasonable and practicable to proceed with the application. Housing authorities themselves must decide what action to take based on that advice and therefore the type of adaptations, if any, for which grant is approved (2015 Guidance).

The council uses a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) to administer the full grant application, arrange contractors and oversee any works carried out. If a client chooses to use the HIA then all applications including Planning and Building Control can be dealt with by the HIA. The HIA fees can be covered by the eligible grant, however, should a client decide not to proceed with the works following the final grant approval, without an acceptable reason, they may be liable for any abortive fees incurred. If preliminary surveys are required to determine the works required, the client is liable for these and must ensure satisfactory invoices are included with the application for the costs to be reimbursed. If works exceed the £30,000 maximum the client will be expected to fund the excess themselves (including fee's etc). For agent fee's to be covered by any approved grant they must meet the criteria set out in appendix 2. Any fee's will be included within the £30,000 grant limit and will not be paid until the grant is approved.

A mandatory grant will only be considered for eligible works. See appendix 3 for a list of eligible works.

If a client chooses to use the HIA, the following will be arranged. All necessary paperwork will be completed with the client by the HIA. The client will need to provide:

- Proof of property ownership / tenancy
- Proof of benefits
- Utility bill (no more than 6 months old)
- Full financial disclosure for the applicant (and partner if applicable), if a means test is required (bank statements, pensions, savings, benefits, additional properties owned)
- Landlord consent, where applicable (or co-owner)
- Application form
- Authority to appoint HIA
- Maximum amount awarded £30,000, including fee's, VAT and other costs.
- Grant applications will not be considered where works have already been carried out, started or a particular contractor engaged.

There are occasions when clients decide they do not want to have the adaptations recommended by the OT but would prefer to have alternative and more costly works carried out. This is known as an enhanced scheme.

The Council will not facilitate enhanced schemes under the Disability Facilities Grant process. However, the Council does accept that, on rare occasions, it may be necessary to exercise its discretion to assist those who require works under an enhanced scheme. The request for an enhanced scheme will be considered by the Housing Renewal Panel which will consist of the Private Housing Manager and the Service Manager (Housing Options). Example being an extension instead of the OT recommended wet room and stair lift. In this

instance it is possible for the client to choose to have the extension built and funded themselves.

The client would be responsible for all statutory permissions such as building control and planning. The client would fund the full cost of the build and on satisfactory completion, including all certification and approval (and on the understanding that the previously recommended wet room was still relevant) the client would be re-assessed for the wet room. During the building works clients can use the HIA to ensure the build will accommodate the wet room recommendations given by the OT. To enable this, adequate scale drawings must be available to the HIA to enable plans to be drawn up. A fee to be agreed with the HIA will be due up front, to be paid by the client, to cover the cost of the plans for the wet room (or relevant works). This can be claimed back if the grant is fully approved. If the above example were used, then following completion of the extension the council would then fund the wet room as the lift would no longer be appropriate for the client.

Should circumstances change for either a property owner, landlord or tenant during the application process, works or condition period of the grant, the council has the right to demand repayment of any assistance that has been paid. However, if there are extenuating circumstances then repayment may be revised or reduced.

If a client chooses not to use the HIA or chooses another HIA then we recommend contacting the council before proceeding to ensure any additional conditions are met, relating to conditions of payment and appropriate contractors.

7. Other Forms of Assistance and how to apply

See appendix 1 for details of housing assistance available and how to apply for the assistance.

8. General Terms and Conditions

Any person who makes an application for Assistance must:

Be over 18 years of age at the date of the application (applicant, not client)

Live in the dwelling as his/her only main residence and have an owner's interest in the dwelling (other than by virtue of being a Registered Social Landlord under Part 1 of the Housing Act 1996 or being eligible for such registration) or be a tenant or licensee of the dwelling, alone or jointly with others but not being a member of the landlords' family, with a tenancy or license permitting occupation of the dwelling for a minimum period of 12 months after approval of the Assistance

Have the power or duty to carry out the works and where appropriate have the owner's consent in writing to carrying out the works, and satisfy such test of resources as the council, or statute, may from time to time have in place.

Not be ineligible, by virtue of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, regulations made under the Act or any other enactment.

