



Housing Assistance Policy 2021-2026

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1.0 Introduction / Forward by the Executive Member

I am delighted to introduce Bracknell Forest Council's Housing Assistance Policy.

This Policy is made in response to the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO). The Regulatory Reform Order allows local authorities greater freedom in providing financial assistance for home repairs, adaptations and other improvements and to determine what will work best in their own local areas. To do this local authorities must first publish a policy setting out the framework for assistance in their area.

Bracknell Forest Council's Housing Assistance Policy sets out the range of financial assistance that the Council can make available to improve living conditions for vulnerable residents in our community. This includes assistance to help disabled residents in the Borough adapt and improve their properties to meet their needs or to secure alternative solutions where that is more cost effective.

Ensuring that homes are decent, accessible, safe and secure is vitally important for the health and wellbeing of the occupants. People's ability to modify their own home to better suit their needs is key to enabling people to maintain their independence for as long as possible and to live safely and with dignity. Home adaptations can be cost-effective in preventing falls and injuries, improving performance of everyday activities, improving mental health and making homes more suitable for people with dementia.

That is why this policy is so important – providing new forms of support including assisting people to move to a more suitable property and to support specific aims such as enabling faster hospital discharge, relieving pressures on accident and emergency services, and reducing the need for residential care

The new forms of support and flexibilities are designed help local people stay in their homes longer and to increase the health and well-being of residents.

Cllr Dale Birch

2.0 Executive Summary

Bracknell Forest Council is committed to supporting older and disabled people to remain living independently in their own homes for as long as is safely possible. In order to achieve this, we have reviewed our Housing Assistance Policy which outlines the grant support we can offer to eligible people to provide aids and adaptations and carry out essential repairs to their homes to support them.

The mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is seen as one of the main support packages that both older people and people with long-term health conditions are able to access to support this ambition, however, it is also acknowledged that the DFG is an 'old' grant based on legislation¹ which is over 30 years old and which in modern society can be limiting in terms of the support it can offer. Therefore, the Council has decided to use the powers available to extend the support it offers using the DFG funding to ensure that all allocated funding is spent and ensure that support is available to as many people as possible.

The enhanced grant provision outlined within this policy supports this priority and will enable older and disabled people to remain living independently in their own home for longer.

The policy includes support for people who require more extensive works than the current mandatory DFG limit allows through discretionary 'top-up' funding, as well as potential funding support for those people whose means test result would previously have excluded them from receiving support, and support for those whose home cannot be adapted to meet their needs to move to a more suitable property. There are also a range of smaller, bespoke grants to support specific aims such as enabling faster hospital discharge and supporting people with dementia.

3.0 Context

National

In April 2015 the Government made significant changes to the funding mechanism for disabled facilities grants by making the allocation part of the Better Care Fund (BCF) a pooled budget between the NHS and upper tier councils. The aim of the fund is to provide more joined-up and customer focused services to reduce hospital and care admissions and enable people to return from hospital more quickly.

The Care Act 2014 established a requirement that a needs assessment must be carried out where it appears to the social care authority that a person for whom they may provide or arrange community care services, may be in need of such services. The associated guidance states that the care and support system must actively promote wellbeing and independence and aim to prevent need, not just wait to respond when people reach a crisis point.

It is clear that home adaptations can contribute to meeting a range of Public Health, NHS and Social Care outcomes. While the housing law relating to the provision of grants for disabled adaptations has not changed, there is scope for local innovation in delivery and opportunities to consider how home adaptations can better support housing, health and social care to achieve improved health and wellbeing outcomes for those with care and support needs.

¹ Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 : [Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

It is a widely accepted fact that housing and health are closely linked and that the conditions that an individual or family live in can have a significant impact on their quality of life. The Department of Health published a Guidance paper in 2017 called 'Improving Health through the Home' the introduction of which states:

"The right home environment is essential to health and wellbeing, throughout life. It is a wider determinant of health.

There are risks to an individual's physical and mental health associated with living in:

- *a cold, damp, or otherwise hazardous home (an unhealthy home)*
- *a home that doesn't meet the household's needs due to risks such as being overcrowded or inaccessible to a disabled or older person (an unsuitable home)*
- *a home that does not provide a sense of safety and security including precarious living circumstances and/or homelessness (an unstable home)*

The right home environment protects and improves health and wellbeing, and prevents physical and mental ill health. It also enables people to:

- *manage their own health and care needs, including long term conditions*
- *live independently, safely and well in their own home for as long as they choose*
- *complete treatment and recover from substance misuse, tuberculosis or other ill-health*
- *move on successfully from homelessness or other traumatic life event*
- *access and sustain education, training and employment*
- *participate and contribute to society*

The right home environment is essential to delivering NHS England's Five Year Forward View, and local authority plans for social care. It can:

- *delay and reduce the need for primary care and social care*
- *prevent hospital admissions*
- *enable timely discharge from hospital, and prevent re-admissions*
- *enable rapid recovery from periods of ill health or planned admissions*
- *It is also essential to ambitions for the economy.*

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) gave the Council the power to provide financial assistance for home repairs, adaptations and other improvements to reflect local needs, conditions and resources. The assistance provided under this policy is subject to individual terms and conditions, including a requirement to contribute or repay some or all the assistance in certain circumstances.

The Order stipulates that a local housing authority may not exercise the power to provide assistance unless they have adopted a policy for the provision of assistance. This revised policy will apply to all new applications for assistance from 1st April 2021.

Local

The 2020 Housing Needs Assessment produced by Icen Projects Ltd on behalf of Bracknell Forest Council evidenced that the population of older people is increasing and therefore the need for housing which meets those needs is imperative. It shows that alongside many other authorities Bracknell Forest is expected to see a "notable increase in the older person population, with the total number of people aged 65 and over projected to increase by 58%

over the 17 years to 2036. This compares with overall population growth of 15% and a modest increase in the under 65 population of 8%.”²

The current tenure profile of older people living in Bracknell Forest shows that, as with many areas, the majority (71%) of older people are owner-occupiers; with a further 23% living in social rented housing. Therefore, the implications for the DFG budget and the need to adapt homes is significant.

The report also includes analysis of POPPI and PANSI data which shows that there is an anticipated 79% increase, an additional 2,413 people, in the number of older people who will have mobility problems in the period up to 2036 and an increase of 8%, an additional 374 people, who are likely to have impaired mobility by 2036. It is a relatively safe assumption that based on this data the need for adaptations to the homes of these people, as well as new accessible homes, will be needed over the same period.

Whilst the Housing Needs Report focuses on the need for New Build Homes the data provides useful indicators regarding potential demand for adaptations as many older people do not wish to move from their long-term and/or family home and prefer to adapt it to meet their changing needs.

The ‘Seamless Health’ Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy for Bracknell Forest also highlights ‘Ageing Well’ as a priority with its ambition to help older people to live independently in good health for longer. The strategy outlines the strategic aims of supporting joint working to deliver good housing and services that support independence which this policy aims to put into practice.

