

REPORT TITLE: PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT

6 JULY 2017

REPORT OF PORTFOLIO HOLDER FOR HOUSING: Cllr Caroline Horrill

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WARD(S): ALL

PURPOSE

This report seeks approval of the proposed changes to the Disabled Facilities Grant policy and procedure.

The mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant funding allocated by Central Government now includes a significant additional grant through the Department of Health, Better Care Fund. The grant(s) are identified to be utilised to help with the cost of providing home adaption grants for disabled and older people. This report sets out the associated proposals for expenditure of both the mandatory and discretionary grant for 2017/18 and 2018/19.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. That the Disabled Facilities Grant policy and procedure and the associated spending plans for 2017/18 and 2018/19, as set out in the Report, be approved.

IMPLICATIONS:

1 COUNCIL STRATEGY OUTCOME

- 1.1 The Council Strategy 2017-2020 recognises 'Delivering Quality Housing Options' and 'Health and Happiness' 'working with partners to improve the health of all residents in the District' as two of the 5 key themes within the strategy.
- 1.2 The Leader and Portfolio Holder for Housing Portfolio Plan 2017/18 contain a priority to 'invest annually on disabled facilities grants in line with government funding to help people in their own home'.

2 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 2.1 The Disabled Facilities Grant is allocated to Hampshire County Council as the 'top tier' authority for distribution to District Councils on a formula basis which takes account of local need as well as historic spend. Unspent Disabled Facilities Grant may result in future reductions of allocated grant and/or underspent grant redistributed to better performing Council's.
- 2.2 For context and comparison, in 2016/17 the new funding regime increased the allocated central government mandatory grant from £445,119.00 to £838,257.00 to include the additional funding through the Better Care Fund. The allocated grant for 2017/18 is £921,855.00.

3 LEGAL AND PROCUREMENT IMPLICATIONS

- 3.1 Required to comply with Hampshire County Council and the Department of Health grant conditions. All works procured in accordance with the Council's Contract Procedure Rules as set out in the Council's constitution.

4 WORKFORCE IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The additional funding, new policy and subsequent improved service delivery will have a significant impact on the private rented sector team. Two new employees, an in house Occupational Therapist and a DFG case officer have been recruited this year on fixed term contracts through the additional grant funding. This approach will be reviewed after a year.

5 PROPERTY AND ASSET IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Officer expertise, legal resources and implications when placing charges on owner occupied properties to recover grant contributions or associated loans as set out in the new policy.

6 CONSULTATION AND COMMUNICATION

- 6.1 The Assistant Director (Housing) and Portfolio Holder for Housing have been routinely briefed. Hampshire County Council as the commissioning authority

have been regularly briefed and updated with meetings take place on a quarterly basis. Other associated County teams have been consulted including the Occupational Therapy Assessment team and Paediatric Children and Families' team, as well as the Royal Hampshire County Hospital Re-enablement Team and the District Health and Wellbeing Board. Last year the service underwent a Southern Internal Disabled Facilities Grant Audit review, and the recommendations arising from this have been incorporated within the new policy.

7 ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 7.1 Improved housing environment for disabled and older people providing sustainable and quality housing options.

8 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

- 8.1 Integrated Impact Assessment scheduled for 27 June 2017. Any subsequent outcomes will be included in the final Disabled Facilities Grant policy and procedure.

9 RISK MANAGEMENT

Risk	Mitigation	Opportunities
Community Support –Lack of DFG referrals.	Robust publicly of the DFG service with members of the public and our voluntary and statutory sectors partners.	Increased referrals and utilisation of the allocated DFG funds.
Timescales – Failure to deliver on the DFG policy.	Regular review through the HCC monitoring meetings/workbooks.	Increased housing outcomes for disabled and older people.
Project capacity – ability of the Private sector housing team to meet the objectives of the DFG policy.	Effective project planning and monitoring, particularly in relation to resources. Use of Covalent reporting.	
Financial – Failure to spend the DFG allocated budget.	Effective project planning and monitoring. Use of the financials system to monitor grant expenditure.	
Innovation – Failure to deliver on the discretionary grant changes to the DFG policy/new fee charging regime	Effective project planning and monitoring.	Opportunity to enhance the lives of disabled and older people. Maximise income streams.
Reputation – Risk of failing to deliver on the policy.	Regular monitoring and review of resources.	Opportunity to positively enhance the Council's reputation through

		delivering positive and sustainable housing outcomes for disabled and older persons households.
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10 SUPPORTING INFORMATION:

Background:

- 10.1 The Council's policy for implementing Disabled Facilities Grants in private sector housing is considered out of date, particularly in the light of the recent change to the funding mechanism and the new funding stream via "the Better Care Fund".
- 10.2 A review of the policy highlighted that it did not provide for applicants who were at critical points in their lives, and for whom, adaptations would have enabled them to remain living at home with minimal external care, prevent breakdown in their home care situation, or at worse, unnecessary admission to hospital, residential and nursing care.
- 10.3 The change to the funding mechanism via the Better Care Fund comes with intentions from Central Government and Hampshire County Council which require and encourage the Council to provide a more flexible approach to grants: to enable vulnerable individuals to stay living independently within their own home, preventing higher packages of care, early and inappropriate admission to hospital and residential care settings, and to enable families and individuals to continue to have a quality of life within the community.
- 10.4 The Key Priorities of the Better Care Fund in relation to Disabled Facilities Grants are:
- a) Facilitating timely hospital discharge, preventing delayed transfer of care.
 - b) Preventing unnecessary admission to hospital, or nursing/residential care.
 - c) Enabling the highest opportunities for independence within the home and therefore avoiding premature or unnecessary packages of care that may increase dependence.
 - d) Contributing to the wider prevention agenda of housing, social care, and health authorities by facilitating improvements in individuals and carers and family members general sense of wellbeing and independence in the community.

At the end of the last financial year there was a substantial underspend, at least in part driven by the existing policy making no provision for the use of discretionary grants, particularly to support the Better Care Fund objectives detailed above. The available budget for 2017/18 is therefore substantial when including the carry forward from 2016/17.

Proposed changes to the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy

- 10.5 To provide discretionary grants and loans on top of mandatory grants to support the objectives of the Better Care Fund and the wider health and wellbeing agenda.
- 10.6 To provide a service to applicants who do not qualify but who nevertheless would benefit from adaptations. This service is proposed to create fees for the service and Council.
- 10.7 To provide a mechanism for recovering grant in certain circumstances to enable recycling of grant funding in future years.
- 10.8 The proposal is to offer discretionary grants to clients at high risk of imminent deterioration in both their physical and mental health circumstances; this is primarily to prevent unnecessary admission to hospital, enable timely discharge, or when the needs of the individual, and their carer are such that to not offer urgent adaptations would result in the likely breakdown of care.
- 10.9 The recent employment of an In-House Occupational Therapist through the increase of funding was designed to develop contacts with health and other social care services and directly with vulnerable client groups around the District to market and improve options to target disabled and older person households.
- 10.10 The change in policy supported by the Better Care Fund enables the Council to provide funding to develop and support other schemes aimed at contributing to the wider prevention agenda of housing, social care, and health authorities, either targeted at individual customers or at groups, within a housing content.
- 10.11 The Council currently charges a fee equivalent to 12% of the cost of the relevant works in grant-assisted cases, which is paid from the Central Government Disabled Facilities Grant budget to the Council. This fee covers the managed service provided to applicants in liaison with occupational therapists, designing the works, tendering and engaging contractors on the applicant's behalf, and dealing with and paying contractors. The proposal is to offer the same service at the same fee rate to applicants who do not qualify for grant but nevertheless require assistance and would prefer to have the works managed through the Council and its contractors. Cases from last year that may have been suitable for this service would have raised fees of approximately £10,000. In conjunction with the better marketing of the service generally for the purpose of the Better Care Fund spend, this service may also generate greater interest than is reflected by past cases.
- 10.12 In addition to the significant changes there are further changes to policy to reflect the occasional needs to provide:

- Assistance to child applicants who split their time with separated parents.
- Discretionary assistance with moving costs if enabling the applicant to move house would result in an overall saving in providing grant to meet the applicant's needs.
- Discretionary assistance where the works exceed the £30,000 limit for mandatory grants.
- Discretionary assistance for those applicants who can demonstrate that they cannot afford their assessed contribution.
- A mechanism for recovering grant monies through local Land Charges in certain circumstances.