Homeowners and landlords have the primary responsibility and duty of care for ensuring their properties are properly maintained and in the first instance should pursue private finance. We may assist eligible vulnerable homeowners to ensure they achieve the required property standards, via minor repairs only. Where the property is subject to a mortgage the property is to be maintained in line with said mortgage terms and conditions.

Where an owner occupier has given a signed undertaking to occupy a property as his/her principal residence after completion of the assisted works for a period of time, and if they cease to do so during that time, they may be required to repay on demand to the council the total amount of Assistance paid out.

Where a landlord (or owner) has given a signed undertaking that the property will be available for letting for a period specified after completion of the assisted works, and if the landlord ceases to make the relevant property available for letting during the specified period, then the landlord will repay on demand to the council the total amount of Assistance paid out.

Where the council has the right to demand repayment, but extenuating circumstances exist, the council may determine to waive the right to repayment or to demand a sum less than the full amount of assistance paid out.

An applicant is able to adapt the recommendations, for example change the tiles in a bathroom or have fittings of a higher specification, provided they are willing to fund any additional costs incurred. The only stipulation in these circumstances is, the finished works must fully meet the adaptation needs as assessed by the OT and agreed by the Grants Officer.

All disabled people are entitled to apply for a DFG regardless of tenure. However, housing association tenants are expected to approach their housing association in the first instance. Housing Associations are expected to maintain their own housing stock and provide funding towards the cost of adaptations where possible.

Council Tenants – the council has a separate process for council tenants and adaptations are funded differently. Please contact the council if you are a Gravesham Borough Council tenant.

Repairs and other works which are essential to allow the works specified under a mandatory DFG to go ahead or be completed will need to be discussed with the Grant Officer before proceeding. If the applicant is a private tenant, then the landlord will be expected to carry out the repairs. If the applicant is an owner occupier, then it will be considered whether they are able to fund the additional works or if additional funding needs are required.

If the demand for grants covered in this policy exceed available budget in any financial year, it may be necessary to prioritise requests, should this arise applicants will be advised, and further details given on the process.

9. Fees and Charges

Fees and Charges that may be Eligible for Grant Aid. Charges necessarily incurred in undertaking mandatory grant works will also be considered for assistance. The following list provides an indication of the type of fees and charges that may be covered. This list is not exhaustive:

- Cost of technical and structural surveys
- Design and preparation of plans and drawings
- Assistance on completing forms
- Advice on financing the cost of the relevant works which are not met by the grant
- Applications for building regulations approval or planning permission (including the application fee and preparation of related documents)
- Obtaining estimates for the relevant works

- Advice on contracts
- Consideration of tenders
- Supervision of the relevant works
- Reconnection of electricity, gas, water, or drainage services where this is made necessary by the relevant works
- Charges made by Agency services for advising or assisting with applications (the council use Town & Country Housing (T&CH), formerly Peabody), who currently charge 15% of the cost of the works to administer each case. Fee's will only be paid to an agency up to, but not exceeding, the amount that would have been charged by T&CH. Any agent chosen must be a fit and proper person with considerable experience in designing adaptations for the disabled (see criteria in appendix 2)
- For disabled facilities grants, services of an Occupational Therapist to advise on client needs.
- Fees incurred by the Council to prove ownership of the property
- Fees incurred by the Council in registering a charge against the property
- Fees incurred by the Council in setting up loan assistance
- Fees incurred under the provisions of the Party Wall Act 1996
- Fees for removal and storage of effect

Where fees are necessarily incurred in the preparation of a scheme, but the works do not proceed due to circumstances beyond the control of the applicant, the council may agree to pay the 50% abortive fee due to the HIA. If fees are incurred through circumstances within the applicant's control, then any abortive fee due to the HIA must be covered by the applicant along with any additional fee's which may be due such as surveyor's fee's or individually produced specialist equipment.

10. Grant Conditions

Under the provisions of the Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008, the council is entitled to place a local land charge on the property. A charge will be placed on owner occupiers where an approved application for a DFG is over £5000. However, the charge itself cannot exceed £10,000 per grant. Any increase in the grant amount may have an impact on the charge placed on the property.

The charge will only be recovered if the property is disposed of within 10 years of the "certified date", that is, the date the works are certified as completed to the council's satisfaction.