4.0 Links to corporate priorities and strategies

The Housing Assistance Policy will determine the nature and extent of the assistance that will be available (and to what conditions it is subject to in any given case) and will ensure that housing renewal services are both appropriate and effective. It will also provide an additional means by which the relevant strategic aims and objectives of the Council, as set out in its strategies and plans, are turned into actions.

The Policy will also contribute towards the successful delivery of the Council’s Plan 2019-2023³. The Council Plan sets out the Council’s ambitions for the Borough and sets out how they will be achieved under Six Strategic Themes.

The Policy support the practical delivery of the aims and ambitions of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy “Seamless Health”⁴ which looks to support joint working to enable older and vulnerable people to live independently in good health in their own homes for longer.

The Policy will support the Council Plan ambition of caring for you and your family, and the Health and Wellbeing Strategy aims and priorities.

5.0 Legal and Regulatory Framework

This policy is based on the legislation which governs the implementation of major adaptations via Disabled Facilities Grants under the ‘Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996’ and the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO).

² Bracknell Forest Housing Needs Assessment; Icen Projects Ltd. July 2020

³ [Council Plan 2019 to 2023 \(bracknell-forest.gov.uk\)](https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/council-plan-2019-to-2023.pdf)

⁴ <https://www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/sites/default/files/documents/seamless-health-2016-2020.pdf>

The Council must provide certain grants to residents in the Borough on a compulsory or mandatory basis if conditions are met. Other grants are discretionary and are provided based on how they contribute to meeting the wider strategic objectives to support residents living in the Borough.

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) set a requirement for a Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy. It repealed the former prescriptive legislation with flexible and wide-ranging powers to help with housing renewal based on local circumstances and needs.

Assistance can be given to pay for any fees and charges associated with the assisted works. Assistance given under the general power may be unconditional or subject to conditions, for example the requirement to repay a grant if the property is sold within the designated period.

This policy meets the requirements of the RRO and sets out under what circumstances the Council may help residents with housing renewal, repair and adaptation.

Further legislation which should be considered when providing adaptations is the Care Act 2014. The Care Act sets out the framework for the future provision of adult social care. In April 2015 the Department of Health published the Care and Support Statutory Guidance and associated Regulations. Housing and/or accommodation is mentioned in most chapters and there is a specific housing section in Chapter 15: Integration, co-operation and partnerships. There is extensive reference to information and advice, including integration with housing advice; adaptations and home improvement agencies are also specifically mentioned.

At Chapter 15 the Care Act underlines the key role of housing in delivering care and support. It makes the housing link to key principles which underpin the Act, notably:

'Housing plays a critical role in enabling people to live independently and in helping carers to support others.....Suitability of living accommodation is one of the matters local authorities must take into account as part of their duty to promote ...wellbeing.' (15.53)

'Getting housing right and helping people to choose the right housing options for them can help to prevent falls, prevent hospital admissions and readmissions, reduce the need for care and support, improve wellbeing, and help maintain independence at home.'(15.61)

'Community equipment, along with telecare, aids and adaptations can support re-ablement, promote independence contributing to preventing the need for care and support.' (15.62)

6.0 Equality and Diversity

Bracknell Forest Council is committed to fulfilling its roles as an employer, service provider, purchaser of goods and services and community leader without discrimination on any grounds, such as race, culture or ethnic origin, nationality, religious belief, disability or sexuality or other status. All members, employees and agents of the Council must seek to eliminate discrimination and promote equality and good relations between all groups.

This policy will contribute to ensuring that all users and potential users of the services and employees are treated fairly and respectfully with regard to the protected characteristics of age, disability, gender, reassignment, marriage or civil partnership, pregnancy and maternity, race, religion, sex and sexual orientation.

The policy will also proactively support older, disabled and other vulnerable people to fulfil their ambitions with regard to living independently in their own home for as long as possible

and supporting them to fully participate in the community through an improved sense of wellbeing and safety in their home environment.

The Council's equality information can be found on the council's website at the following location: [Click Here](#)

7.0 Priorities and capital resources

The following capital financial resources are available to apply and deliver through this policy:

- Capital grants from central government distributed through the Better Care Fund or otherwise.
- Where capital monies are provided through the BCF they will be allocated for spending in line with decisions regarding capital expenditure agreed with the Health and Wellbeing Board.
- Local capital from the Council which may be provided for any specified purpose.
- Monies from national schemes such as energy company obligations.
- Money provided from partners or other public sector organisations to address specified problems.
- Money obtained from charitable or other sources on behalf of customers.

The above will be targeted in accordance with the following priorities;

Local Housing Authorities must deliver mandatory DFGs or an equivalent or enhanced service to local residents. The proposed additional discretionary assistance will not be delivered at the expense of delays to the statutory grant. This may mean that on occasion, as resources are determined, some discretionary assistance may not be available if all capital resources have been allocated to mandatory grants.

In addition to mandatory DFGs, Bracknell Forest Council has determined our local priorities to offer;

- Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants (Top-Up)
- Contribution Assistance Grant
- Help to Move/Relocation Grant
- Hospital Prevention and Discharge Assistance
- Safe & Secure Grant
- Dementia, Cognitive and Behavioural Conditions Grant

An outline of each grant is given in the table below.

Budgets will be set for each form of assistance based on available resources and evidence of demand for each type of assistance from previous years. To ensure the delivery of mandatory DFGs and maximum impact of resources the budgets for each form of assistance will be transferrable.

8.0 Principles of assistance

The Council recognises that the primary responsibility for repairing and maintaining a property rests with the owner⁵. However, the Council has certain statutory responsibilities to fulfil and must also take steps to protect and assist vulnerable members of the community

⁵ The owner' is defined as the owner occupier or private landlord.

whilst providing advice to all residents to help them maintain their own homes and utilise government funding where appropriate.

The Council provides support to older and disabled individuals, and their carers, to help them to remain living independently, confidently, safely and with dignity in their own homes. Housing assistance can help to reduce the impact of a disabling environment and therefore maximise independence. It can also help to prevent or delay the need for care and support, both of which are central themes of the Care Act 2014.

In addition, housing assistance provides support to carers in their caring role and underpins a wide range of customer and carer outcomes including improved safety, greater independence, personal resilience and well-being.

Eligibility for all types of assistance in this policy is subject to change due to funding levels and any alterations will be made with the agreement of the Executive Member.

The provision of financial assistance is subject to the availability of funding and the support and assistance we provide should encourage private investment and maximise the impact of available public funds.

