

Appendix 1 – Proposed changes to policy (revised policy wording below where changes have been made to relevant products)

4.1 HEATING AND RENOVATION ASSISTANCE

Heating and Renovation Assistance enables owner-occupiers to fund essential repairs/improvements to their homes, as assessed by the Council. The assistance is also available to qualifying owner-occupiers and tenants to enable heating improvements to be undertaken, subject to the Landlords consent in the case of rented properties. The home may be a building of traditional construction, a houseboat or mobile home. This discretionary assistance can be given up to a maximum value of £30,000 (combined grant and loan), as follows:

up to a maximum of £5,000 grant for heating improvements only
up to £10,000 grant for smaller scale essential repairs/improvements
up to £20,000 loan assistance over and above the £10,000 grant limit for larger scale essential repairs/improvements

Loan is split into two, as follows:

Loan up to and including £10,000 (Lower Renovation Loan)

Loans exceeding £10,000 (Higher Renovation Loan)

Examples of grant loan combinations:

- Cost of heating only works £3,500 – applicant receives a grant for £3,500
- Cost of renovation works £9,000 – applicant receives a grant for £9,000
- Cost of renovation works £15,000 – applicant receives a grant for £10,000 and a loan for £5,000 (Lower Renovation Loan)
- Cost of renovation works £28,000 – applicant receives a grant for £10,000 and a loan for £18,000 (Higher Renovation Loan)

The financial assistance product includes associated professional third-party fees and for the loans above £10k (Higher Renovation Loan) an independent property valuation and the approval of an Independent Financial Advisor and are also required prior to the approval of the loan.

Eligibility

- (i) **Grants and Loans for both heating improvements and essential repair work**

Applicants must be:

- aged 18 or over on the date of application;
- live in the dwelling as their main residence for at least 6 months prior to the application date ;
- in receipt of Council Tax Support or are a hospital in-patient who cannot be safely discharged from hospital care back into their home due to concerns over the extent of disrepair or hazardous conditions at their property
- not subject to a bankruptcy order, debt relief or in certain other arrangements where an individual is insolvent and powers to deal with assets are restricted (only applicable to loan assistance for owner-occupiers)

(ii) Grants for heating improvements only

Applicants must not be eligible for the energy companies' Home Energy Cost Reduction Obligation

In the case of tenant applications, the landlord must not be subject to Wirral Council enforcement action to improve housing standards at the subject property

There is a limit on the number of eligible tenants of large, portfolio landlords (those renting 3 or more properties), who can access the grant assistance for heating efficiency improvements. The number of applications for grant assistance from the collective eligible tenants of such landlords will be restricted to no more than 2 separate and individual cases per year.

The following heating improvements works may be undertaken:

- Full central heating system where none already exists (maximum of 6 radiators)
- Repair of existing central heating systems (gas, oil or electric)
- Replace gas heating boilers which are faulty or irreparable at reasonable cost (as part of a pilot exercise*, applicants will be given the option of having an air source heat pump (ASHP) as an alternative to a gas boiler)
- Small works to existing systems to improve the energy efficiency, such as the installation of thermostatic radiator valves, timer/programmers, room thermostats or new radiators
- Provision of alternative heating solutions in circumstances where there is a new central heating system needed and there is no gas supply to the property, and where to install the gas supply would be prohibitively expensive, alternative options would be explored
- Removal of excessive cluttering such as furniture, stored materials and waste, if deemed necessary by the Council, to enable adequate inspection/contractor(s) to quote for work/works to be undertaken

***Air Source Heat Pump (ASHP) Pilot**

Where a gas or oil boiler is to be replaced the applicant will be given the option of installing an ASHP as an alternative to a new gas boiler as part of a time limited pilot to trial the installation of this technology in preparation for the proposed national ban on new gas boilers. Applicants will be under no obligation to participate in this pilot.

(iii) Grants and Loans for essential repair work

Applicants must have an owner's interest.

The maximum assistance available is £30,000 (consisting of £10,000 grant and £20,000 loan) except where unforeseen works are found to be necessary to complete the approved works. If unforeseen works are encountered, then in order to ensure the completion of works on site to a satisfactory standard, an applicant may apply to the Director of Regeneration and Place, to exercise his delegated authority to increase the loan above the £30,000 limit up to a maximum of £40,000 but the final decision will be made by the Independent Financial Advisor (IFA). In cases not approved by the IFA, then the Director of Regeneration & Place or the appropriate approved signatory can consider the use of a non-means tested grant to enable the completion of the works, setting such conditions as may be appropriate to the circumstances.