Conclusion:

10.13 The recommended change in policy supported by the increase of funding through the Better Care Fund is a catalyst for new ways of working to ensure the Council maximises opportunities to work differently and to adopt a more flexible approach to service delivery. It allows officers to actively publicise a more inclusive Disabled Facilities Grant service ensuring more people are aware of options, advice and assistance to help maximise their independence and improve their quality of life. The fund allows greater opportunities and flexibility, enabling the Council to establish new services that reach out to and work alongside our clients to ensure we deliver a service to our local residents that is responsive, helping people to avoid hospital, nursing and residential care admissions, allowing them to remain in their own home as long as is possible.

11 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED AND REJECTED

11.1 None[

BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS:-

Previous Committee Reports:-

None

Other Background Documents:-

Integration Briefing 3: Innovation in home adaptations - a fresh chance, produced by Care and Repair and supported by Public Health England.

APPENDICES:

Appendix 1 - Private Sector Housing: Disabled Facilities Policy and Procedure

**Winchester City Council – Housing Services
Policy and Procedure**

Title	Disabled Facility Grants
Housing Team	Private Sector Housing
Author Name & title	Mary Richards – originator John Easey – 2017 Revision
Version Number & Date Finalised	7a, 05 June 2017

Review Date	25 August 2016
Title of officer with responsibility for maintaining and updating	Kevin Reed Private Sector Housing Team Leader

<p>Ratification Details - i.e. where policy decision was finalised and by whom</p> <p>e.g. Committee paper references, Portfolio Holder Decision Ref, policy determined under scheme of delegation, DMT or other relevant meeting details & dates where policy determined. Include details in order that context of policy can be checked if necessary</p>	Date
Other Related Policy and Procedures	Private Sector Housing Renewal Strategy 2016-21
<p>Details of Performance Indicators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Relevance to statutory returns (e.g. CORE, P1Es, LASH) • Relevance to non statutory returns (locally agreed indicators and HouseMark Benchmarking club) 	<p>Response to HCC requests for monitoring returns</p> <p>Statutory time limits provide that a written decision on an application must be provided within 6 months of receipt of the application and grant monies must be paid within 12 months of the approval of the application</p> <p>2017/18. Service Delivery Plan requirements for 40 cases to be</p>

	delivered in the period and for the full Better Care Fund allocation to be spent.
Quality Checks Details of how performance is monitored e.g. random checks of 10% of cases.	Customer service questionnaire to service users in all cases.

Headline Summary of Disabled Facilities Grant Policy and Procedure September 2016

Introduction

This procedure note describes the policy, objectives, and actions to be taken during the various stages of the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) process.

The service is provided by the Private Sector Housing team with a lead officer responsible for service delivery and expenditure targets.

The DFG is a mandatory grant, as provided by The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, available to all applicants, towards the cost of the eligible works necessary to address their identified needs. The amount of financial contribution that an applicant must make is determined by a prescribed means tested assessment.

Purpose/aim

To encourage the adaptation of dwellings to meet the needs of disabled occupants. The 1996 Act details the following as purposes for which a DFG may be given:

- 1) Facilitating Access – grant may be given for works to remove or overcome any obstacles which prevent the disabled person from moving freely into and around the dwelling, access to the garden and enjoying use of the dwelling and facilities or amenities within it.
- 2) Making a Dwelling or Building Safe – grant may be given for certain adaptations to the dwelling or building to make it safe for the disabled person and other persons residing with them. This may include the provision of lighting where safety is an issue or for adaptations designed to minimise the risk of danger where a disabled person has behavioural problems.
- 3) Access to a room usable for sleeping – grant may be given for the provision of a room usable for sleeping where adaptation of an existing room in a dwelling (upstairs or downstairs) or the access to that room is unsuitable. Where the disabled person shares a bedroom with a spouse or partner a grant may be given to provide a room of sufficient size so that normal sleeping arrangements can be maintained.
- 4) Access to a bathroom – grant may be given for the provision of, or access to, a WC, washing, bathing and/or showering facilities.

- 5) Facilitating preparation and cooking of food – grant may be given to re-arrange or enlarge a kitchen to improve the manoeuvrability for a wheelchair and to provide specially modified or designed storage units, work top area etc. Where most of the cooking and preparation of meals is done by another household member, it would not normally be appropriate to carry out full adaptations to the kitchen. However, it might be appropriate to carry out certain adaptations that enable the disabled person to perform minor functions in the kitchen, such as preparing light meals or hot drinks.
- 6) Heating, lighting and power – a grant may be given to provide or improve the existing heating system in the dwelling to meet the disabled person's needs. A grant will not be given to adapt or install heating in rooms which are not normally used by the disabled person. The installation of central heating will only be considered where the well-being and mobility of the disabled person would otherwise be adversely affected. Provision is also made under this section for the adaptation of heating, lighting and power to make them suitable for use by the disabled person.
- 7) Dependant Residents – grant may be given for works to enable a disabled occupant better access around the dwelling in order to care for another disabled person who normally resides there whether or not they are related to the disabled person. Such works could include adaptations to a part of the dwelling to which the disabled person would not normally need access but which is used by the person to whom they are providing care and therefore it is reasonable for such works to be carried out.
- 8) Common parts- grant may be given for works to facilitate access to a dwelling through common parts of a building.

The utilising powers of the NHS Act 2006 as amended by The Care Act 2014 provide that Disabled Facility Grants using the Better Care Fund can also be provided for:

- 1) Enabling vulnerable individuals to stay living independently within their own home, preventing them from becoming homeless or having to move unnecessarily into a less independent institutional setting, and with the objective of:
 - a) Facilitating timely hospital discharge
 - b) Reducing admissions to residential care homes
 - c) Reducing the cost of providing domiciliary care
 - d) Contributing to the wider prevention agenda of housing, social care, and health authorities by facilitating improvements in individuals wellbeing and reducing hospital admissions.

To ensure that every enquirer for a disabled facilities grant is provided with suitable and sufficient guidance and support in the application process and that that guidance and support is transparent, easily understood and appropriately communicated.

To ensure that all applicants are treated fairly and equitably through the application process.

To ensure that eligible works are carried out having regard to the individual need, the financial resources available, and the City Council's statutory duty under Regulations, and intent under this policy.

To ensure that value for money is achieved in the process of commissioning and completing all eligible works, and that works are completed to such standards and statutory certification as are applicable to the works.

Scope

The client group are disabled occupants in the private housing sector in the district in need of home adaptations and/or improvements in order to remain living at home with a sustainable quality of life. In the context of this policy private sector housing includes all tenures that are not Winchester City Council tenants. The provision of adaptations within Winchester City Council housing stock is managed and funded by the Property Services team.

The Disabled Facilities Grants (Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes) (England) Order 2008 prescribes the maximum amount of mandatory grant which a local authority can give (currently £30,000). Local authorities may award discretionary grant awards or provide loan finance in excess of this limit in appropriate circumstances as allowed by The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 and in accordance with the authority's published private sector renewal policy.

The Better Care Fund allocation from Hampshire County Council is provided to support both mandatory grants and discretionary support. Winchester City Council is required to use this funding for the express purpose of contributing to the wider prevention agenda of housing, social care and health authorities and will work in partnership with these agencies to further this purpose.

The Better Care Fund

The Better Care Fund is contributing to the additional allocation for DFGs provided to Hampshire County Council and distributed to Winchester City Council under a determination from Central Government.

It is encouraging new initiatives to avoid admission to hospital, reduce falls, and prevent delayed discharge from hospital.

Key Priorities:

To raise the importance of safe/accessible Housing/community as significant factors in health and wellbeing

To improve Health and Wellbeing by encouraging more flexible and instant availability of DFG monies.

To enable the development of a more pro active approach to publicising the Service to the mainstream public arena

To promote independent/supported living at home by more responsive access to minor and urgent adaptations, (without the need for full financial assessment).

Discretionary grants:

Discretionary grants have a key role to play, particularly in avoiding delayed discharge from hospital, prevention of admission and in delaying the risk of falls/reduced independence in the home.

Priorities for Discretionary Grants

Consideration will be given to Discretionary Grants in the following circumstances:

Where delayed transfer of care from hospital could be avoided by the provision of essential adaptations, and, if not provided, this would result in a deterioration of the client's medical condition/ independence, or their ability to resume life at home.

Where the client is at high risk of falls, or the care situation is at imminent risk of breakdown if essential adaptations are not provided quickly, discretionary grant can be provided to delay or avert admission to hospital or to residential care.