9.0 Summary of Types of Assistance available

Disabled Facilities Grant (Mandatory) – Enhanced				
Scope of works	Maximum grant available	Means Tested?	Eligibility	Land Charge?
To carry out works to facilitate access to facilities and in and around the home as set out in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 – works must be deemed necessary, appropriate, reasonable and practicable by the OT Service and DFG Service.	Up to £30,000 for eligible works	Adults – Yes Children – No	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As set out in S.100 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 – the person must be disabled The applicant must be an owner or tenant of the property (where the disabled person lives with family then the owner or tenant would apply on behalf of the disabled person – e.g. parents would apply on behalf of a child for funding towards an adaptation) 	Yes A local land charge for the portion of the grant over £5,000 – up to a maximum charge of £10,000 for a period of 10 years – payable if the property is sold
Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance				
Scope of works	Maximum grant available	Means Tested?	Eligibility	Land Charge?
To ‘top-up’ Mandatory DFG schemes where works exceed the maximum grant available.	Not limited but over £15,000 requires Assistant Director Approval and full options appraisal	No additional means test to the Mandatory DFG	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Applicants must be eligible for Mandatory DFG The household is considered to be in financial hardship and cannot afford to fund the works All other means of funding (i.e. charities) have been explored unsuccessfully Only available to provide Mandatory schemes as 	Yes – full cost of works (not fees) placed as a local land charge

			<p>assessed by the OT Services & DFG Team (not applicant own/ preferred/ enhanced schemes)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Only 1 application within a 5-year period 	
Contribution Assistance Grant				
Scope of works	Maximum grant available	Means Tested?	Eligibility	Land Charge?
To fund means tested contributions where it can be proven that the applicant cannot afford and to not complete the works would incur additional costs to Social Care and/or place the individual at significant risk of harm	No limit but requires Senior Manager approval and financial hardship must be proven	No additional means test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants must be eligible for Mandatory DFG • The household is considered to be in financial hardship and cannot afford to fund the contribution • All other means of funding (i.e. charities) have been explored unsuccessfully • Only available to provide Mandatory schemes as assessed by the OT Services & DFG Team (not applicant own/ preferred/ enhanced schemes) • Only 1 application within a 5-year period 	Yes – full contribution value placed as a local land charge
Help to Move/ Relocation Grant				
Scope of works	Maximum grant available	Means Tested?	Eligibility	Land Charge?
To support and fund moving costs for households where the property is unable to	£7,000	There will be no means test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Applicants must be eligible for Mandatory DFG • The current home is unable to be adapted or it is unviable to adapt 	No land charge will be placed

be adapted or there is a more suitable property available		attached to this grant	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The move is necessary to enable care provision • The move is necessary due to landlord refusal of permission • Other such reasons as may be determined over time • Only 1 application within a 5-year period 	
Hospital Prevention & Discharge Assistance				
Scope of works	Maximum grant available	Means Tested?	Eligibility	Land Charge?
Minor adaptations and other works designed to prevent admission to hospital, care or nursing home or assist with speedy discharge from hospital.	£2,500	There will be no means test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant must be a permanent Bracknell Forest resident and the property must be their permanent home. • The works must facilitate a fast and safe discharge from an acute hospital setting or prevent admission to hospital, or a care or nursing home. • Only 1 application per admission 	There will be no land charge placed
Safe & Secure Grant				
Scope of works	Maximum grant available	Means Tested?	Eligibility	Land Charge?
To enable essential property repairs that are necessary to facilitate adaptations being	£5,000	Applicants must be in receipt of a relevant benefit (see appendix)	Applicants must be <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Owner Occupiers - Permanent resident in Bracknell Forest 	Yes – full cost of works (not fees) placed as a local land charge

undertaken for owner occupiers			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The property must be their permanent home - Only 1 application within a 5-year period - The works must be necessary to facilitate an adaptation 	
Dementia, Cognitive and Behavioural Conditions Grant				
Scope of works	Maximum grant available	Means Tested?	Eligibility	Land Charge?
To provide aids and adaptations or provide equipment to help people living with dementia to remain living safely in their home	£2,000	There will be no means test	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The applicant must have an appropriate diagnosis or assessment of condition. • The applicant must be a permanent resident in Bracknell Forest and works must be to their permanent home. • Only 1 application within a 5-year period. 	There will be no land charge placed

Full details of the schemes can be found in the Appendices to this policy.

Following assessment of need and the resources available to the Council, new initiatives may be developed and added at a future date and amended via approval of Executive and published on the Council's website.

10.0 Who will the new grants allow the Council to help?

This section aims to demonstrate through case studies how the new grants will enable the council to more effectively support older and disabled people:

Mrs L

Mrs L was in her mid-50s and had a diagnosis of Motor Neurone Disease; she lived with her husband and 2 teenage children and adaptations were required to provide ground floor bedroom and bathing facilities to her home. Her husband worked which resulted in a sizeable means test contribution under the Mandatory DFG which meant she was unable to proceed to get adaptations completed and she entered the Care system earlier than otherwise would have been necessary.

With the new grants, her application would be fast-tracked as a result of her diagnosis and she could apply for Contribution Assistance Grant funding to pay her contribution, therefore allowing her adaptations to proceed and for her to be able to live at home and independently with her family for longer.

Master B

Master B was a young boy who had multiple complex health conditions and required extensive adaptations to his home including ground floor bedroom and bathing facilities and hoisting throughout the areas of the home he needed to access. The cost of works exceeded the maximum Mandatory grant limit which meant that special permission had to be sought to fund the work which was a lengthy process.

Under the new proposed grant system if the excess costs are less than £15,000 above the mandatory grant limit then these could be approved by the DFG Team Manager and it is only if costs exceed this that senior officer involvement is required.

Mr S

Mr S was an elderly gentleman who had several physical and mental health difficulties which meant that he found coping with his home difficult. Following a short stay in hospital the hospital were unable to discharge him due to the condition of his property; it needed decluttering and a deep clean before it could be made safe for him to return to. As a result of this and the lack of funding available to complete these types of work Mr S remained in hospital for 4 weeks longer than was necessary whilst different agencies tried to find funding and arrange for the works to be completed.

Under the new grants Mr S could have been referred by the Hospital Discharge team or Adult Social Care for Hospital Prevention and Discharge Assistance which would have been able to facilitate the works quickly and effectively through its contractor list. Therefore, supporting faster discharge from hospital.

Miss G

Miss G lived alone and was in receipt of Income Support and she had applied for a Disabled Facilities Grant for a level access shower. However, when the survey was carried out it was found that she only had a single glazed window which was cracked in her bathroom. Whilst this wasn't dangerous it did mean that the bathroom was cold. Whilst the DFG would replace the broken glass it was unable to upgrade the window to a double-glazed unit.

Under the new grants Miss G would have been eligible for a Safe and Warm Grant which would have changed the window for a double-glazed unit and the works could be completed at the same time, and by the same contractor as the DFG adaptations.

Mr F

Mr F was in his late 70s and lived alone following his wife's death. Mr F had received a diagnosis of Alzheimer's Disease. His son and family lived close by and provided daily care, but Mr F was starting to struggle with some elements of his home. Unfortunately, the works Mr F needed to do to his home were not eligible for Social Care or Health funding and he had limited funds to be able to carry them out himself which meant that no changes to his home could be made.

Through the new grants Mr F would have been eligible for a dementia, cognitive and behavioural conditions grant which could have funded some of the works required including, clearing and relaying the front path to his property to make it level and safe and replacing some of his carpets which were dark in colour and which looked like 'holes' to Mr F and he therefore wouldn't walk on them.

11.0 How assistance is delivered

Option 1 – Managed application process / Mandatory Scheme

The Disabled Facilities Grant Team fully manages the application on behalf of the applicant. The Team will handle everything on behalf of the applicant, and the respective responsibilities of the Council and the applicant will be reflected in an agreement signed by both parties. This is the easiest and least stressful option for an applicant, particularly for more extensive adaptations, as the Council will organise and manage both the application and the work.