The council may use its discretion not to recover the charge in some circumstances, where doing so may cause financial hardship or the client move is due to exceptional circumstances. Should an applicant need to apply for discretion to be used in any repayment of grant / Local Land Charge they should put the details of the request in writing to the Private Sector Housing Team for consideration, prior to any changes in circumstances which may breach the conditions of the grant. Grants that are repaid will be recycled into further assistance for other residents, allowing more residents to be assisted with what is a limited amount of resource.

1. Supervision of Works

The contract of employment will be between the applicant and the chosen contractor and will not include the Council.

The responsibility for supervision of work rests with the applicant unless the applicant appoints a professional advisor or agent for that purpose.

The Council is not liable for any poor workmanship, nor does it provide a guarantee. The Council does not accept any responsibility for supervision of works and the applicant will be responsible to the Council for ensuring that the works completed are to an acceptable standard. Where eligible works have not been completed to an acceptable standard, the Council may withhold any money that is outstanding.

An officer from the Council or the approved Home Improvement Agency will check the works on completion and ensure that the works have been carried out in accordance with the agreed specification of work and in accordance with good building practice.

2. Decisions and Notifications

The Council will notify an applicant in writing whether the application for assistance is approved or refused. The notification will be provided as soon as reasonably practicable, and normally no later than four weeks after the date the application is received.

When an application is approved the notification will specify the works which are eligible for assistance, the value of the assistance and the form that the assistance will take. It will also state the amount the applicant must contribute towards the cost of the works, the expiry date of the assistance and the contractors that the costs have been based on.

In the case of a refusal, the Council will explain in writing the reasons for the refusal and the procedure for appealing against the decision.

Assistance is not transferrable between properties and applicants.

Once approved the client has 12 months to complete the works. The works must be completed by the contractor stated on the approval document. If there is a client contribution towards the works, the client is expected to ensure this is available prior to the works starting. Any unforeseen works must be agreed by the council before they are undertaken.

3. Complaints Process

Where a person is not satisfied with the service that the Council has provided, they have the right to seek redress. In the first instance, they must put their complaint in writing to the Service Manager (Housing Options), who will investigate and seek to resolve the complaint.

If the matter cannot be resolved at the first stage, it should then be referred to the Director (Housing).

Once these two stages have been completed, should the person still not be satisfied, they have a right to appeal to the Chief Executive.

If after the 3 previous stages, the person complaining is still dissatisfied, they have the right to refer the matter to the Ombudsman service. The letter that they receive informing them of the outcome of Stage 3 of the council's complaints process will give direction as to which Ombudsman service to refer the matter to.

4. Cases Outside of Policy

Discretionary Grant: Assistance where the works exceed the maximum £30000 mandatory DFG limit. Grant limit of £10,000. Criteria and conditions for eligible works as identified by OT Recommendations. Means test to be carried out. The applicant would first

be expected to have applied to Kent County Council's Hardship Fund and been refused assistance before consideration can be given for a top up grant

A land charge will be placed on the property and the grant will be repayable if the property is sold within 10 years of completion of the works. The charge will be additional to any Mandatory Grant awarded.

The assisted works must be executed to the satisfaction of the Council, and the Council must be provided with an acceptable invoice.

The Housing Review Panel will determine each case on its merits.

1. Service Standards

The council aims to provide a decision on any full application for a Mandatory DFG within 20 working days, but in any case, within six months of receipt of all necessary paperwork. Once an approval has been received any approved works ideally and realistically are to be completed within 12 months of the approval date.

2. Performance

Grant performance is monitored quarterly at corporate level and annually to Central Government.

Implementation

Definitions

Reference in this policy to 'The Council' means Gravesham Borough Council.

Passported Benefits:

- Working Tax Credit (with an income less than £15,050)
- Child Tax Credit (with an income less than £15,050)
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- Pension Credit (Guaranteed)
- Income-based Employment and Support Allowance

Universal Credit.

If an applicant is in receipt of one of the above benefits, then the grant application will not require a means test to be carried out. Proof of the relevant benefit will be required.

Certified Date is the date when Gravesham Borough Council deems the work to be satisfactorily completed.

Disposal includes the whole or part of the property and is a conveyance of the freehold or assignment of the lease or the grant of a lease for more than 21 years.