To provide "Top ups" for Statutory DFGs" where clients can demonstrate they have no option to take additional loans or funding themselves, and the adaptations are key to maintaining supported living at home.

To provide essential and urgent adaptations when clients have palliative care needs, and the provision of adaptations to provide access to essential amenities within the home will facilitate the option to return home safely and to avoid unnecessary nursing or residential care.

To develop a programme of "Healthy Home Checks" as part of a key Health and Wellbeing initiative. These checks aim to educate and inform clients of how to maintain safe mobility and independence within the home. This may include minor adaptations to prevent slips, trips and falls, and as part of the prevention of falls programme in the locality.

What is the policy

To provide **mandatory** grant funded assistance to qualifying applicants to meet their identified needs subject to the prescribed means test and statutory limits.

To provide **discretionary** additional grant award or loan funding, where appropriate, where the cost of the eligible works exceeds the statutory limit for Disabled Facility Grants or where affordability is a demonstrable concern to applicants..

To provide **discretionary grants to** meet the objectives of the Better Care Fund as it relates to Disabled Facilities Grants

To offer a **fee generating support service** to applicants who do not qualify for grant award as a result of means testing, in particular to those who may need further adaptations in the future.

How will the Policy be promoted and publicised

The Council recognises that the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants is a front line statutory service and as such should be actively and prominently promoted and publicised to the community to facilitate the most efficient and effective use of the budget available.

This will include prominent positioning on the Council's website and the use of suitable printed information available at all Council offices and distributed to appropriate partner organisations and stakeholders.

1. 1. Main Text - POLICY

1.1 Background Information

The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 provides mandatory means tested disabled facilities grants and places a statutory duty on the Council to provide such grants where the appropriate legislative conditions are met. The objective is to assist applicants with the cost of providing facilities and to carry out works of access or adaptations to dwellings or common parts of buildings containing flats, for the benefit of the disabled occupant/s. There is no prior residency requirement and grants are available to owner occupiers, tenants (or to their landlord).

An assessment of needs must be undertaken before grant can be awarded. The statutory responsibility for making such an assessment rests with the Welfare authority (Social Services Department) by virtue of section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970.

Section 24 of the 1996 Act places a duty on the Council:

- i. to consult the appropriate Welfare authority on whether the relevant works are "**necessary and appropriate**" to meet the needs of the disabled person,
- ii. to satisfy themselves that it is "**reasonable and practicable**" to carry out the works, having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling.

The Council have discretion to approve grant whether or not the property will be fit or unfit following completion of the eligible works.

1.2 Legislation/Guidance

Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. Part 1. The parts relating to mandatory and discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants remains in force. Reference should be made to the relevant sections as it affects and regulates the various stages of the grants process.

ODPM Circular 05/2003: Housing Renewal: A Strategic Approach.

Provides comprehensive guidance on processing grants, legal requirements for applications and approvals, grant conditions and financial/exchequer subsidy matters; guidance on the fitness standard, service of Repair notices, Demolition and Closing Orders.

The Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996 (as amended).

Implements the test of resources (means test) for all grant applicants and thereby reduces the grant awarded by the amount of the means tested contribution to the eligible adaptation/improvement costs.

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

Gives councils greater powers to provide discretionary assistance. This may take the form of low cost loans and equity release as well as grants to private homeowners and others to help them to renovate, repair or adapt their home. The Order also enables

councils to provide other sorts of assistance, for example, helping someone move to more suitable living accommodation if it is satisfied that this would provide a similar benefit to improving or adapting the existing accommodation. Councils may give discretionary assistance in addition to mandatory disabled facilities grants.

The Disabled Facilities Grants (Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes) (England) Order 2008

This prescribes the maximum amount of mandatory grant which a local can give (currently £30,000). NB. local authorities may award discretionary grant awards in excess of this limit in appropriate circumstances.

Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act: Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or payment of Grant) General Consent 2008.

This defines the powers of a Local Authority to impose repayment conditions on a grant recipient subject to specified criteria and circumstances.

2017-19 Integration and Better Care Fund Policy Framework.

This outlines the policy framework under which Better Care Fund monies are allocated and their intended purpose and details the agreed National Conditions for its use.

NHS & Community Care Act 1990

The NHS and Community Care Act 1990 provides the context for the assessment of and response to potential needs including the adaptation of properties. The Act establishes a requirement that a needs assessment must be carried out where it appears to the social services authority that any person for whom they may provide or arrange community care services, may be in need of such services.

Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 abolished the earlier Disability Discrimination Act 1995 and hence the current definition of disability is provided in the most recent legislation. A person has a disability for the purposes of this Act if s/he has a physical or mental impairment which has a substantial and long-term adverse effect on their ability to carry out normal day to day activities. Schedule 1 to the Act expands on this definition including further definition of “long term effects”, “normal day to day activities” and “substantial adverse effects”.

However, there may be people who, whilst not meeting the substantial and long-term test, will have had needs identified and assessed under the NHS & Community Care Act 1990, The Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995, or The Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000, for whom an adaptation will form part of an appropriate service response by the welfare authority.

1.3 Mandatory Grants

The provision of mandatory grants is covered by the Act and the authority must comply with this legislation. All applications will be assessed for their eligibility for mandatory grant as defined by the range of needs and tests detailed above, and funded up to the £30,000 limit available subject to any contribution payable as a result of the means test carried out.

The Council offers all qualifying applicants an end-to-end service and support for the completion of application forms, drawing up of specifications of work, sourcing and appointing contractors, consultation with other agencies, site visits and works oversight, and payment of contractors invoices and any other support necessary for the timely completion of the application and works. The Council charges a fee of 12% of the approved cost of the works and this fee is itself eligible for grant payment and will be included within the total amount of grant formally approved. **As the cost of works under mandatory grants approaches this figure the Council's fee will reduce to a minimum of £409.80 plus VAT so as not to exceed the mandatory grant limit. Where the cost of eligible works and the Council's minimum fee combined exceed £30,000 the Council will limit its fee to £409.80 plus VAT regardless of any additional assistance offered through discretionary funding.** If an application is not approved then no fee will be payable for the service to that point.

The applicant may chose not to agree to this fee but this will limit the service provided by the Council to the statutory requirement to assess the application, carry out the financial means test, approve quotes provided by the applicants chosen contractors against the recommendations of the OT, and complete a final inspection of the works to approve payment of the grant.

1.4 Discretionary Assistance

In addition to providing mandatory DFGs the authority may offer other discretionary assistance by virtue of Article 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. This may typically be considered in the following circumstances:

- a) To fund larger schemes where costs are in excess of the £30,000 limit for mandatory grant
- b) To assist individuals who may find it hard to fund their assessed contribution

Such assistance will only be considered for schemes that have already met the criteria for mandatory grant but where the applicant would suffer financial hardship in going ahead with the works required to meet their needs.

In addition, where a scheme is likely to cost more than £30,000 it must be demonstrated that due consideration has been given to the practicality of the applicant and/or their family moving to a property more suitable for their needs or for adaptation, for which a Relocation Grant of £3000 from the DFG fund can be provided (see below), as part of a maximum £30000 grant, to assist with moving costs.

- c) The authority may also provide discretionary assistance to applicants where providing grant will promote the stated purposes of the Better Care Fund in facilitating timely hospital discharge or in preventing or reducing the likelihood of hospital admission.

Schemes costing over the £30,000 limit

In the case of applications for children's grants, such assistance may be provided as a grant where at least one parent is in receipt of a means tested benefit.

Assistance will be provided as a grant and/or low interest loan secured by a legal charge on the property and repayable on the eventual sale or transfer of the property in other cases. Where the applicant is in rented accommodation their contribution will be assessed in accordance with the following paragraph and the balance of the assistance will be by grant.

A low interest loan may be provided for sums equivalent to that for which the monthly repayment of a commercial loan over 5 years would not exceed 5% of the household net income at the time of application, provided that the applicant can demonstrate that they are unable to access such finance as a personal loan from their own bank or another mainstream high street lender. If the applicant is able to access such finance they will be required to make a contribution up to this amount.

Sums above this loan limit will be funded by discretionary grant, and may be in addition to a loan.

In the case of applications for adults in receipt of passport benefits such assistance may be provided as a grant and/or low interest loan secured by a legal charge on the property and repayable on the eventual sale or transfer of the property.

Where the applicant is in rented accommodation their contribution will be assessed in accordance with the following paragraph and the balance of the assistance will be by grant.