The Team will:

- Where applicable, assess the applicant's financial circumstances by a statutory **means test** which will identify any contribution to be paid towards the cost of the works.
- Arrange for a technical officer to visit to discuss how the adaptations can be provided in the home and what building works or alterations are required to provide them.
- Draw up a schedule of works and plans (and planning permission or building regulations approval if required).
- Assist in the completion of the formal DFG application forms.
- Supervise the contractor on site.
- Deal with any unforeseen works and interim payments.
- Arrange final payment to the contractor and collect any certificates and guarantees from them and pass them on to the applicant.

Option 2 – Customer Managed Process.

In certain circumstances an applicant may wish to complete all elements of the application, supporting information and building management themselves. In such instances the applicant will arrange for their own architect and contractors to plan, develop and build their scheme.

Should this option be chosen it is essential to ensure that the Scheme meets all the requirements of the needs specification and is able to demonstrate best value. Therefore, a comprehensive information pack will be provided to any applicants who wish to pursue their own application which outlines the information required to make a DFG application and the requirements that any contractors must fulfil in order to receive DFG funding.

Option 3 – Customer Managed Process / Preferred Scheme

This option is where an applicant may wish to carry out works that are significantly different to the Mandatory Scheme proposed to meet the identified needs of the disabled person. In such instances the option of having the Disabled Facilities Grants Team manage the adaptations project is not available and therefore the applicant will need to use their own architect and contractors to plan, develop and build the preferred scheme.

Prior to beginning any works, the preferred Scheme must be formally agreed by the Disabled Facilities Grants Team Manager, who will also consult with the Occupational Therapist, as it is essential to ensure that the completed works will meet the needs of the disabled person.

Examples in which preferred schemes are undertaken may include incidences where identified needs could be met through either a lift installation and the conversion of a family bathroom but the applicant's preferred option is the building of a ground floor extension to provide, for example, a bedroom and a wet room. Funding would be available to the value of the mandatory scheme (i.e., the lift and, bathroom conversion) and the remaining costs would be the responsibility of the applicant.

A comprehensive information pack will be provided to any applicants who wish to pursue their own application which outlines the information required to make a DFG application and the requirements that any contractors must fulfil in order to receive DFG funding.

12.0 Fees and Ancillary charges

The Council will consider reasonable fees for financial assistance. The following fees will be eligible for financial assistance if they have been properly incurred in making an application or seeking approval for the proposed works, or to ensure the satisfactory completion of works assisted under this policy;

- Confirmation, if sought by the Council, that the applicant has a relevant owner's interest
- Relevant legal fees
- Technical and structural surveys
- Design and preparation of plans and drawings
- Preparation of schedules of relevant works
- Assistance in completing forms
- Applications for building regulations approval (including application fee and preparation of related documents), planning permission, listed building consent and conservation area consent (and similar)
- Obtaining of estimates
- Consideration of tenders
- Supervision of the relevant works
- Disconnection and reconnection of utilities where necessitated by relevant works
- Payment of contractors
- In a case where the application is for adaptations support, the reasonable services and charges of a (private) occupational therapist in relation to the relevant works

13.0 Prioritisation

Where possible the Council will consider an enquiry for assessment for financial support or other services within this policy in chronological order of receipt of enquiry (for DFG this would be from receipt of referral from the OT service), subject to the following provisions;

- With the agreement of DFG Team Manager, an enquiry must be considered as urgent if the customer would be unable to remain in their home safely unless the works are expedited, notwithstanding that care in the home is provided, OR that required works are necessary to facilitate discharge from hospital or nursing or residential care,
- Any priority scheme agreed for DFGs
- The property subject of the enquiry is in such a condition as to present an immediate and significant danger to the occupants or visitors.
- For the purposes of budgetary control, a category of financial assistance may be given priority over another, or sums may be switched between categories but NOT to the detriment of mandatory DFGs
- For the purposes of policy or project implementation a category of financial assistance may be given priority over another

Where resources (financial, staffing or other) are limited, those services which are provided for vulnerable groups or most vulnerable individuals will take priority over other types of assistance or cases.

It is proposed that applications from people with a chronic life limiting condition, such as Motor Neurone Disease, or who require palliative care at home will be dealt with outside of any priority scheme and will be dealt with 'urgently'. Cases considered as this will be nominated by the OT Team Manager in agreement with the DFG Team Manager and appropriate resources made available to progress the applications in a timely manner. The Council proposes that the use of Mandatory DFG, Contribution Assistance Grant, and Discretionary DFG Top-Up should be sufficient to enable these cases to progress swiftly through the system.

Where a property, case, customer or category of service is to be considered outside of chronological order the Head of Service or DFG Team Manager will sanction the action and a written record will be retained on file in justification of that decision.

14.0 Complaints

The Council has a corporate complaints procedure that will apply in relation to any complaints about the implementation of any of the processes flowing from the policy. Details of the complaint's procedure will be provided on request or can be viewed on the Council's website.

Any such complaint will be treated seriously and will (if necessary) be reflected in subsequent reviews of this policy or in amendments to the way that services are delivered.

Any member of the public who is dissatisfied with the performance of the DFG service in administering this policy may make a formal complaint through the Council's procedure. However, we would encourage both the public and the staff (and their supervisors) to try to address any misunderstandings or disagreements by mutual agreement – within the jurisdiction of the staff to do so – to avoid the need for a matter to escalate to formality. Staff

must make the DFG Team Manager aware of such issues even if resolved, in order to facilitate learning and service improvement.

Complaints that are relating to a disagreement regarding a decision the Council or its officers have made, or Policy, cannot be dealt with informally and should be referred directly to the Council's complaints process.

15.0 Service Standards, Key Targets

There is no national standard for the services provided through this policy excepting a statutory requirement for Councils to determine valid and fully made applications for mandatory DFG within six months. This does not account for pre-application activities such as the screening process and the 'application support' and administration including occupational therapy assessment, means testing, producing specifications, finding contractors etc. In practice, when an application is received by the DFG service it is practically complete and ready for an almost instant decision. In a few cases there may be details to pursue, such as proof of property ownership, landlord or owner's permission etc., and if there are alternative schemes under consideration or issues to do with financing the customers contribution. However, the service records all key activities and dates and can report on a variety of measures, including date enquiry received, date application submitted, date determined, date works started, value of works and contributions, date works finished, and completed as in signed-off.

Legislation also requires that works are completed within 12 months of any DFG grant approval being issued, but this can be extended by negotiation if there are valid reasons to do so, such as the customer receiving care, occasional changes in contractor or specification, complex snagging etc.

Locally, the service aims to apply the funding it receives fully each year with minimal waiting lists and with maximum benefit to customers. The Team is committed to ensuring good quality customer service and the performance measures used are based around measuring and improving the quality of service and customer outcomes as well as ensuring improvements in the speed of service delivery.

16.0 Appendices

Appendix 1 – Grant Details

A1 - Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants

This is included for context and information purposes and includes an enhancement for warranty provision.