Loans applications exceeding £10,000 are assessed for suitability for the applicant by an IFA selected from a list provided by Wirral Council. Access to the IFA is arranged via the Housing Standards Team. The assessment undertaken by the IFA takes account of the ability of the applicant to obtain a sufficient commercial mortgage at a reasonable rate, or release sufficient equity from their property.

Loans exceeding £10,000 are subject to the following conditions:

1. Where there is no existing secured loan or mortgage on the property, the loan must not exceed 50% of the market value of the property as assessed by an independent valuer
2. Where there are existing loans secured on the property then the total of those taken together with the loan must not exceed 80% of the market value of the property as assessed by an independent valuer

Heating and Renovation Assistance is allocated mainly to dwellings affected by one or more of the following defects:

- Risk of electric shock or fire as a result of a defective electrical installation.

- Risk of carbon monoxide poisoning from a gas appliance. Any remedial works will be limited to the removal of the defective appliance, and the replacement of an equivalent specification.
- Risk of imminent structural collapse of part of the building or structure.
- Dampness considered so pervasive as to be prejudicial to the health of the occupant(s).
- Faulty domestic water heating appliance in accommodation occupied by elderly people or young children, requiring repair, augmentation or replacement.
- Properties with collapsed drains causing surcharge of effluent, where remedial works are not covered by property insurance.
- Any other conditions determined by the Council to present an immediate risk to the health and safety of the occupant(s). Each case to be considered on its merits and subject to a risk assessment. (In the case of flat entrance fire doors, the maximum assistance available is £2,000)

The amount of the assistance includes associated reasonable professional fees.

The grant and loan can incorporate the removal of excessive cluttering such as furniture, stored materials and waste, if deemed necessary by the Council, to enable adequate inspection/contractor(s) to quote for work/works to be undertaken.

Conditions

- (iv) **Grants and Loans for both heating improvements and renovation assistance**

The Council will determine the extent of the work

Applicants may wish to consider selecting a contractor from the Business Approval Register.

There are no repayments on the loan assistance, until the applicant or executor transfers the property whether by way of sale or otherwise. The loan is repaid in full to the value of the original loan. The applicant may choose to repay the loan at any time, in one lump sum. The loan amount to be paid back equals the original value of the loan given.

The assisted work must be completed within 6 months from the date of approval or such further period as the Council may allow for unforeseen works to be completed.

On completion of the works, payments are made directly to the contractors. In some circumstances (depending on the cost and complexity and timescale of the works) interim payments may be made to a contractor upon partial performance of set stages in the works. The capital sum is not paid to the applicant.

For grants up to £10,000, applicants must complete the application process, including submission of suitable quotations, within 3 months of returning the completed application form. Officers have discretion to go beyond this period, if deemed appropriate.

Complaints regarding Heat and Renovation Assistance will be considered through the procedures set out in the Council's corporate complaints procedure.

(v) Grants for heating improvements only

The grant is a maximum of £5,000, except where unforeseen works are found to be essential to complete approved works

No more than one application allowed per 12 month period, and no more than one application per 3 year period from a tenant who then moves to a different tenanted address owned by the same landlord within that 3 year period

Boilers fitted must have an efficiency rating of 92% or above.

Landlords must agree not increase the rent for 2 years and will be encouraged to apply to be accredited under Wirral Council's Property Accreditation Scheme, if not already accredited. If the subject property is regulated under a fair rent agreement or subject to an annual rent review under the tenancy agreement, this may continue, providing any rent increase does not take into account any heating measures carried out in connection with the loan at the property.