A low interest loan may be provided for sums equivalent to that for which the monthly repayment of a commercial loan over 5 years would not exceed 5% of the household net income at the time of application, provided that the applicant can demonstrate that they are unable to access such finance as a personal loan from their own bank or another mainstream high street lender. If the applicant is able to access such finance they will be required to make a contribution up to this amount.

Sums above this loan limit will be funded by discretionary grant, and may be in addition to a loan.

Individuals who may find it hard to fund their assessed contribution

Where the applicant is assessed as needing to make a contribution – applicants may apply for financial support to effectively defer their contribution where they can demonstrate that meeting their assessed contribution would cause hardship or where they are unable to access such commercial lending as would be necessary for them to meet their assessed contribution.

In such cases the applicant will still be expected to make a contribution of up to 20% of their readily available capital and savings (monies not tied up in property) or to the

amount of a commercially available personal loan from their bank (or similar mainstream high street lender) equivalent to a monthly repayment of 5% of their monthly income at the time of application over a 5 year repayment period. Where the applicants is able to demonstrate that they cannot access a personal loan of this amount, their contribution will be the 20% of their readily available capital and savings.

Applicants may apply for a low interest loan secured by a legal charge on the property repayable on the eventual sale or transfer of the property for any amounts above these thresholds.

NB loan applications under this heading may be for the entire cost of the recommended adaptations and may include for fees for support services as detailed below

Such loan assistance is only available to applicants who hold an owners interest. This means either a freehold or an unexpired leasehold term of at least 5 years, or an unexpired right of occupation for a mobile home or permanent mooring agreement for a houseboat.

Better Care Fund Discretionary Grants

Applications for assistance will primarily be assessed using the provisions of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and the associated means test for mandatory grants and the options for discretionary assistance detailed above. However, in certain circumstances, and in consideration of the following criteria, discretionary grant will be provided as the identified need of an individual meets the specific purposes of the Better Care Fund as it applies to Disabled Facilities Grants.

The Key criteria are:

- 1) When essential adaptations (to enable access to the home and access to key facilities to ensure that living at home is possible), need to be provided “urgently” to facilitate timely discharge from hospital/nursing or residential care, (avoiding delayed transfer of care and maximising opportunity for re-ablement at home).
- 2) Where clients in the community, have high and complex level of disability and/or life changing diagnosis, and the risk of sudden deterioration in their condition/ reduced independence or increased risk of falls could be minimised by urgent provision of essential adaptations to the home,(to reduce risk of premature admission to hospital/ residential care, or increase in care package).
- 3) When the care situation in the home is at imminent risk of breakdown if essential adaptations are not provided quickly,(to support the carer and maximise client independence, health and wellbeing).
- 4) Where clients have catastrophic and life changing/limiting diagnosis, where urgent essential adaptations could minimise the risk of breakdown of family life and care, and enable supported living at home, delaying the time scale for the start, or increase in external health or social intervention.
- 5) When the timely provision of minor adaptations (in line with Health and wellbeing targets and better care priorities), would reduce the risk of falls and promote a safer home environment when clients have no immediate and safe access to alternative service options.

Discretionary grant of up to £5000 may be available to provide suitable adaptations to facilitate timely hospital discharge or to carry out minor preventative works aimed at reducing hospital or residential care home admissions, following an assessment by the in-house Occupational Therapist in discussion with such other agencies as may be involved in an individual’s care.

In exceptional circumstances this grant limit may be extended in consultation with the appropriate health authority and with the agreement of a panel consisting of the Head of Housing Options and Allocations, the in-house Occupational Therapist, and a senior officer from another department in the Council, and will normally only be considered when to not provide additional funding would result in catastrophic loss of independence/breakdown in care and admission to residential or nursing care. The panel will consider whether the application of discretionary funding is both essential and unavoidable via any other funding pathway.

Applications will be assessed on a case by case basis following a referral from an appropriate Health Authority or healthcare provider, or as identified by officers of the Council as additional non-mandatory works during the application process for a mandatory grant.

For grant to be approved it must be demonstrated that the provision of grant supports one of the key priorities as detailed in the Scope of this policy (see above), and meets the above criteria.

Discretionary grant provided under this heading will not preclude the recipient from applying for additional assistance under a mandatory grant or other discretionary grant or loan.

Additional scope for the Better Care Fund

The Better Care Fund includes a stated aim of contributing to the wider prevention agenda of housing, social care, and health authorities by facilitating improvements in individuals wellbeing and reducing hospital admissions.

The Council will encourage and consider any bid for funding from the Better Care Fund for schemes which will demonstrably support this aim, whether from individuals or from organisations, and whether to support individual disabled people or to provide provision for disabled people generally within a housing adaptation setting.

Dual residency of a disabled child

In cases where families separate and a court order provides that residency of the subject disabled child is split between the mother and father (or other designated guardian) the Authority may consider the award of discretionary DFG to one property. The proposed adaptations will only be considered for discretionary assistance if they fall within those headings normally applied to mandatory schemes.

Mandatory DFG can only be provided to the 'sole or main residence' of the disabled applicant and in circumstances covered by this section it would be assumed that one party would apply for mandatory grant on the basis that the child occupies the subject property as their sole or main residence. The main residence will be determined by which party receives child benefit. This property may or may not be within the Winchester City Council area.

The Authority will consider the details of any court order and specifically the allocation of time spent with each parent in determining eligibility for assistance. No specific percentage split is proposed by this policy as each case will be reviewed on its own merits. Factors to be considered include the specific details of any order, likely time to be spent at each property, whether the child will stay overnight at the subject property and for what period etc.

In determining the works that might be considered as eligible for assistance the Authority will consider the suitability of the subject property for adaptation, the

complexity and scope of the adaptations required and any observations or referral made by the Occupational Therapy service. The scope of any works will not necessarily mirror that to be undertaken at the sole or main residence.

Any assistance provided under this heading will be up to a maximum award of £10000, but will not be subject to any form of means testing. Any award will be repayable to the Authority if and when the subject property is sold. The award amount will be recorded as a Land Registry charge.

Any discretionary award will only be considered having regard to the amount of resources the Authority has at the time. If the Authority does not have sufficient resources left to deal with other mandatory referrals that have been passed to them by the Occupational Therapy Service at the time, the Council reserves the right not to approve any discretionary assistance.

Relocation Grant

A discretionary relocation grant may be available to an applicant who owns or privately rents their property if adaptations to their current home through DFG are determined not to be feasible or reasonable and they are considering relocation to a property they intend to purchase.

Applicants must be 18 or over on the date of application is made and, in the case of a disabled child, the parent(s) would make the application. Any application must be supported by a recommendation from the Hampshire County Council OT service.

The Authority and the OT must be satisfied that the proposed property already meets the needs of the disabled person without further adaptation or are satisfied that it can be adapted at a reasonable cost.

Applicants must be relocating within the Winchester City Council area. Consideration may be given to a move within Hampshire but this would require the approval of the relevant district/borough council, whether or not adaptations are required and the scale of any adaptations before a relocation grant can be considered.

A grant of up to £3000 may be made available towards specific relocation expenses, which includes estate agent fees, legal costs, removal costs.

The cost of the relocation grant together with the cost of any adaptations required to the new property must demonstrate value for money, whether the move is within Winchester or to another district/borough council in Hampshire.

Applications must be submitted prior to the relocation, grants cannot be paid retrospectively. Assistance will not be given toward the purchase price of the new property.

If on sale of the applicant's existing property, a net equity is released, the amount of net equity will be included in a revised means test for assessment of any grant for

adaptations. (Net equity refers to any equity released when the purchase price of the new property is less than the existing property's selling price).

If the move is aborted through the fault of the applicant then costs will not be paid and any costs already paid will be reclaimed from the applicant. If the reason for the move failing is through no fault of the applicant then the Authority will cover the costs.

The new property must be the disabled person's main residence and no applicant will be awarded a Relocation Grant on more than one occasion.

If the disabled occupant moves from the new property within 5 years then the grant must be paid back in full except in exceptional circumstances.

The Relocation Grant scheme will be subject to the same means test as the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant scheme unless the relocation is for a disabled child in which case no test will be applied.

Repayment of Mandatory and Discretionary Grant in event of disposal of the property

The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and the 2008 General Consent allow the authority to impose repayment conditions on Disabled Facility Grants subject to the following prescribed criteria. To be repayable, the grant must be awarded subject to a local land charge being registered on the premises.