The Council will award mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) according to the governing legislation – principally the 1996 Act and subordinate Regulations and Orders as amended - and guidance issued by central Government, and which details amongst other matters the types of work that are to be funded, the maximum grant payable (currently £30,000), and the test of financial resources where applicable.

Qualifying Criteria

All owner-occupiers and tenants, licensees or occupiers who can satisfy the criteria in sections 19-22 of the 1996 Act are eligible to *apply* for DFG, but applicants must be aged 18 or over (this does not apply to the disabled person, who may be younger). Tenants of Council and other Social Housing are also eligible to apply, but Councils and some social landlords (Registered Providers) may have parallel and equally effective systems which can be no less effective or generous than DFG. Being eligible to apply does not automatically confer approval – some cases will not meet statutory tests as described below, and others may have significant means tested contributions in excess of the cost of works. Other (private) tenants may also apply for mandatory DFG.

As a part of the application process, the Councils will require certificates relating to property ownership and future occupation and will request permission from the owner. The Council would reasonably want to ensure the tenant has the right to carry out the works and that the landlord would not object or attempt to reinstate the property and evict the client.

Qualifying Works

Those works eligible for mandatory DFG are set out in section 23(1) of the 1996 Act, as amended. These are;

- (i) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to and from the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or qualifying park home, (now including the garden) or
- (ii) making the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or qualifying park home safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with him;
- (iii) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to a room used or usable as the principal family room;
- (iv) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room used or usable for sleeping;
- (v) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a lavatory, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
- (vi) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a bath or shower (or both), or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;

- (vii) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a wash hand basin, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
- (viii) facilitating the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant;
- (ix) improving any heating system in the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or qualifying park home to meet the needs of the disabled occupant or, if there is no existing heating system or any such system is unsuitable for use by the disabled occupant, providing a heating system suitable to meet his needs;
- (x) facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of one or more means of access to or control of that source or by providing additional means of control;
- (xi) facilitating access and movement by the disabled occupant around the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or qualifying park home in order to enable him to care for a person who is normally resident and is in need of such care;
- (xii) facilitating access to and from a garden by a disabled occupant; or making access to a garden safe for a disabled occupant.

Local enhancement to DFG in Bracknell Forest

The Councils will include as part of the mandatory DFG the cost of a maintenance agreement for a period of five (5) years (where available) from the certified date for stair lifts, through-floor lifts, Wash/Dry type toilet, step-lifts and similar equipment installed with the assistance of that grant. Where maintenance agreements of 5 years are not available through the Manufacturer the Council will fund the maximum warranty that is available. Where installing a reconditioned stair lift, any unspent warranty will be increased to a full 5 years if possible and affordable. At the end of the warranty period, it is the responsibility of the applicant (or in certain circumstances their landlord) to ensure that the equipment is appropriately maintained. Grants for replacing equipment will only be awarded in exceptional circumstances, and whether the equipment has been appropriately maintained will be taken into consideration.

Necessary, Appropriate, Reasonable & Practicable

A DFG will only be made if the works are both 'necessary and appropriate' and 'reasonably practicable', where the housing authority has consulted the welfare authority or its agents. Where an applicant prefers a different scheme of works to that approved by the Councils, the Council may offer to 'offset' the value of the original scheme towards those greater works with appropriate safeguards. This is at the discretion of the Council.

Works which have been commenced prior to the approval of an application will not be eligible for financial assistance.

Unexpected works which arise during the carrying out of eligible works will be considered for assistance if the works could not have been reasonably foreseen before commencement and if they are vital to the completion of a safe and effective scheme.

Unforeseen works carried out without prior approval of the Council will not be eligible for assistance. Where unforeseen works are necessary these will be added to the grant up to the specified maximum for mandatory DFG. Costs above the mandatory grant maximum may be supported as discretionary DDFG in accordance with this policy. Care must be taken when agreeing to schemes of works on third-party property such as tenanted accommodation, that the property owner is fully engaged with the decision process. This is also particularly important where an architect or similar is acting on the customers behalf, and where issues such as planning permission, building control and other regulation are involved.

Fees

The Council's DFG award is for a sum of funding only and is not inclusive or exclusive of using particular contractors or products. Customers may specify and choose their own contractors, agent, products and design – but take responsibility for those choices which may fall outside of the remit of any appointed contractors, as long as the contractors are suitably qualified, and the result meets the Council DFG Service and Occupational Therapist's requirements.

Financial Assistance

Mandatory DFG will be subject to a means test in accordance with the regulations made under the 1996 Act, as amended. The maximum mandatory DFG award is currently £30,000 minus any contribution required by a 'means test' (test of financial resources). Successive applications may be awarded for those persons whose condition is degenerative, or they develop additional needs. If the maximum grant limit is changed by statute then the maximum available DFG award by Bracknell Forest Council will reflect this.

Where successive applications are awarded, the applicants' assessed contribution to the first grant award will be taken into account if within the time period of the contribution originally calculated (10 years if owner, 5 years if tenant).

NOTE: where an applicant is in receipt of a recognised, qualifying, means tested benefit they will not be further means tested and they will have no calculated contribution to make. Where works are for the benefit of a child or young person of 19 years of age or younger at the date of application – they too will be exempt from a means test.

Order of processing applications

DFG applications or recommendations will usually be processed in chronological order, in line with the approved priority system, excepting in emergency circumstances at the discretion of the Council.

Recovery of assistance awarded

Some mandatory DFG may be recoverable in accordance with permitted values. Where the customer is an owner-occupier and not a tenant, a sum of up to £10,000 may be recovered for works in excess of £5,000. This sum would only be recovered if the property was sold or title otherwise transferred within 10 years of the certified (completion) date of works, subject to the Council's discretion to reduce or waive in the case of financial hardship. All recoverable costs would be registered as a land charge against the property.

NOTE: this is separate and different to the potential repayment of grant in the event of a breach of occupancy conditions or detected fraud. Also, Councils are entitled to recalculate grant awards in limited circumstances, such as for example if any relevant insurance claims are pending, and to cease making payments and to seek repayment in some cases as detailed in sections 40-42 of the 1996 Act.

The Council will also impose a standard condition that it may recover specialised equipment, such as stair lifts, where no longer required.

Conditions relating to Contractors, Standard of Works and Invoices

In approving an application for financial assistance, the Council will require as a condition that the eligible works are carried out in accordance with any specification it has decided to impose.

The eligible works must be carried out by the contractor(s) upon whose estimate the financial assistance is based, or if two or more estimates were submitted, by one of those contractors. The Council's consent must be obtained prior to the works if a contractor who did not submit an

estimate is to carry out the works, and if an agreement is given, an estimate from the new contractor must be submitted to the Council (this does not automatically convey a difference in revised grant award – any additional costs must be separately financed by the client).

An invoice, demand or receipt will not be acceptable if it is given by the applicant or a member of the applicant's family. Where works are carried out by the applicant or a member of their family, only the cost of materials used will be eligible for financial assistance.

It is a condition of the financial assistance that the eligible works are carried out within 12 months of the date of approval of the application. This period may be extended by the Council if it thinks fit, particularly where it is satisfied that the eligible works cannot be completed for good cause – requests for additional time must be made in writing before the 12-month period ends, and approved extra time will be confirmed in writing by the Council.