An exempt disposal is:

To the owner or one of the joint owners of the dwelling or to a spouse or former spouse of the owner or one of the joint owners, or, in the case of a company, to an associated company;

By court order of a domestic breakdown

By Compulsory Purchase Order;

Of land which is "included land" under section 184 of the Housing Act 1985;

By way of lease extension under part 1 of the Leasehold Reform Act 1967;

A disposal by a person over 70 to provide an annuity income and the person concerned is entitled to continue to occupy the premises as his or her only or main residence.

Appendix 1

Summary of Initiatives:

Assistance	Use	Additional Conditions	Additional Information
<p>Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant</p> <p>Maximum grant up to £30,000</p> <p>Application forms to be completed or provided by T&CH following OT referral. If a client chooses not to use the HIA we recommend contacting the council to discuss.</p>	<p>The Council has a statutory obligation to provide mandatory disabled facilities grants.</p> <p>A means test may be required.</p> <p>Documents required to accompany the application will be required.</p>	<p>A local land charge may be placed against the property where the grant exceeds £5,000 for owner occupiers.</p> <p>If the property is disposed of within 10 years of the grant being completed, the council may demand repayment of the grant up to a maximum of £10,000.</p> <p>To be eligible you are or could be registered as disabled under the relevant acts.</p>	<p>To request a referral from the OT Service please call 03000 416161</p> <p>Mandatory Grants are for adaptations to enable clients to remain living independently in a safe and warm home.</p>
<p>Discretionary DFG outside scope</p> <p>Maximum grant up to £10,000</p> <p>This grant would be linked to the mandatory DFG application therefore no additional forms will</p>	<p>Assists cases where the client has a contribution to pay towards the Mandatory Grant, but they cannot afford to do so. Additionally, essential works need to be undertaken to enable the Mandatory Grant works to proceed, and the client is unable to fund the additional works.</p>	<p>A land charge may be placed on the property according to the conditions for a Mandatory Grant.</p> <p>Eligibility is as per the Mandatory Grant.</p>	<p>In the first instance, the applicant is expected to request assistance from KCC Hardship Fund. Unless the work is considered urgent due to a critical health condition.</p> <p>A review panel decision will be made, each case on its own merits.</p>

need to be completed			
<p>Discretionary DFG Relocation Grant</p> <p>Maximum grant up to £10,000</p> <p>Please contact the Grants Officer for further information</p>	<p>The property is unsuitable for adaptation as agreed by both Social Services and the council.</p> <p>The new property must be suitable for adaptation as agreed by both Social Services and the council.</p>	<p>We will look to contribute to</p> <p>Legal fees</p> <p>Stamp Duty</p> <p>Surveyor or Valuation fees</p> <p>Estate agent fees</p> <p>Removal fees</p> <p>(Minimum of 2 quotes required for all)</p>	<p>Where the new property is of less value and the applicants benefit from the equity released, the new grant may be a NIL approval.</p> <p>The grant must be approved before any costs are incurred. All fees are to be paid by the client who will then be reimbursed by the grant.</p> <p>Relevant invoices must be retained to enable repayment to be made.</p>
<p>Discretionary Hospital Discharge / Enablement Assistance</p> <p>Maximum of £2,000</p> <p>Referrals received via Town & Country Housing Group via the Hospital Discharge Service</p>	<p>To fund essential minor repairs to allow a patient to be discharged home from hospital.</p> <p>The grant provides assistance via the Health and Housing Coordinator based at Darent Valley Hospital.</p>	<p>No requirement for a land charge to be applied.</p> <p>Client contribution may be requested.</p>	<p>Applicants will be assessed by the Health and Housing Coordinator.</p> <p>Applicants will not be means tested by the council. Discretion on funding where maximum is exceeded.</p>
<p>Discretionary Healthy Homes Service</p> <p>Maximum of £2,000 per client</p> <p>Referrals received via Dr's, LA,</p>	<p>Provides support by the Healthy Homes Coordinator in improving living conditions to prevent hospital admissions.</p>	<p>No requirement for a land charge to be applied.</p> <p>Client contribution may be requested.</p>	<p>Applicants will be assessed by the Healthy Homes Coordinator.</p> <p>Applicant will not be means tested by the council. Discretion on funding where maximum is exceeded.</p>