- 1) The authority may demand repayment of any grant which exceeds £5000 up to a maximum repayment of £10000
- 2) The applicant must have a qualifying owners interest in the premises where the relevant works are to be carried out
- 3) The recipient of grant disposes of the premises within 10 years of the certified completion of the works, whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise.
- 4) The authority is satisfied that it is reasonable to require repayment taking into account a) whether repayment would impose significant hardship, b) whether disposal of the premises is to enable the recipient to take up employment or change employment, c) whether the disposal is connected with the recipients health and d) whether the disposal is to enable the recipient to receive or provide care
- 5) Whether the grant was registered as a local land charge

Discretionary Grants Budget

Grants provided specifically for the express purposes of enabling timely discharge from hospital or for preventing or reducing the likelihood of hospital admissions will be provided from the general DFG budget allocated via Hampshire County Council.

The budget for all discretionary grants and loans not made under the purposes described above will be set annually by the Chief Housing Officer.

1.5 Fee Generating Support Services

The Council recognises that applicants who do not qualify for mandatory grant assistance or discretionary grant or loan assistance nonetheless still have an identifiable need for adaptations. In some cases, applicants may decide not to proceed with necessary adaptations for lack of confidence or desire to deal with the process of completing specifications, seeking and appointing suitable contractors and managing the installation, and dealing with contractors and payment demands.

The Council wishes to encourage individuals to adapt their homes where necessary and appropriate to enable them to stay in their home in accordance with the wider prevention agenda of housing, social care and health authorities.

For mandatory grant works the Council provides an end-to-end service, acting as agent for the applicant, and charges a fee, of 12% of the grant provided towards the cost of works. This fee forms part of the grant funding allocated. The Council will offer the same service at the same fee rate to all applicants.

The provision of loans and fee paying support services would be advantageous to certain applicants who may need further works carried out in future years, as the legislation allows for the contribution made towards one scheme of works to be counted towards the applicant's contribution to a further scheme of works if this is carried out within 5 years in the case of rented property or 10 years in the case of owner occupied property, provided that the earlier scheme has been managed through the DFG process.

1.6 Contractual relationships and responsibilities:

In all circumstances, the contract for the completion of works will be between the applicant and the contractor appointed to complete the work.

Full details of the contractual relationships and responsibilities will be provided to all contractors invited to bid either by the Council or by the applicant in the document **Preliminary Information to Contractors** which may vary from time to time to reflect changes in legislation and industry standards. This information will also be provided to applicants.

If there is a dispute between the applicant and the contractor, the Council will not be able to get involved unless by some act or default the Council has caused the issue which has led to the dispute. The Council will generally pay contractors on behalf of the applicant, but in the case of an unresolvable dispute the Council will pay the grant direct to the applicant. It is then for the two contracted parties, the applicant and their contractor, to take such action as they deem necessary to resolve their dispute.

1.7 List of approved contractors

The Council will maintain a list of approved contractors capable of completing the works typically associated with Disabled Facility Grants, including specialists in the installation of wet-rooms and stair-lifts as well as general building contractors.

This list will be informed by a 2 yearly invitation to contractors to tender against a given schedule of works, and confirmation of suitable insurances and professional accreditation. It is expected that the list will include no more than 12 contractors including a minimum of 3 in any specialism

NB – applicants may submit quotes from contractors of their own choice as the contractual relationship will be as described above. In this circumstance the Council will advise the applicant to confirm that their chosen contractor is suitably insured and accredited before proceeding.

1.8 Selection of contractors to bid

The Council will normally invite a minimum of 2 contractors to bid for any scheme of works and will select the invitees on a broadly rotational basis from the contractors list. For contracts with a likely value in excess of £20,000 a minimum of three contractors will be invited to bid

In exceptional circumstances the Council may approach a single contractor. This may be where that contractor is known to have a unique specialism which is included in the works specified, or where, due to time constraints on the need for works to be completed (for example, a pending hospital discharge) a contractor who can comply with the time constraint must be appointed.

1.9 Assessment of bids

Submitted bids will be assessed on price in the first instance, with the cheapest bid being the primary choice of contractor, provided that, in the view of officers, the bid is reflective of the works specified.

Submitted bids will also be assessed on the basis of proposed start and completion dates. If, in the view of officers, the timescale indicated by a cheaper bid compared to a higher priced bid would be considered detrimental to the needs of the applicant, then the higher bid may be the primary choice.

The Council is under no obligation to accept either or any bid submitted and further invitations may be sent out.

In view of the contractual relationship, the Council will recommend the primary choice of contractor to the applicant and the applicant may accept or decline this recommendation. In the circumstance that they decline the primary choice, the Council may require that the applicant makes a contribution equivalent to the difference in price between the primary choice and their choice of contractor.

1.10 Contract Variations

Grant approvals are made by assessing submitted tenders for the specification provided. It is the nature of any building work that variations may be required once work commences, either to the specification to provide a more practicable solution, or for additional works due to unforeseeable circumstances.

Applicants who chose to complete their own design must ensure that it satisfies the needs identified by their Occupational Therapist.

If any applicants' design includes for other works not provided for by the grant, the grant will be strictly limited to that part of the cost of works needed to satisfy the minimum necessary and appropriate requirements as identified by the Occupational Therapist and approved by the Council.

Where variations will materially affect the design or function of the adaptation, agreement must be sought from the originating Occupational Therapist before the variation is approved.

All requests for variations from contractors that will involve additional costs must be agreed in writing before works proceed.

Where variations are reasonably expected to reduce costs, the contractor must be required to identify this reduction before works proceed.

In both circumstances the grant approval documentation must be suitably amended.

No additional cost will be agreed for works that an experienced contractor should have reasonably foreseen as necessary for the completion of the specified works.

1.11 Complaints procedure

Where applicants are dissatisfied with the service they have received, including where a grant has been refused, they can make a complaint through the Council's published complaints procedure which can be found at www.winchester.gov.uk/about/complaints

1.12 Other Circumstances

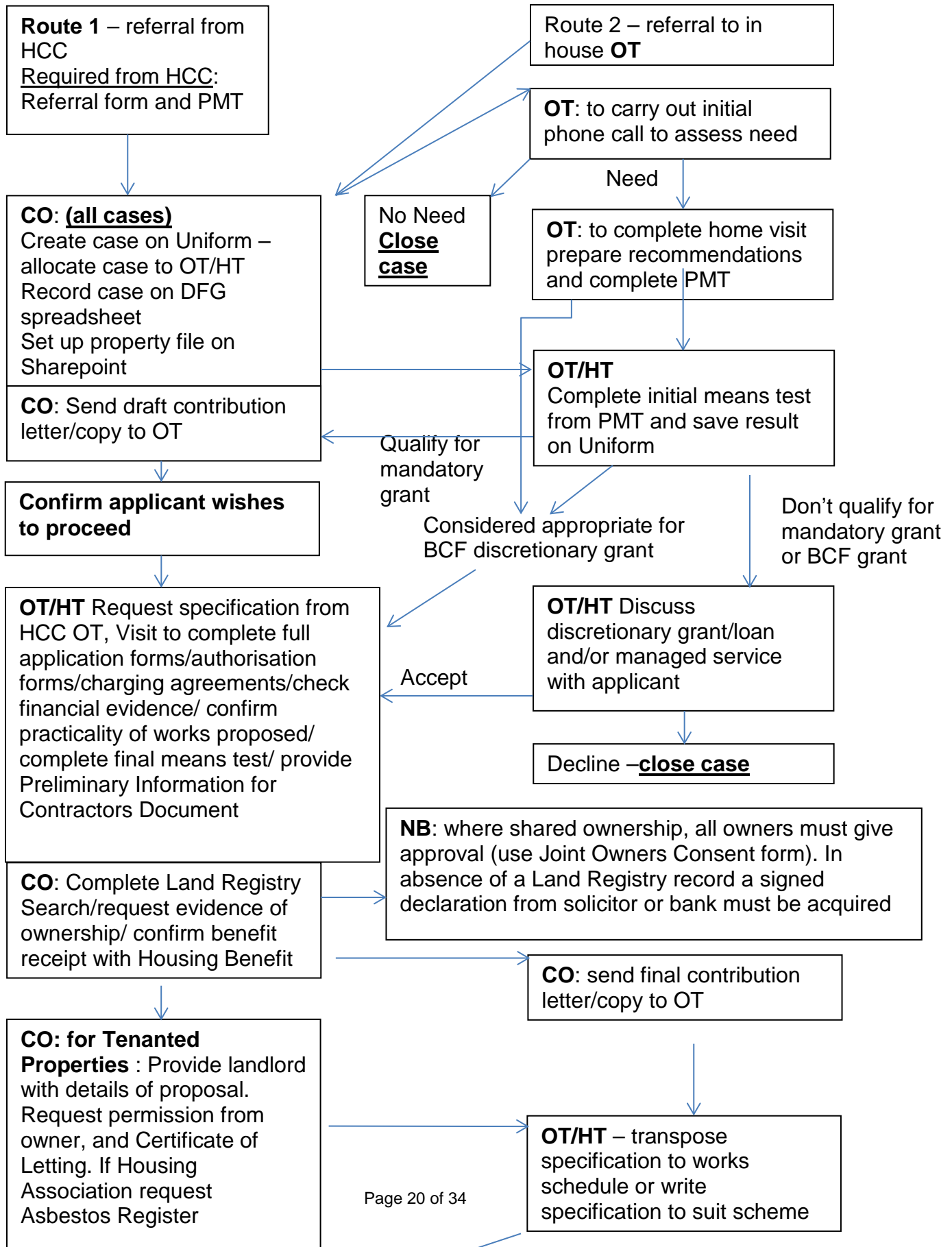
In all other circumstances not detailed in this policy document reference should be made to the provisions of The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