The payment of the financial assistance to the applicant will be dependent upon the works being carried out to a standard that is satisfactory to the Council and upon receipt of a satisfactory invoice, demand or receipt for the works and any preliminary or ancillary services or changes.

The Council will usually make payments direct to the contractor on behalf of the client, and not usually to the applicant. Where the applicant disagrees with a payment made direct to a contractor, no payment shall be made until any dispute is resolved. Legislation permits the Council to make payment by delivering to the applicant an instrument of payment in a form made payable to the contractor, OR by making payment direct to the applicant in accordance with information provided prior to grant approval.

NOTE: Contractors receiving direct payment may be required to provide sufficient information to be set up on the Council's financial systems – BUT this should not frustrate the client's choice, as the mandatory DFG grant (only) is an award of funds and not an award tied to a specific contractor with additional financial conditions.

Future occupation of the dwelling

It is a condition of the grant that throughout the grant condition period (that is 5 years from the date of certification) the dwelling is occupied in accordance with the intention stated in the certificate of owner occupation or availability for letting or intended tenancy.

Customer Own Schemes (COS)

Customers who meet the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) eligibility and are therefore entitled to a grant allocation may wish to 'top-up' the DFG funding. The DFG recommendation by the Occupational Therapist will be for the most cost-effective solution which meets all identified needs and will look to adapt an existing property e.g. by removing the bath and replacing with a level access shower (wet room). Customers may prefer to choose a different option and a wet room upstairs may not be the preferred washing facility. The customer will be responsible for the difference in costs between the DFG 'Mandatory Scheme' and the final cost of the works, including unforeseen costs. Written evidence of being able to afford the cost of the additional works is also required.

The DFG team surveyor and Occupational Therapist will work with the customer, their architect and builders as applicable, to ensure that the final scheme meets the disabled person's needs and where applicable planning and building control regulations have been adhered to.

If a client pursues their own scheme, not the mandatory scheme, then the Council will provide a copy of all necessary documentation required for a valid and complete application to be made and will provide an information pack regarding how to proceed. In these circumstances the

applicant would follow application 'Options 3' outlined in the policy and will fully manage their application process and subsequent build.

Repayment

Where a charge (repayable grant) is due for recovery, on receipt of a written request from the responsible person the DFG Team Manager will consider the options to reduce or waive repayment in particular circumstances to be determined in accordance with the following criteria;

- the extent to which the recipient of the grant would suffer financial hardship were they to be required to repay all or any of the grant;
- whether the disposal of the premises is to enable the recipient of the grant to take up employment, or to change the location of their employment;
- whether the disposal is made for reasons connected with the physical or mental health or wellbeing of the recipient of the grant or of a disabled occupant of the premises;
- whether the disposal is made to enable the recipient of the grant to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or infirm and in need of care, which the recipient of the grant is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the recipient of the grant is in need by reason of disability or infirmity.

If that initial decision is not accepted and further appealed, details of that appeal will be determined by the Head of Service, together or in consultation with the appropriate Assistant Director of the Council for that address or area.

All recoverable charges will be recorded as local land charges.

The land charge will be placed in accordance with 2008 General Consent⁶ which enabled local authorities to place a local land charge for the portion of the grant over £5,000. The charge can be up to £10,000 and applies if the owner wants to sell the property within 10 years of the certified (completion) date.

Worked examples of the charge are given below:

	Total Grant Awarded	Exempt Amount	Remaining Value of Grant	Charge Placed
Example A	£12,000	£5,000	£7,000	£7,000
Example B	£15,000	£5,000	£10,000	£10,000
Example C	£25,000	£5,000	£20,000	£10,000

⁶

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/78111/generalconsent2008.pdf

A2 - Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants (Top-Up)

Aims

The aim of the scheme is to help the vulnerable members of the community where the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is insufficient to cover the full cost of the works or where the works are out of scope of the legislation but by completing them there would be demonstrable savings to the wider public purse and clear benefits to the applicant and/or their family/carers.

How will it be funded?

The grants would be funded from the DFG Budget from a dedicated part of the budget held solely for discretionary purposes. The value of this budget will be set annually by the Executive Member.

Who will it help?

Those eligible for Mandatory DFG assistance.

Will it be means-tested?

There will be no additional formal means test.

How much funding might be available?

DDFG may be awarded and will be subject to the availability of resources. Additional funding may be available as a top-up to owner occupiers* with sufficient equity (for works above the Mandatory DFG limit as set out in current legislation, which is currently £30,000).

Where the additional funding required is less than £15,000 then the decision will be based upon evidence provided by the DFG Service to the DFG Team Manager. However, if funding is required above this amount then it must be presented to the responsible Assistant Director and alternative options, such as moving, would need to have been demonstrated to have been explored in full.

Will there be a charge against the property?

For owner-occupiers, DDFG will be registered, in full, as a local land charge against the property and will be recovered on the sale or transfer of the property, subject to rules regarding exempt sales.

Note – this is separate to the £10,000 recoverable DFG which expires at 10 years from certification of works completion.

Conditions attached to the DDFG

The person must be a permanent resident of Bracknell Forest and the property must be their permanent address.

Conditions restricting future use and ownership of the property – the following additional conditions will apply where the Council has made an award of DDFG;

- The owner will notify the Council in writing if a relevant disposal of the property is proposed.
- The owner of the property will provide, within 21 days of a written notice from the Council, a statement confirming the ownership and occupancy of the dwelling. If the property has been sold or transferred the statement will include the date of transfer of ownership.

- DDFG will be registered as a charge against the property and will be repayable on sale or transfer of the property, subject to exempt sales. The charge will be binding on successors in title.
- It is a condition of DDFG that where an owner makes a relevant disposal of the dwelling, other than an exempt disposal, the DDFG shall be repayable subject to above.
- If a relevant disposal takes place after a period of 10 years after the certified date of completion of works, no amount shall be recovered which, after repayment of all charges registered against the property, results in owner(s) having a residual equity of less than £10,000. No account will be taken by the Council of charges subsequent to the charges registered by the Council.
- If the property is transferred, or the sale price does not reflect the market price, the Council will have the right to seek an independent valuation of the market value, which will be binding on both parties, in order to recover the grant repayable.

If the applicant for DDFG is a tenant then the Council will liaise with the appropriate landlord to explore whether alternative funding options, such as funding from the landlord and/or moving to alternative suitable accommodation is an option, before approving DDFG.

Applications for DDFG will be considered for Top-Up once works have already been started if the scheme is a Mandatory Scheme.

Where an applicant is pursuing a 'preferred' scheme and has received the maximum eligible grant funding then applications for DDFG will not be considered.

A maximum of one application for DDFG will be considered in any 5-year period.

How to apply?

Through the Council's DFG Team.

Funding will be awarded on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Council's Senior Management.