Applicants will be encouraged to obtain minimum insulation standards if not already present (where technically possible)

Applications received from qualifying tenants will only be approved if a) the landlord gives permission for the works to be undertaken at the house, b) the landlord is not subject to Wirral Council enforcement action to improve housing standards .The Council may waive this requirement at its absolute discretion. The action to be in connection with the house subject to the application

(vi) Grants and Loans for essential renovation work

No further applications for Heating and Renovation Assistance to address works other than for heating can be made within a period of three years

Loans over and above the grant limit of £10k up to and including £10,000 are secured by a legal restriction against the property at HM Land Registry

Loans above £10,000 and up to £20,000 are secured by a registered legal charge against the property at HM Land Registry

Method of Application

A preliminary enquiry is made by visiting the Council's website and completing an enquiry, telephone, e-mail or in writing and formal application is made by completing a prescribed form.

Advice Available

Verbal and written advice is available from the Council's Housing Standards Team (See Section 6.9 Contact Details).

4.2 INDEPENDENT FINANCIAL ADVICE & PROPERTY VALUATION

The Council maintains a list of Independent Financial Advisors (IFAs) who have been briefed on the Assistance Policy and what it sets out to achieve and the service standards expected. The Higher Renovation Loans between £10,000 and £20,000 can only be accessed following the recommendation of an IFA on the Council's list.

Eligibility

Applicants for Independent Financial Advice must be owner-occupiers applying for a Higher Renovation Loans exceeding £10,000 and below or equal to £20,000

Conditions

Access to Independent Financial Advice relating to renewal must be made by referral from the Council's Housing Standards Team.

Applicants for the Higher Renovation Loan will have to seek independent financial advice as part of their application to ensure that the product being offered by the Council is appropriate to their particular circumstances. The fee for that advice is currently £495 and that will be paid to the IFA by the Council after their consultation

with the applicant and before the loan is approved, and added to the loan upon completion. Should the loan application and relevant works not progress to completion then the fee for the IFA and any other pre-approval third-party fees accrued will be secured against the subject property via a restriction, which the applicant has consented to within the loan application form.

All Independent Financial Advice is deemed to be and is in fact independent of Wirral Council. Payment or reimbursement of fees by the Council does not mean advice is that of the Council; the IFA is independent.

4.3 DISCRETIONARY DFG TOP UP GRANT ASSISTANCE

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) will continue to be made available in accordance with the statute. In cases where the DFG limit of £30,000 is exceeded, the Council will consider providing such additional assistance in the form of a grant funded discretionary top up payment up to £50,000 to facilitate the adaptation works deemed to be necessary to meet the need.

The Council will offer owner occupiers or tenants Discretionary DFG gap funding on application usually to a maximum amount of up to £50,000 to “top-up” mandatory DFGs where circumstances are such that the cost of the works exceeds £30,000 (either because of unforeseen works or the extent of the original adaptation scheme schedule of work). However, should circumstances arise where unforeseen additional works are necessary to complete delivery, following approval of the Authorities Scheme; funding in excess of this Discretionary DFG maximum of £50k will be considered by the Head of Service or Senior Manager on a case-by-case basis. This type of assistance will only be offered for works that meet the eligibility criteria for Mandatory DFGs to meet the applicant “need” as proposed in the Council’s Adaptation Scheme and applicants have been subject to the test of resources.

Discretionary funding from the Council will only be made available as a last resort or in cases where delays posed by applicants having to seek additional funding would leave key health/social care priorities (i.e., Delayed Transfer of Care, hospital admission/readmission,) at risk of not being supported with associated risks, at significant potential cost to Health & Social Care budgets. All relevant alternative funding options at the time of Discretionary funding application/assessment will be explored by the applicant and considered by the Authority, however any advice received from a Senior Health/Social Care professional will form part of this process. The impact of any delays associated with seeking additional funding which will/may detrimentally affect Health & Social Care priorities as highlighted in any advice from the relevant Senior Health/Social Care professional is likely to lead to a decision to

grant access to the Discretionary funding required forthwith; thus, facilitating approval and delivery of appropriate adaptations at the earliest opportunity.

Discretionary funding requests up to £10k must be considered and approved by the Service Manager and requests over £10k up to £50K must be considered and approved by the Assistant Director of Housing or Senior Manager.

Eligibility

Discretionary DFG Gap Funding can be made available to both owner-occupiers and tenants that qualify for a mandatory DFG in cases where the cost of the adaptation exceeds the grant limit of £30,000.

The maximum top up funding available is £50,000 except where unforeseen works are found to be necessary to complete the approved works in which case the Council may, at its discretion, agree to cover part of all of the costs of the unforeseen works or in cases where the extent of the original adaptation scheme schedule of works would breach the £50k and the Head of Service is of the opinion that such circumstances exist that the Authority is minded to use its discretion in line with this report. In such cases, any excess costs will be kept to a minimum.