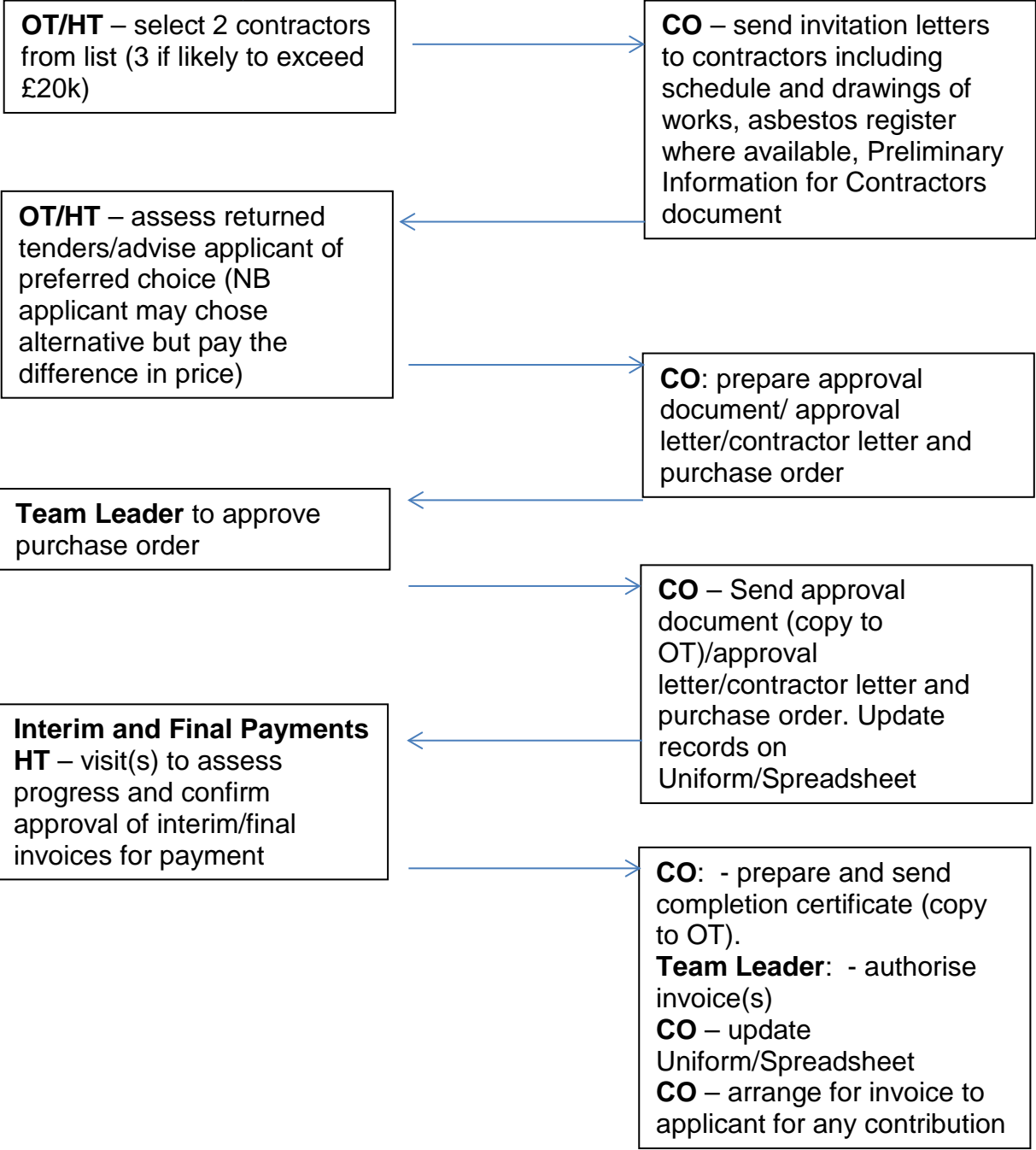
Associated Documents.

Preliminary Information to Contractors for Disabled Facility Grant works.

Eligible Works Policy.

2 Grant Processing PROCEDURE flow chart.





OT = Occupational Therapist
 CO = DFG Case Worker
 HT = Housing Technician

General notes:

Documents – all preliminary means test, application, authorisation and consent forms are to be scanned and saved in Sharepoint at the earliest opportunity.

Letters – all letters issued to the applicant, landlord, Occupational Therapist, contractors are to be saved in Sharepoint at the earliest opportunity.

Evidence – all Land Registry records, Asbestos Registers from Housing Associations, proof of income and savings, confirmation of benefit receipt evidence to be saved in Sharepoint at the earliest opportunity.

Specifications and tenders: - all specification documents, tender invitations and returns to be saved in Sharepoint at the earliest opportunity

2.1 General

Section 1 of Part 1 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 provides for a Disabled Facilities Grant specifically for works to provide facilities and to carry out adaptations to dwellings whether Owner Occupier or Tenanted, or common parts of buildings containing flats (with landlord permission), for the benefit of disabled people.

For the purpose of grant, a person is disabled if:-

- his/her sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired,
- he/she has a mental disorder or impairment of any kind, or
- he/she is physically disabled by illness, injury, impairment present since birth or otherwise.

A person aged over eighteen shall be taken to be disabled if:-

- he/she is registered disabled in pursuance of arrangements made under Section 29(1) of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (handicapped person's welfare), or
- he/she is a person for whose welfare arrangements have been made under that provision, or in the opinion of the welfare authority, might be made under it.

A person below the age of nineteen shall be taken to be disabled if:-

- he/she is registered in a register of disabled children maintained under paragraph 2 of Schedule 2 to the Children Act 1989, or
- he/she is in the opinion of the Social Services Authority a disabled child as defined for the purposes of Part III of the Children Act 1989 (local authority support for children and their families).

In addition to owner occupiers and landlords, a wide range of tenants are able to apply for Disabled Facilities Grants, these include Housing Association Tenants and Private Sector Tenants irrespective of repairing obligations. Licensees are also eligible.

2.2 Initial applications and referrals

Applications will be received by two principal routes – direct to the Council and assessed by the in-house Occupation Therapist, or via Hampshire County Council Adult and Children's Services.

Direct applicants to Winchester City Council will be contacted by the in-house Occupation Therapist, who will conduct an initial telephone assessment and a provisional test of resources. This will assess if an adaptation is considered necessary and whether the applicant is likely to qualify for a mandatory grant, either fully funded or with an assessed contribution, or can be offered discretionary assistance or the paid support service.

Referrals from Hampshire County Council Adult/Children Services Department will be subjected to a provisional test of resources to determine whether the applicant is likely to qualify for a mandatory grant, either fully funded or with an assessed contribution, or can be offered discretionary assistance or the paid support service.

An assessment and referral from an OT, in-house or at the Adult or Children Services Department, must contain the applicant's details and identify the works/adaptations or improvements required.