A3 – Contribution Assistance Grant (CAG)

Aims

The means test, as set out in the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 has remained unchanged since the introduction of DFGs in their current form in 1996. It is widely accepted as being out of date and does not take into account outgoing of a household when assessing a contribution towards DFG. The result is that, on occasion, anomalous results can occur which mean that vulnerable people are unable to proceed with the adaptations they need to help them live at home due to an unaffordable contribution level. The 2018 DFG Review recommended that the means test be overhauled but to date this has not happened.

The aim of this scheme is to help the vulnerable members of the community where the applicant is unable to proceed with adaptations as a result of a means tested contribution which means that they are at significant risk in their home and/or the failure to complete adaptations will result in increased costs to the wider Social Care budgets. It gives the Council the ability to pay these contributions from discretionary funding therefore enabling works to go ahead and the applicant to remain living in their home.

How will it be funded?

The grants would be funded from the DFG Budget from a dedicated part of the budget held solely for discretionary purposes. The value of this budget will be set annually by the Executive Member.

Who will it help?

Those eligible for Mandatory DFG assistance.

Will it be means-tested?

There will be no additional formal means test.

How much funding might be available?

CAG may be awarded where the following conditions are met:

- i. The applicant is not able to proceed with the works due to the assessed contribution
- ii. There is a report from the OT recommending and demonstrating a severe health impact if assistance is refused
- iii. Evidence of financial hardship can be provided (e.g. proof of inability to obtain funds from high street loan or proof of outgoings/ lack of savings etc.)
- iv. Evidence that the lack of adaptations leaves the applicant at risk in their home
- v. Evidence that not completing the adaptations could result in increased costs to the Social Care Budget.

Will there be a charge against the property?

CAG will be registered, in full, as a local land charge against the property and will be recovered on the sale or transfer of the property, subject to rules regarding exempt sales.

Note – this is separate to the £10,000 recoverable DFG which expires at 10 years from certification of works completion.

Conditions attached to the CAG

The person must be a permanent resident of Bracknell Forest and the property must be their permanent address.

Conditions restricting future use and ownership of the property – the following additional conditions will apply where the Council has made an award of CAG;

- The owner will notify the Council in writing if a relevant disposal of the property is proposed.
- The owner of the property will provide, within 21 days of a written notice from the Council, a statement confirming the ownership and occupancy of the dwelling. If the property has been sold or transferred the statement will include the date of transfer of ownership.
- CAG will be registered as a charge against the property and will be repayable on sale or transfer of the property, subject to exempt sales. The charge will be binding on successors in title.
- It is a condition of CAG that where an owner makes a relevant disposal of the dwelling, other than an exempt disposal, the CAG shall be repayable subject to above.
 - If a relevant disposal takes place after a period of 10 years after the certified date of completion of works, no amount shall be recovered which, after repayment of all charges registered against the property, results in owner(s) having a residual equity of less than £10,000. No account will be taken by the Council of charges after the charges registered by the Council.
 - If the property is transferred, or the sale price does not reflect the market price, the Council will have the right to seek an independent valuation of the market value, which will be binding on both parties, to recover the grant repayable.

A maximum of one application for CAG will be considered in any 5-year period.

[How to apply?](#)

Through the Council's DFG Team.

Funding will be awarded on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Council's Senior Management.

A4 - Help to Move/Relocation Grant

Aims

The aim of the scheme is to help the vulnerable members of the community where moving home is more appropriate than adapting their current property, and by supporting them to move to more suitable accommodation there would be demonstrable savings to the wider public purse and clear benefits to the applicant and/or their family/carers.

How will it be funded?

The grants would be funded from the DFG Budget from a dedicated part of the budget held solely for discretionary purposes. The value of this budget will be set annually by the Executive Member.

Who will it help?

Those eligible for Mandatory DFG assistance.

Will it be means-tested?

There will be no formal means test.

Support to Move/ Relocate

Funding may be available to assist the disabled person to move to a more suitable property where it is impracticable to adapt or more cost effective than adapting the current home of a disabled person to make it suitable for their present or future needs, even though the new property may need some adaptation.

Criteria for consideration in cases of help-to-move/relocate; (this is not an exclusive or exhaustive list, as other factors may become apparent with experience):

- The disabled person may need to move to give or receive care, or to receive medical treatment.
- The disabled person may need to move to maintain or gain employment.
- The cost of works to the current property may exceed the benefit to the client.
- The cost of works may exceed the available grant and loan maximum and any available client or third-party contribution.
- The client's calculated contribution may be unaffordable, and moving/buying is a better financial solution.
- The client may need to move to reduce rent and/or release spare bedrooms which they can no longer afford (e.g. benefits cap and/or the spare room subsidy).
- A different property may provide a greater benefit for the client for the funds.
- The current property may not be adaptable, and another property may be more amenable to adaptation.
- The current property may contain hazards or defects which would not be sufficiently addressed by the works or otherwise by the client or owner.
- The property owner (landlord) refuses to permit the adaptation.
- The property is for sale, or pending foreclosure, bankruptcy (as security against debt) or repossession.
- The tenancy is due to end and not be renewed or is otherwise unstable.
- Relationship breakdown.
- The client wishes to downsize

Councils are required first to consult the 'welfare authority' to consider what assistance would be necessary and appropriate for the client, and then apply a test of what is reasonable and practicable in the circumstances of the property. The service must consider viable alternative solutions which appear more cost effective.

Such solutions may include contributions towards costs incurred as part of an alternative house-purchase and moving to an already adapted or more economically adaptable and suitable property. Funding will not be given towards the purchase price of an alternative property but may be provided towards legal and moving costs.

Moving and house purchase finance will be determined on a case-by-case basis determined by:

- the tenure and location of the original and new properties,
- the residual equity and any increased mortgage debt,
- whether moving within the Council's jurisdiction, or beyond,
- whether the original property is unadaptable, unaffordable or poor value to adapt,

or that moving is purely an occupier choice or as a result of a landlord's refusal to permit adaptation.

Mandatory DFG of up to £30,000 is available for adaptations in properties residents have moved to (within the local area only) but may be reduced by any assessed contributions.

Help to move assistance is available to owner-occupiers and to tenants' subject to individual determination.

As there are too many variables to set a fixed policy on awards for moving or buying property, each case will be determined on its merits subject to resources by recommendation from the DFG Team Manager to the manager with sufficient discretionary authority to approve works of that value.

[How much funding might be available?](#)

Help to Move funding may be awarded and will be subject to the availability of resources. A maximum of £7,000 may be available to support costs solely associated with moving home.

[Will there be a charge against the property?](#)

There will be no land charge registered against the property.

[Conditions attached to the Grant](#)

The person must be a permanent resident of Bracknell Forest and the property must be their current and intended permanent address.

A maximum of one application will be considered in any 5-year period.

[How to apply?](#)

Through the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant Team.

Funding will be awarded on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Council's Senior Management.

A5 - Hospital Prevention & Discharge Assistance

Aims

The grant aims to pay for essential urgent works and adaptations designed to prevent admission to hospital, or a care or nursing home or to assist with speedy discharge from hospital.