Conditions

This gap funding in the form of a Discretionary Grant is not currently subject to a fee.

Discretionary funding from the Council will only be made available as a last resort or in cases where delays posed by applicants having to seek additional funding would leave key health/social care priorities at risk of not being supported with associated risks, at significant potential cost to health & social care budgets.

Key Health & Social Care priorities would include: -

- At risk of admission to Hospital in next 12 months
- At risk of readmission to hospital
- DTOC - Significant projected costs to health & social care
- Facilitate hospital discharge
- Risk of carer break down/carers break down

Opinion of a senior health/social care professional that advises that delays associated with seeking additional funding will detrimentally affect Health & Social Care priorities will be sought.

Discretionary funding requests up to £10k must be considered and approved by the service manager and requests over £10k up to £50K must be considered and approved by the Assistant Director of Housing or Senior Manager.

Gap funding application is approved by an appropriate approved signatory

Method of application

Application form provided by Disabled Adaptation Service.

Advice available

From the Disabled Adaptation Service – 691 8090

4.4 HOME ADAPTATION GRANT (HAG)

Fast tracked non-means tested grant assistance is available to support Better Care Fund (BCF) joint plan outcomes. The Home Adaptation Grant will assist with supporting Wirral residents who are at risk of non-elective admission or readmission to hospital i.e., through falls by enabling a more rapid response for the provision of such straight forward to install adaptations.

Eligibility

Applicants must:

1. Have a need as identified or confirmed by Occupational Therapist (OT) in-line with current mandatory DFG criteria.
2. Have a need that can be met by the installation of the following adaptation(s):-
 - Stair lift (straight & curved)
 - Ramped access to property (including door widening)
 - Level access shower
 - Ceiling Track Hoist
 - Or a combination of 2 of the adaptations outlined above not exceeding a combined value of £15,000 (the Head of Service or Senior Manager can authorise 10% variance on this maximum amount in response to unforeseen circumstances).
3. Reside in or is planning to relocate to a property of any tenure in Wirral Borough Council boundary.

Conditions

1. The work is delivered by an appropriate contractor(s) as arranged by the Council's Adaptation Service.
2. The contract for delivery of the adaptations works is between the applicant and the contractor (except when the Council has a sole provider arrangement in place for adaptation(s) works/equipment); the Adaptation Service play a facilitating role.
3. Consent is obtained for the necessary works (as sought by Adaptation Service) either owner/occ certificate or tenant's certificate.
4. Applicant agrees to HAG product conditions documentation (accompanies application correspondence/pack). By applying for a HAG the Council assumes the applicant has agreed to the conditions inclusive of co-operation with contractors regarding required access and the Council regarding final inspection of works and provision of the required conditions i.e. necessary consents (owners certificate/tenants certificate), customer feedback and future evaluation studies.
5. This form of Adaptation Financial Assistance is not currently subject to a fee

Method of application

1. Through direct referral from external OT professional
2. Through Self-Assessment route (SAF) and assessment by in- house OT or Trusted Assessor.

Advice Available

By contacting the Adaptations Service by e-mail:

homeadaptationsteam@wirral.gov.uk

4.5 ADAPTATION SCHEME ENABLING GRANT (ASEG).

The ASEG is discretionary financial assistance designed to facilitate the timely installation of DFG/HAG funded adaptation schemes which may otherwise stall or close due to the identification of disrepair or discovery of accumulations of items at the property which must be addressed to enable the adaptation installation to be delivered in a timely manner to the appropriate standards. This assistance is in the form of a grant with a maximum available funding of £10k.

Eligibility

The applicant must

- Have an open DFG/HAG funded/part funded adaptation scheme application to meet their needs and an owner's interest in the subject property.
- Have an open DFG/HAG funded/part funded adaptation scheme application to meet their needs and live with a parent, guardian, partner, family member who has an owner's interest in the subject property.
- Meet Product eligibility criteria detail currently being developed.

Conditions

This form of adaptation financial assistance – ASEG will not be subject to a fee. ASEG funding requests up to £5k must be considered and approved by the Service Manager and over £5k must be considered and approved by the Head of Service or Senior manager.