On receipt of an application the following initial actions must be completed by the DFG Administrator

- record the application/OT referral on DFG Pipeline held on Sharepoint
- record client details on Uniform system
- make up an address file on Sharepoint
- undertake a Land Registry search to confirm ownership. If no Land Registry record exists the applicant must be requested to provide suitable proof of ownership (copy of Deeds)

The OT will need to provide a detailed recommendation of works that are required to meet the needs of the client, but this may be provided once the Provisional Means Test (PMT) has been undertaken and the client wishes to proceed with the grant or paid support service.

Hampshire OTs should complete, or leave, a Provisional Means Test Form (PMT) with the client. The form contains questions about "passport" benefit receipt as well as income and savings information.

2.3 Provisional Means Test (PMT)

An essential step in the process is to advise the applicant as early as possible as to their (provisional) level of financial contribution to the eligible works. The test is only applicable when the recommended adaptations qualify for grant aid and the person is **not** in receipt of one of the following "passport" benefits:-

- Universal Credit

- Income Support
- Income-based Employment and Support Allowance
(not contribution-based ESA)
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
(not contribution-based JSA)
- Guarantee Pension Credit
(not Savings Pension Credit alone)
- Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit
(where your annual income for the purposes of the tax credits
assessment was below £15,460)
- Housing Benefit

Grant applications for the benefit of children are automatically awarded a full grant and no means test is required.

Where applicants are in receipt of Passporting benefits evidence must be acquired to confirm this information.

The PMT form should be dealt with as soon as possible as the result will dictate further progression of the enquiry. The result of the test should be notified to the applicant and a decision can be agreed whether or not a grant application is to be made or whether a paid service can be offered. An email of the PMT result should be sent to the originating OT advising of the outcome and advising if the client wishes to proceed.

The PMT result is recorded in Uniform. If the application is to be withdrawn because of the PMT result, the Officer should update the grant record screen by entering a "Closed" date and a "Reason": not eligible - means test.

Applicants should be made aware that there may be some benefit in proceeding with an application even if this would lead to a "Nil" grant approval. This will be important if further works become necessary within a 10 year period, such as a stair lift followed by a through floor lift, or an over bath shower followed by a ground floor water closet. In such cases applicants should be advised that if they proceed with a "Nil" grant approval and undertake the works to the satisfaction of the City Council they may benefit on a subsequent application. The provisions for disregarding the contribution will only apply for a 10 year period for owner occupiers and 5 years for tenants and will only relate to the same property.

There are no restrictions on successive applications for grant on the same property. Provision is made in the legislation to reduce the amount of an applicant's current contribution when a previous grant has been given. The contribution will be reduced by any previously assessed contribution if the applicant went ahead with the previous works. The time period, for the purpose of this test, is ten years for owner-occupiers and 5 years for tenants i.e. if the applicant's contribution was £8,000 and the amount of grant was £10,000 then any contribution in a subsequent application within the time limits would be reduced by £8,000.

2.4 Initial Site Visit

The in-house Occupational Therapist or Housing Technician will arrange to carry out the necessary survey of the property to determine the extent of the works and whether these are **necessary, appropriate, reasonable and practicable**.

The whole of the property should be inspected in order to assess and record whether the property exhibits any significant hazards as assessed using the HHSRS.

The survey of the property should also consider whether any works are required to install preventative measures to reduce hospital or residential care home admissions and facilitate improvements in individuals' wellbeing and ability to remain independent in their own home and which may attract discretionary grant.

If works are requested which do not fall within the mandatory categories of work eligible for DFG, or fall within the discretionary category, then the applicant should be notified.

Prior to any grant survey the grant officer should examine any previously completed grant information which will be detailed in Uniform.

At this visit the OT/HT will complete a full application form appropriate to the case and determined by the content and result of the provisional means test form (cases for passport benefits and children need a shorter application form), and request agreement from the applicant to act on their behalf in organising and managing the works, and authorisation to conduct such financial enquiries of Council benefits sections or other agencies as may be necessary to confirm the information provided in the application form. The following forms may be required:

- Application form
- Certificate of Owner Occupation , or
- Tenants Certificate
- Certificate of Title (Legal interest in the property) where the property has not been land registered.
- Authorisation and Charging Agreement and Terms and Conditions Form
- Consent form from Landlord or Joint Owner

At the visit the OT/HT will provide the applicant with a copy of the Preliminary Information for Contractors document which explains the relationship between them, any appointed contractor, and the Council, and expectation as to the performance of the appointed contractor.

If a property has significant HHSRS Hazards a full survey should be carried out and recorded and whilst DFG awards can be given to properties which have such hazards, no commitment should be given until the most satisfactory course of action to remedy

these Hazards has been determined and the case has been discussed with the Private Sector Housing Team Leader.

It should not normally be necessary to have a joint visit with the Occupational Therapist, but in complex and difficult cases a joint visit may be instigated by either party.

2.5 Grant Applications

The DFG Administrator should check the application details to determine whether all the information is complete. The following completed items comprise a proper application:

- Application form (including proof of benefit status and/ or supporting bank statements etc. see below)
- Certificate of Owner Occupation, or
- Certificate Of Letting
- Owner's permission to carry out works (tenanted properties)
- Certificate of title/interest in the property
- Receipt of benefits: the original documents/correspondence, or true copies. It has been agreed by Internal Audit that photographic reproductions of such documentation/correspondence, confirming receipt of benefit/s, may be placed on file as proof.
- Signed Authorisation, Charging Agreement and Terms and Conditions form.

All documents must be scanned and save in the Sharepoint folder for the property

Tenanted Properties (Privately Rented and Housing Associations)

In tenanted properties the permission of the owner must be sought along with a Certificate of Letting stating that they expect to let the property for a period of 5 years from the date of the certificate. If the property is tenanted the DFG Administrator should forward the Certificate of Letting and permission letter to the owners or owner's agents for completion along with a copy of the schedule and specification as detailed below.

Tenanted Properties – special requirements in Housing Associations

In properties owned by Housing Associations and other registered providers the OT/HT must make the following requests of the landlord:

- 1) A copy of the Asbestos Register for the property to forward to potential contractors.
- 2) Details of any specific requirements with regard to materials or design.
- 3) A statement of their proposed contribution

2.6 Schedule and Specification and requesting quotes

The HT should, following the survey, produce a detailed Schedule of Works using the excel spreadsheets of standard phrases or create a suitable written specification agreed with the OT where works have specific characteristics.

The HT should select a minimum of two contractors (three for projects over £20,000) and the DFG Administrator should send out a standard letter of invitation to quote with a copy of the schedule of works and Preliminary Information to Contractors document to these companies.

If the HT disagrees with the Occupational Therapist referral or finds that the works cannot be carried out, the case must initially be discussed with the OT. It is important for the Housing Technician not to alter referrals without firstly agreeing the alteration with the Occupational Therapist and obtaining an amended recommendation in writing. The final decision regarding the scheme of works, however, lies with the City Council.

Where appropriate the specification must require that suitable planning consents, building control certificates, gas safety records, electrical installation certificates etc are required to be submitted at suitable stages of the works.

2.7 Offer of Grant

An offer of a grant can be made where

- A written referral from Adult or Children's Services is received or an assessment is completed by the in-house OT service
- the work is necessary and proportionate and reasonable & practical
- the result of the PMT is favourable
- permission is received from the property owner if applicable
- all necessary forms and certificates have been provided

2.8. Grant Approval

On receipt of quotes and all other necessary paperwork as detailed above, the HT should calculate the cost of the eligible works, eligible ancillary fees and charges. A copy of this should be saved in the Sharepoint folder for the property.

The following works are zero rated for VAT:

- the construction of ramps or widening of doorways or passages for the purpose of facilitating the disabled person's entry to, or movement within the building, including any preparatory work or making good
- the installation of a lift for the purpose of facilitating the movement of the disabled person between floors of the building. Repair and maintenance or preparatory works, making good and restoring of decorations are also zero-rated

- the providing, extending or adapting of a bathroom, washroom or lavatory where such provision, extension or adaptation is necessary by reason of the disabled person's condition. In addition, other work essential to the provision of these facilities can be zero-rated

Full details of what can be zero rated for VAT purposes can be found in VAT Notice 701/7. It should be noted that it is the contractor's responsibility to correctly charge VAT and this is noted in the Preliminary Information to Contractors document

The assessment should be forwarded to the DFG Administrator who will prepare the Certificate of Approval and approval letter from the information held on Uniform.

When the HT has chosen the contractor, the DFG Administrator will then raise a purchase order (PO) based on the winning quote. The PO number is to be itemised on the letter sent and the letter saved on Sharepoint.