The works must facilitate one of the above, and can include any required works including (but not exclusively):

- Deep cleaning
- Decluttering
- Minor adaptations
- Boiler repairs/replacements (where a Gas Safe engineer has deemed the boiler unsafe or beyond economic repair)
- Property repairs to remove Category 1 Hazards
- Stairlift provision – including curved-track stairlift rental costs covered for a 6-month period where urgent need is identified.
- Ceiling-Track Hoist provision

This list is not exhaustive and should not be a replacement for the minor works adaptations grant funded by Social Care.

How will it be funded?

The grants would be funded from the DFG Budget from a dedicated part of the budget held solely for discretionary purposes. The value of this budget will be set annually by the Executive Member.

Who will it help?

Any disabled or vulnerable person currently within an acute hospital setting, assessed and referred by Adult Social Care/ the Hospital Discharge Team.

Will it be means-tested?

There will be no formal means test.

How much funding might be available?

The maximum funding available is £2,500 per application.

Will there be a charge against the property?

There will be no land charge registered against the property.

Will there be any conditions attached?

The person must be a permanent resident of Bracknell Forest and the property must be their permanent address.

A maximum of one application per admission or per annum in the case of prevention will be allowed.

How to apply...

Through the Council's Social Care Team and Disabled Facilities Grant Team.

Funding will be awarded on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Council's Senior Management

A6 - Safe & Secure Grant

Aims

The Safe and Secure Grant is available for essential property repairs which are necessary to facilitate adaptations being undertaken to the property for owner occupiers.

Eligible works which could include the following (this list is not exhaustive):

- Water supply, drainage and heating issues
- Electrical and gas safety works
- Repairs or modifications to stairs, floors and steps
- Safety and security repairs

How will it be funded?

The grants would be funded from the DFG Budget from a dedicated part of the budget held solely for discretionary purposes. The value of this budget will be set annually by the Executive Member.

Who will it help?

Those eligible for Mandatory DFG assistance.

Eligible Owner-Occupiers

Will it be means-tested?

In order to be eligible for assistance applicants must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

- Income Support
- Jobseekers Allowance (All)
- Employment and Support Allowance (All)
- Pension credit (Guarantee Credit)
- Universal Credit
- Bracknell Forest Council Tax Support (Not single person reduction)

How much funding might be available?

The maximum grant funding available is £5,000

Will there be a charge against the property?

Funding will be registered as a local land charge against the property and will be recovered on the sale or transfer of the property, subject to rules regarding exempt sales.

Note – this is separate to the £10,000 recoverable DFG which expires at 10 years from certification of works completion.

Conditions attached to the Grant

The person must be a permanent resident of Bracknell Forest and the property must be their permanent address.

Conditions restricting future use and ownership of the property – the following additional conditions will apply where the Council has made an award funding.

- The owner will notify the Council in writing if a relevant disposal of the property is proposed.

- The owner of the property will provide, within 21 days of a written notice from the Council, a statement confirming the ownership and occupancy of the dwelling. If the property has been sold or transferred the statement will include the date of transfer of ownership.
- Safe & Secure Grant will be registered as a charge against the property and will be repayable on sale or transfer of the property, subject to exempt sales. The charge will be binding on successors in title.
- It is a condition of Safe & Secure Grant that where an owner makes a relevant disposal of the dwelling, other than an exempt disposal, the Safe & Secure Grant shall be repayable subject to above.
 - If a relevant disposal takes place after a period of 10 years after the certified date of completion of works, no amount shall be recovered which, after repayment of all charges registered against the property, results in owner(s) having a residual equity of less than £10,000. No account will be taken by the Council of charges subsequent to the charges registered by the Council.
 - If the property is transferred, or the sale price does not reflect the market price, the Council will have the right to seek an independent valuation of the market value, which will be binding on both parties, in order to recover the grant repayable.

A maximum of one application will be considered in any 5-year period.

[How to apply?](#)

Through the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant Team and Adult Social Care Team.

Funding will be awarded on a case-by-case basis at the discretion of the Council's Senior Management.

A7. Dementia, Cognitive and Behavioural Conditions Grant

Aims

Where the disabled person is diagnosed with dementia, or other cognitive impairment or sensory disability or a recognised long term behavioural condition including but not limited to such conditions as Autism, Attention Deficit and Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) etc., works to make homes friendly and to help the person live safely, manage their surroundings, and retain their independence for longer will be eligible for funding. Works could include items such as:

- making changes to lighting to improve brightness and visibility
- changing cupboard doors to glass fronted ones to aid recognition of items inside
- redecorating selected dark coloured walls that will give a calmer effect
- replacing selected floor coverings that cause confusion or safety issues
- replacing bathroom toilet seats and rails with coloured to improve visual perception
- installing signage for easier recognition
- ensuring safe access to the property and that it is free from hazards
- provision of a safe space
- Carbon monoxide/cold/heat alarms
- Digital assistive technology

This case is not exhaustive and each case will be considered with the assistance and advice from the Council's Occupational Therapy service.

How will it be funded?

The grants would be funded from the DFG Budget from a dedicated part of the budget held solely for discretionary purposes. The value of this budget will be set annually by the Executive Member.

Who will it help?

It will help anyone who is a permanent resident within Bracknell Forest with a clinical diagnosis of dementia/Alzheimer's Disease or memory loss.

Will it be means tested?

There will be no means test.

How much funding might be available?

The maximum funding available is £2,000 per applicant/property.

Will there be a charge against the property?

No, there will be no charge placed against the property.

Will there be any conditions attached?

The person must be a permanent resident of Bracknell Forest and the property must be their permanent address.

A maximum of one application will be considered in any 5-year period.

How to apply...

Applicants must be referred by Social Care Team for assistance.

Appendix B - Key definitions, References and Abbreviations

RRO – Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukxi/2002/1860/article/3/made>

The 'Act' (1996) – Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/53/contents>

DFG – Disabled Facilities Grant.

DDFG – Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance

BCF – Better Care Fund

HHSRS – the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, the prescribed system under the Housing Act 2004 for measuring hazards associated with housing conditions.

ECO – Energy Company Obligation

Certified Date – the date certified by the service on behalf of the Council as that on which the execution of eligible works is completed to the Councils satisfaction. In this instance being the works complete date.

Dwelling – a building or part of a building occupied or intended to be occupied as a separate dwelling, together with any yard, garden, outhouse and appurtenance belonging to it or usually enjoyed with it.

Exempt disposal – a disposal or transfer of the whole or part of the premises to a person whose main residence is the property and who is (a) one of the joint owners of the dwelling, or (b) the wife, husband or partner (including same sex) of the owner or one of the joint owners of that property.

Relevant disposal – a conveyance of the freehold or an assignment of the lease, or the granting of a long lease (one of over 21 years, otherwise than at rack rent)

Member of family – a person is a member of the applicant's family if they are the spouse of the applicant or living together as partners, or is the grandparent, parent or dependent child of the applicant or their spouse or partner (inclusive of same sex partners, stepchildren, adopted and foster children).

Owner-occupier – whilst this term is self-explanatory, where appropriate it will include certain tenants with repairing type leases (sometimes called FRI or Full Repairing and Insuring Leases, of a suitable duration) who would otherwise be unable to insist their 'superior landlord' undertake renovations. Repairing lease tenants would qualify for DFG in their own right, with permission.