Method of application

1. Through direct referral from external OT professional
2. Through Self-Assessment route (SAF) and assessment by in- house OT
- 3 As referred by Adaptation Service during DFG/HAG application/feasibility /delivery process.

Advice Available

By contacting the Adaptations Service on 0151 691 8090 or by e-mail on homeadaptationsteam@wirral.gov.uk

4.6 TIME CRITICAL ADAPTATIONS GRANT

Urgent priority non-means tested grant assistance is available to support Better Care Fund (BCF) joint plan outcomes – in particular the TCAG will assist with supporting Wirral residents with an End-of-Life diagnosis & other complex cases where Hospital Discharge (HD) can't be enabled swiftly with interim measures in place at home to remain in/return safely to their home in the shortest time possible with independence and dignity when time is particularly precious. The TCAG also aims to support the disabled applicant as well as assisting families and carer(s) to support the disabled person through assignment of a client liaison officer, improving mental health at a difficult time.

Eligibility

Applicants must:

1. Have a need as identified or confirmed by an Occupational Therapist (OT) in-line with current mandatory DFG criteria.
2. Have a condition with a diagnosis which is confirmed by the OT which falls into the following categories: -
 - Motor Neurone Disease
 - Other end stage conditions leading to applicant being registered with the Palliative Care Service within the Health Trust.
 - Presentation of Government Benefits correspondence T1500 - which classifies applicant as terminally ill.
 - Other relevant conditions as determined by the service manager with an end-of-life diagnoses confirmed by an OT in the region of IRO 2yrs.
3. Be unable to be discharged from a Hospital/Health Trust setting or other relevant community social care setting (as confirmed by a senior health/social care professional) as this can't be enabled with interim risk reduction measures in place at home.
4. Reside in or is planning to relocate to a property of any tenure in Wirral Borough Council boundary.

Conditions

1. The work is delivered by an appropriate experienced contractor(s) as arranged by the Council's Adaptation Service.
2. The contract for delivery of the adaptations works is between the applicant and the contractor (except when the Council has a sole provider arrangement in place for adaptation(s) works/equipment); the Adaptation Service play a facilitating role.
3. Consent is obtained for the necessary works (as sought by Adaptation Service) either owner/occ certificate or tenant's certificate.
4. Applicant agrees to TCAG product conditions documentation (accompanies application correspondence/pack). By applying for a TCAG the Council assumes the applicant has agreed to the conditions inclusive of co-operation with contractors regarding required access and the Council regarding final inspection of works and provision of the required conditions i.e., necessary consents (owners certificate/tenants' certificate), customer feedback and future evaluation studies.
5. The Council will always consider the most cost-effective option when choosing a scheme to meet the needs.
6. Any proposed scheme with a value above £40,000 must be considered and agreed by the Head of Service or Senior Manager prior to approval.
7. The Council will always consider the views of the applicant, impact of relevant delivery/life expectancy timeframes when considering scheme design / proposals, which will/may influence the Council's proposed scheme as determined by the Service Manager.
9. This form of Adaptation Financial Assistance is not currently subject to a fee.

Method of application

1. Through direct referral from external OT professional
2. Through direct referral from Palliative Care Service
2. Through Self-Assessment route (SAF) and assessment by in- house OT

Advice Available

By contacting the Adaptations Service on 0151 691 8090 or by e-mail on:
homeadaptationsteam@wirral.gov.uk

4.7 REPAIR OR REPLACEMENT OF ADAPTATION GRANT (RAG)

Fast tracked, non-means tested financial assistance product (RAG) available to all tenures will enable some of the most vulnerable Wirral residents to access support, often when at crisis point for the re-instatement of their adaptation equipment through repair or replacement.

Eligibility

Applicants must:

1. Have a need as identified or confirmed by Occupational Therapist (OT) in-line with current mandatory DFG criteria and/or have previously received a grant via the Housing Adaptation Service on equipment such as Stairlifts, Ceiling Track Hoists, Vertical Lifts or Step lifts without a valid or appropriate warranty.
2. Have a need(s) that is not currently being met by the relevant equipment in place due to its failure.
3. Require a diagnostic report in relation to relevant failed equipment.
4. Require the re-instatement of their adaptation equipment through repair or replacement.
5. Reside in a property of any tenure in Wirral Borough Council boundary.