When the DFG Administrator is satisfied that the Certificate of Approval and accompanying letter are correct they should be passed with the file to the Private Sector Housing Team Leader who will check the details and sign the Certificate and covering letter and pass the file to the DFG Administrator. The approved amounts will be recorded in the grants register and on the grant record and activity screens by the DFG Administrator who will dispatch the Certificate and letter to the applicant.

A copy of the Certificate and letter will be emailed to the relevant OT.

All documents will be saved on Sharepoint.

2.9 Site Visits

The HT should make sufficient site visits at appropriate times to inspect the progress of the eligible works. The frequency of visits, will be decided by the HT according to the extent or complexity of each scheme. Visits can also be made at the request of the applicant, OT, contractor or surveyor to assess progress, discuss/resolve any practical matters or agree unforeseen works and interim payments where necessary.

All visits should be recorded by the HT as Interim visits in the Sharepoint folder for the property. Any changes or omissions from the approved works should be drawn to the applicant's attention. Any suggested changes should be discussed beforehand and given prior approval as appropriate.

NB- It is essential that the applicant be kept fully informed of any on site matters and is advised and agrees in conjunction with the OT, to any changes/additional works.

2.10 Interim Payments (stage payments)

Interim payment (IP) will normally be approved within the following guidelines:

Grant approval - below £5,000 - one IP

Grant approval - £5,000 - £10,000 - up to two IPs

Grant approval - £10,000 - £20,000 - up to three IPs

Grant approval - £20,000+ up to 4 IPs

In any case, an appropriate amount of grant should be retained as a final payment (never less than 10% of the approved grant amount) as a control measure and an incentive to complete all works within a reasonable time period.

Requests for an Interim Payments must be accompanied by an itemised invoice from the contractor. A site visit should be made to ensure that the works for which payment is invoiced have been satisfactorily completed. The procedure for requisition of a payment is described in 5.4. below

2.11 Revised Approvals

The HT should visit the property and assess whether any additional/unforeseen works are considered necessary in order to complete the eligible works. Consultation with the OT should be undertaken to confirm whether any additional works are essential or necessary.

The Officer should decide what additional works are essential to the completion of the grant aided works and update the file notes accordingly. If agreed, the applicant should submit a contractor's estimate for the unforeseen works and a written request for a revised grant approval. The estimate should be checked and if acceptable a revised grant approval should be issued. A note should be placed on the file describing the unforeseen works agreed to.

Where small amounts of additional work are necessary which needs to be undertaken as the job proceeds, the officer if satisfied, may give verbal approval in response to requests from the applicant or the contractor (on behalf of the applicant) to proceed with the agreed additional works subject to the subsequent submission of an estimate/s as soon as possible. An explanatory note of the agreed action should be placed on file.

A revised Certificate of Approval should be produced together with the standard covering letter the copies should be saved on retriever and passed to the Private Sector Housing Team Leader for signature.

2.12 Final Inspections

A visit should be undertaken jointly with the OT or unaccompanied as appropriate. The Officer should carry out a comprehensive inspection following completion of grant aided works and be satisfied that this has been done to a satisfactory standard. The applicant and the O.T. should also be satisfied with the work and that the completed scheme meets the needs of the applicant.

Incomplete or unacceptable work should be notified to the applicant, the OT and to the contractor or surveyor as necessary. Advice/instructions should be given and confirmed in writing if appropriate. The file notes should be updated on any outstanding or unsatisfactory items of work.

If the HT, OT and the applicant are satisfied that the works are duly completed the file cover should be endorsed and the grant record/activity screens updated. Where

appropriate, checks should be made that the works have been signed off by the Building Control Officer in compliance with Building Regulations.

2.13 Final Payment

The contractor will send in their invoice/s which should detail the final/total costs of the grant aided works. The invoice should be checked against the amount of grant approved. Any discrepancies should be resolved by discussion with the applicant and the contractor. If invoices are acceptable a payment Requisition for the final payment can be raised. Invoices, or true copies should be saved on Sharepoint.

The DFG Administrator will produce the Certificate of Completion which will be signed by the Private Sector Housing Team Leader and dispatched with the standard covering letter to the contractor when authorised.

NB – interim and final payments can only be approved by officer within their approved limits.

2.14 Payment Requisitions

When the invoice has come in from the contractor the invoice must be scanned into the financial system and a copy saved in the Sharepoint folder for the property. Then when the invoice comes up in the DFG Administrator's email the payment can be made if the HT agrees that the work has been completed satisfactorily.

To do this the DFG Administrator will click on the email containing the invoice and follow the procedure for payment, send to Private Sector Housing Team Leader for authorisation and then print copy of the payment and save email in the Sharepoint folder for the property

Now print letter to contractor stating payment is on the way from accounts department and again save on Sharepoint.

The Finance Department will dispatch the cheque automatically or make a BACS transfer. Now enter payment details on CAPS and excel spreadsheet.

2.15 Recovery of Client Contributions

Where the applicant is assessed as having to make a contribution, the Council will arrange for payment of invoices to the Contractor for the full value of the works and recover the applicant's contribution by invoice to the applicant.

The invoice will be raised on approval of the Contractor's final invoice and will be subject to the Council's standard terms and conditions for payment and, if necessary, debt recovery policy.

Separation of Responsibilities

To safeguard against the possibility of any impropriety or exploitation of the grant system, it is essential that authorisation of payments be made by another Officer from the person who commenced and/or supervised the process to this stage. The Officer

must be duly authorised to sanction expenditure payments in accordance with the Council's current Scheme of Authorisation.

2.16 Reconciliation of grant payments

The DFG Administrator is responsible for recording all interim and final grant payments and to ensure that a monthly reconciliation with the Council's Financial System payments recording system is made (refer to procedure below). This procedure should be maintained within the Housing Section grant payment records.

Reconciliation procedure: refer to: "Procedures for grant reconciliation – including Financial System and Excel"; procedure notes kept by the DFG Administrator.

2.17 Approval Period

The statutory approval period is 12 months from the date of formal grant approval. The officer dealing with the grant should be aware of any lack of progress to complete the works within this period. If it appears likely that completion may not be within the approval period, an advisory/warning letter should be sent within sufficient time so that the applicant is made fully aware that grant payment cannot be guaranteed after the expiry date.

In exceptional circumstances or cases where unavoidable delays have occurred, an extension to the approval period may be considered. The file notes should be updated to explain the reasons for any delay and of the decision whether or not to extend the approval time.

Checklist

<p>Integrated impact Assessment (IIA)</p> <p>Have you carried out an IIA?</p> <p>Remember it is a statutory requirement that any significant change to policy or process for service delivery needs to go through the corporate impact assessment process – speak to the Project Co-ordinator for further guidance.</p>	<p>Yes / No as doesn't meet IIA criteria</p> <p>If yes please provide details</p> <p>Date of IIA -</p> <p>Date of EIA -</p> <p>Validation Date -</p>
<p>Ratification</p> <p>Is formal ratification required?</p> <p>If a change of policy is being set out check whether formal committee ratification is required.</p> <p>If unsure discuss with your manager, and/check Part 3 of the Constitution Section 6 -Scheme of Delegation to officers, Section 2 - the terms of reference of Cabinet Housing Committee, Section 3 - Delegation to Portfolio Holders.</p> <p>Legal, Finance and Democratic Service teams are also able to advise.</p>	<p>Yes / Not required</p> <p>If yes – complete section on page one with the details</p>

<p>References - Remember to provide footnotes to guidance/documents etc you've used in developing the policy and procedure, especially references that relate to statutory requirements?</p>
<p>Glossary – Is this required? Please note that it is good practice to keep jargon to a minimum and use plain English which ideally will remove the need for a glossary.</p>

Consultation Details – Remember to keep records of any consultation processes, along with the outcomes and how the policy has been amended as a result as an audit?

If preferred use the section below to record these details.

Who	Date	Comments Made	Changes Applied

Briefing/Training - Remember to keep details of how this policy and procedure has been communicated to those who'll be required to deliver it.

If preferred use the section below to record these details.

Who	How	Date

Formal Sign Off (optional) – If required, prepare and print off a sign off the slip on the next page as a record that this policy and procedure has been read and understood by those who apply it. This may also be required should formal procedures are required.

Sign off Housing Policy and Procedure

Officer Name	
Title of Policy and Procedure	
I confirm that I have read and understand the policy and procedure.	
Officer signature	
Date	