hospitals, or other such professionals.			Service available for no more than two interventions within 3 years
<p>Discretionary Disabled Facilities Heating Grant</p> <p>Maximum Assistance £6,000</p> <p>Application forms are available from the council. Please contact the Grants Officer on 01474 337960 or housing.grants@gravesham.gov.uk</p>	To assist clients who are eligible for a mandatory DFG to repair or replace defective heating and hot water systems.	A land charge may be placed on the property according to conditions for a Mandatory Grant.	<p>Client to meet the eligibility criteria for a mandatory DFG to qualify.</p> <p>Discretion on funding may be considered where multiple measures may be required.</p> <p>The grant is to ensure clients are living in warm homes to prevent illnesses related to cold and hospital admissions.</p> <p>Private tenants are advised to refer to their tenancy agreements and landlord obligations.</p>
<p>Discretionary Energy Efficiency top up grant</p> <p>Maximum grant £3,000</p>	To assist with top of Government assistance via energy initiatives.	Applicants will be assessed under the relevant scheme and eligibility requirements met.	<p>To enquire about eligibility please contact the Grants Officer on 01474 337960 or via energy.housing@gravesham.gov.uk</p> <p>Discretion on funding where maximum is exceeded.</p>
<p>Discretionary Specialist Assistance Grant</p> <p>Maximum £30,000</p>	To assist clients with a specialist need such as Motor Neurones Disease	<p>Referrals made via the OT service at Kent County Council</p> <p>A charge may be placed on an owner-occupied property as per the Mandatory Grant conditions above.</p> <p>The application and eligibility process will be in line with the Mandatory Grant process. Proof of diagnosis may be</p>	<p>Due to the urgency and nature of the grant requests, it is possible for the council to waive the means test.</p> <p>.</p>

		required.	
<p>Discretionary Minor Repairs</p> <p>Maximum grant £3,000</p> <p>Referrals made by the client, OT or Healthy Homes Coordinator</p>	<p>To assist clients with Category 1 hazards identified within their homes. Housing Act 2004, the Housing Health & Safety Rating System.</p> <p>Where a minor repair would prevent ill health and hospital admission.</p>	<p>Hazards will be assessed and rated by the Private Sector Housing Team.</p>	<p>Applicants need to fit the eligibility criteria for one of the forms of assistance listed above.</p> <p>Applicants will not be means tested by the council. Discretion on funding where maximum is exceeded.</p> <p>This assistance would ensure clients are living in safe properties with limited risk to their health and safety.</p> <p>Where there is evidence of a lack of maintenance and/or household insurance support may be declined.</p>
<p>Discretionary Disabled Facilities Fastrack Grant</p> <p>Maximum grant up to £12,000</p>	<p>The grant is to assist with adaptations which are straight forward and urgently required.</p>	<p>Where on final application the works exceed the Fastrack limit a full financial assessment may be required. A charge may be placed on owner occupied properties.</p> <p>This will be discussed with the client.</p>	<p>Applicants will be assessed by the OT and it be noted Fastrack adaptations are required.</p> <p>This assistance will ensure urgent cases are assessed and processed as quickly as possible.</p>
<p>Discretionary Alzheimer & Dementia Support Grant</p> <p>Maximum amount £3,000</p>	<p>This grant is to assist with specialist equipment specifically aimed at clients with Alzheimer's or Dementia.</p>	<p>The client will be referred either via the OT service, or a specialist charity.</p>	<p>An assessment may be required by a specialist assessor.</p> <p>Confirmation of diagnosis may be required.</p> <p>The assistance aims for clients diagnosed with Alzheimer's or Dementia to remain in their property and be independent for as</p>

			long as possible.
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Appendix

Guidance and code of Practice for Agents and Advisors acting on behalf of clients wishing to access grants and loans

It is the advisors/agent's role to act on behalf of the client in designing adaptations or schemes of work, obtaining consents, and securing services of suitable builders, leading eventually to the satisfactory completion of works.

It is expected that the advisor/agent would have a collaborative approach with the Local Authority over the delivery of grants. They should acknowledge an understanding of the rationale and practicalities of managing expenditure and the need to demonstrate "fairness" to all applicants.