Conditions

1. The Council's Technical officer/relevant officer is presented with documented evidence of equipment failure (condition/diagnostic report) either funded via the grant or other and associated appropriate/relevant quote for necessary repair works required and confirmation there is no valid or appropriate warranty in existence.
2. The Council determine if the relevant equipment is obsolete, beyond economical repair and/or whether the replacement or repair of equipment in the circumstances is the best investment of grant funding; any complex case or challenge would be dealt with by the Service Manager.
3. The relevant work/equipment is delivered by an appropriate contractor(s) as arranged by the Council's Adaptation Service with regards to replacement via RAG

or existing HAG route or the applicants chosen relevant & appropriate contractor (usually original installer/manufacture in line with the quote presented by the applicant to or sought by the Council) in the case of a repair as agreed with the Council.

4. The contract for delivery of the adaptations works is between the applicant and the contractor (except when the Council has a sole provider arrangement in place for adaptation(s) works/equipment); the Adaptation Service play a facilitating role.

5. Consent is obtained for the necessary works (as sought by Adaptation Service) either owner/occ certificate or tenant's certificate.

6. Applicant agrees to RAG product conditions documentation (accompanies application correspondence/pack). By applying for a RAG, the Council assumes the applicant has agreed to the conditions inclusive of co-operation with contractors regarding required access and the Council regarding final inspection of works and provision of the required conditions i.e., necessary consents (owners certificate/tenants' certificate), customer feedback and future evaluation studies.

7. This form of Adaptation Financial Assistance not subject to a fee.

Method of application

1. Through direct referral from external OT professional
2. Through Self-Assessment route (SAF) and assessment by in- house OT
3. Through referral from relevant Registered Provider
4. Through direct contact with the Adaptation Service by the applicant

Advice Available

By contacting the Adaptations Service on 0151 691 8090 or by e-mail on homeadaptationsteam@wirral.gov.uk

4.8 EMPTY PROPERTY GRANT

Grant assistance available to support the renovation of long-term (6 months or longer) vacant properties. Grants up to £10,000 are available for owner occupiers in Selective Licensing Areas and for all properties in Wirral that will be privately rented where the Council has the right to nominate tenants to occupy the property for a period of up to 3 years. Assistance is conditional upon the property being occupied by a nominated tenant and subsequent tenants should the property become empty within in the 3-year period from the first nominated tenant occupying the property. This maximum is reduced to £5,000 where the landlord does not accept rehousing nomination rights.

This assistance is not available in conjunction with any other financial assistance product funded and administered through Wirral Council's Capital Programme.

Eligibility

Applicants must have an owner's interest in the vacant property and the property must have been vacant for at least 6 months. Where an application for a grant is approved, but before the certified completion date, the applicant ceases to have a qualifying owner's interest (in the case of a joint application this does not apply unless all the applicants cease to have an owner's interest) no grant shall be paid.

Applicants must renovate the property to at least the Decent Homes Standard, including the removal of all Category 1 Hazards in line with the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System, as assessed by the Council.

The grant is to be used only for structural/repair/improvement works, and materials. Fees (other than the Land Registry Search Fee), floor coverings (with the exception of laminate covering where this is deemed to be essential) or appliances are not included. Itemised fixed price quote/s from bona fide contractors with the necessary qualifications and membership to appropriate registered bodies must be submitted by the applicant, covering the value of all works for which the grant application is made. A recommendation will be made for applicants to seek such quote/s from contractors registered with the Business Approval Register.

Applicants will not be allocated any more than three Empty Property Grant Applications per financial year (1st April to 31st March).

The vacant property must exist at the point where an Empty Property Grant application is approved. Empty Property Grants cannot be approved to develop plots of land where no dwelling exists.

Applicants with either outstanding Council Tax arrears or the subject of Council enforcement action to improve property conditions, are not eligible for an Empty Property Grant

Applicants who are directly related to someone that is either subject to enforcement action by the Council or has outstanding Council Tax arrears, where Land Registry records show that the property has been transferred from that person to the applicant within the last 24-month period. are not eligible for Empty Property Grant assistance

Applicants who do not have the appropriate Selective or Mandatory HMO Licence and/or any enforcement action associated with Licensing, if applicable, are not eligible for Empty Property Grant assistance.

Applicants grant in excess of £5,000 (up to a maximum of £(10,000) intending to let a property have to accept nomination rights from the Council for up to 2 years following completion of the works

Conditions

The Director for Regeneration and Place or appropriate authorised signatory will approve grant applications.

Complaints regarding Empty Property Grant will be considered through the procedures set out in the Council's corporate complaints procedure.

Work must not commence until approval has been granted in writing by the council. No grant assistance will be awarded for those works that have commenced prior to the date of the grant approval.

The approval of an Empty Property Grant following receipt of a valid application and satisfactory inspection of the property in question is subject to the availability of sufficient funds.

The Council may require that eligible works are carried out in accordance with any specification the Council decide to impose.

The contract for the undertaking of the works quoted for exists between the applicant and their appointed contractor with the Council having no role in this agreement. The applicant is wholly responsible for the supervision of the works undertaken by their chosen contractor unless a professional advisor or agent is appointed. The Council is in no way responsible for the supervision of the works in question.

Any unforeseen works must be agreed by the Council in writing prior to undertaking them and additional works must be kept to a minimum. Unforeseen works will only be grant funded if there are sufficient funds left within the maximum grant threshold of £5000 or £10,000, whichever is applicable.

The property must not be occupied until the Council is satisfied that:

- The premises are free from all Category 1 Hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (Housing Act 2004) and the Decent Homes Standard has been achieved, both of which approved following a final property inspection by the case officer.
- Applicant has complied with all necessary Building Control/Planning Regulations.
- Acceptable receipted invoices have been received for the works.

- All relevant certification and documentation in relation to the works has been received and signed off by the case officer.
- The provision of a Gas Safe Certificate an Electrical Installation Report and a valid Energy Performance Certificate, where applicable
- The works approved for Empty Property Grant assistance have been completed to the satisfaction of the case officer and as per the quotation provided from the appointed contractor as part of the application process.
- Where nomination rights have been agreed, (for Grants of up to £10,000) a tenancy agreement has been signed and the tenant is in occupation of the property.

Upon the satisfactory completion of the above-mentioned tasks, proof of occupation must be provided by the Applicant and payment will be made at this point.

If the grant is approved between 1st April and 31st July within the same year, then the works must be completed, and the property occupied within six months. Any grant approved after the 1st August must be completed before 31st January of the following year. In exceptional circumstances the Council may extend this period. If an applicant requires additional time, a request must be made in writing to the Housing Renewal Team, explaining the circumstances of the case and the reasons why the works cannot be completed within the specified timescale. Any such requests must be made 2 weeks before the end of an applicant's allotted time period in line with this point. If an applicant fails to adhere to these timeframes, the Empty Property Grant offer may be rescinded by the Council, subject to review.

Where the Council discovers that an application for assistance has been determined on the basis of inaccurate or incomplete information, the Council can withhold payment or demand repayment of grant monies from the applicant. If an applicant knowingly makes a false statement, in respect of any information they provide as part of an application for grant assistance or payment, the authority may refer the matter to the police with a view to prosecution.

Grant applicants intending to let the property on completion of the works are subject to an administration fee that has to be paid at application stage. This fee will increase by at least CPI on an annual basis. Applicants are advised of the latest fee charge level at application stage.

Grant applicants intending to reside in the property on completion of the works are subject to an administration fee that is included in the grant. This fee will increase by at least CPI on an annual basis. Applicants are advised of the latest fee charge level at application stage.

Administration fees will increase, at least by CPI, on an annual basis. Applicants are advised of the latest fee charges at application stage.

Upon payment of the Empty Property Grant, no further application will be considered for the same property within 5 years of when the Empty Property grant payment was made.

Full compliance by the applicant with the Terms and Conditions shown within the Empty Property Grant application form agreed by the applicant is required.

Method of application

A preliminary enquiry is made by telephone, e-mail or in writing and a formal application is made by completing a prescribed form.

Advice available

Verbal and written advice is available from the Housing Standards Team (see Section 6.9 Contact Details). Information on the period of time a premises has been vacant to determine eligibility for Empty Property Grant funding cannot be provided by the Housing Standards Team to individuals who have not yet completed the purchase of the vacant premises.