The Local authority will only pay fees to advisors/agents that satisfy the criteria below. Inappropriate advisors/agents often necessitate considerable extra input from the Local Authority, which is of little benefit either to the client or to the Local Authority. The Local Authority determines to whom fees will be paid and this decision will be final.

For an organisation/person to be considered as an appropriate advisor/agent for grant purposes, they should satisfy the following criteria:

- Experience of designing for the disabled
- Provide evidence of experience of working with a Local Authority or similar
- Provide evidence of CRB checks or a suitable reference from another Local Authority or similar organisation
- Provide evidence of appropriate insurances
- Provide evidence of an appropriate customer care charter
- Provide evidence of an equal opportunities policy
- Provide evidence of the vetting procedures for contractors
- Have evidence of professional registration and compliance with appropriate codes of conduct
- Provide details of complaints procedure and dispute resolution processes
- Meet financial viability criteria

Advisors/agents must always treat clients with respect and dignity, acknowledging the specific needs of the client group.

The advisor/agent should vet contractors to ensure they have adequate public liability and employee liability insurance and have a health & safety policy and any other legislative policies. Details should be vetted of sub-contractor's tax certificate or certificate CIS, and any details on NICEIC, Gas Safe Register, FENSA etc. and VAT registration number if applicable. The vetting and checking of all such certificates and policies should be carried out periodically, not exceeding annually.

Appropriate documentation of the vetting process should be provided to the Local Authority. Applicants should note that they will be liable for an agent's fees in making the application

and they should ensure that they have sufficient funding available to meet these fees as there will be no guarantee of financial assistance until the application is approved.

Generally, abortive fees for discretionary grant aid will not receive financial assistance.

Appendix 3

General guidance of works considered mandatory for Disabled Facilities Grant and Fees and Charges Eligibility

Following consultation between Kent Local Authorities who administer Disabled Facilities Grants, it has been agreed that the following works can attract Mandatory DFG funding. The following categories of adaptation are detailed in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 as being works which must be considered for grant assistance. Full guidance is available upon request.

Where costs are likely to exceed £30,000 Local Authorities will need to take extra care to establish if the proposals are “reasonable and practicable.” Regard must be taken as to how the applicant will be able to finance the additional costs.

Facilitating access: - facilitating access by the disabled occupant

- to and from the dwelling
- to a room used or usable as the principal family room
- to a room used for or usable for sleeping
- to a room in which there is a lavatory
- to a room in which there is a bath or shower
- to a room with a wash hand basin

Washing facilities

Facilitating the use of washing facilities by the disabled occupant: Adaptation of the facilities in the bathroom and toilet, including the provision of flush floor showers, lever taps, specialist WCs, Closo-Mat or Gerberit etc. The adaptation or

provision of more than one bathroom to a house e.g., additional ground floor w.c, will only be considered if evidenced by functional need. Full guidance is available upon request.

Kitchen Facilities

Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food: Where someone other than the disabled person does and will continue to do the cooking and preparation of meals, normally it will not be necessary to carry out full adaptations. However, it may be possible to carry out minor adaptations to allow the disabled person to prepare light meals or hot drinks, typically this may include a low-level worktop with power points for a kettle/microwave.

Full adaptations can be considered where the disabled person is the only or main user of the kitchen. Full guidance is available upon request.

Access to the Garden

This will only be considered if recommended by an Occupational Therapist. In deciding the extent of providing access to the rear garden, the following will be taken into account.

Grant assistance will not be given where there is already access to the garden, but grant may be given to improve an existing access to make it safe for the disabled occupant to use. It does not include extending an existing access e.g., creating a side access so a person can also go around the side of a house. Generally, the most modest solution for providing access to both the house and the garden will be considered and this can mean that one access may be sufficient to access both the house and the garden. Where homes have communal gardens, e.g., blocks of flats served by a single access, grants will not normally be provided for an individual access to the garden unless it can be demonstrated that because of the disabled persons condition the travel distance to the garden would be excessive and unreasonable.

The grant will simply be for providing immediate access to the garden and does not include landscaping gardens to make them more suitable for the disabled person to access. However, to assist a disabled person to live independently, an allowance of 4 m² of pathway, (which may include a turning circle for a wheelchair user), will be considered to assist access to any specific areas enjoyed by the disabled person.

See also the list of non-mandatory items in the next section relating to gardens etc. Full guidance is available upon request.