

## **HELP WITH HOME ADAPTATIONS 2019:**

Harlow Council policy for assisting residents with disabilities in private sector housing under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002

### **INTRODUCTION**

Ensuring that the homes of people with disabilities are as well-adapted as is practicable to their housing needs is important to wellbeing, reducing inequality and increasing independence.

As a landlord, the Council can make arrangements to adapt its own housing. As a local housing authority, the Council can work with other social and private sector landlords and owner occupiers to adapt existing housing.

Adapting an existing home is the way forward usually favoured by residents with disabilities, and is a far better use of resources than alternatives such as institutional care or extended home-care packages.

The Council meets most needs for home adaptation outside its own stock by providing Disabled Facilities Grants, set out in the legislation. However it does have discretion to provide help beyond the definitions given in the grant legislation, provided that it does so in accord with its own published policy.

The purpose of this policy is to allow the Council, subject to the availability of resources from the Better Care Fund, to extend the scope of the help that it can give.

This policy supersedes any previously published policy for assisting residents with disabilities in private sector housing under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 .

### **TYPES OF ASSISTANCE**

#### **A: Assistance that will be offered in all circumstances**

##### **Disabled Facilities Grants**

Qualifying residents are entitled to disabled facilities grants as set out in the grant legislation and that entitlement is in no way diminished by anything in this policy. Making such disabled facilities grants available will continue to be the Council's first priority when allocating resources made available for home adaptations for people with disabilities.

#### **B: Assistance that will be offered subject to the availability of financial resources**

## **Fast Track Grants**

A grant of up to £10,000 towards the cost of providing safe access to a home and between levels in a home necessary to permit prompt discharge from hospital, or to avoid the risk of hospital admission due e.g. to falls. Safe access works eligible are provision of stairlifts and modular ramps, door widening, modification of step and threshold details with necessary preliminary and ancillary works. There is no means test.

## **Small Works Grants**

Grants of up to a total of £10,000 in any 3 year period for people with disabilities<sup>1</sup> to pay for

- repairs to existing adaptations made necessary through age or fair wear and tear where the occupier has repairing responsibility

and for people with disabilities in receipt of specified benefits<sup>2</sup> to pay for

- Walk-in showers
- improving heating and ventilation,
- miscellaneous small works to prevent falls and improve home safety

## **C: Assistance that will be offered subject to the availability of financial resources and subject to the following conditions**

- The works are such that the Welfare Authority would consider them to be necessary and appropriate adaptations to the home for the relevant resident(s) with disabilities.
- The applicant is not the tenant of a registered provider of social housing under an expectation as a social landlord to make provision for the housing needs of tenants with disabilities.

## **Top-up for small works grant**

Grant for people with disabilities who would be eligible for small works grant, where there is no other non-vulnerable adult in the household, and where the cost of eligible works exceeds the £10,000 small works grant limit.

## **Top-up for Children's Disabled Facilities Grant**

Grant of up to £30,000 to top-up Disabled Facilities Grant for a child so that the maximum cost of grant-eligible works is increased from £30,000 to £60,000. There is no means test.

## **Top-up for Adult's Disabled Facilities Grant**

Grant of up to £30,000 to top-up Disabled Facilities Grant for an adult so that the maximum cost of grant-eligible works is increased from £30,000 to £60,000. The statutory test of resources that applies to DFG would apply to the DFG and the Top-up grant taken together.

## **D: Relocation assistance that will be offered subject to the availability of financial resources and subject to the conditions set out below**

A grant of up to £10,000 to assist with the eligible costs of moving to a more suitable home where it is not reasonable and practicable to adapt the existing home, or where the applicant prefers to move to another home in Harlow rather than to adapt the existing home.

Relocation grant will be limited to the cost of the assistance that the Council would otherwise provide under this policy.

The Council and the Welfare Authority must be satisfied that the proposed property already meets the needs of the disabled person without further adaptation or that it would be reasonable and practicable to suitably adapt it.

If the new home is in Harlow, assistance with its adaptation will be available in accord with this policy, however if relocation grant is sought due to the preference of the applicant, the total cost of assistance available under this policy will be no more than would have been offered to adapt the existing home.

The costs of moving eligible for assistance include estate agents' fees, legal costs, and removal costs.

If on any sale of the applicant's existing property, a surplus over the purchase cost of a new property is generated, then this is to be applied to the relocation expenses mentioned above before any relocation grant would be considered.

The new home is to be only or main residence of the relevant person with disabilities.

Only one relocation grant will be awarded per applicant.

Removal Grant paid will become repayable if the removal is not completed due to the applicant's choice or actions, or if having moved, the applicant moves again within 5 years.

1. "People with disabilities" for the purposes of this policy means people who are, or who are entitled to be registered disabled, and people receiving Personal Independence Payment (PIP), Severe Disablement Allowance or Disability Living Allowance of any sort.
2. "Specified benefits" for the purposes of this policy means Guarantee Pension Credit, Income Support, Joint Claim Job-Seekers Allowance, Universal Credit, Income Based Employment Support Allowance, Income Based Job-Seekers Allowance, Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit with an income less than £15,050 per year, Income Support or Employment Support Allowance and any benefit of substantially similar effect that from time to time may replace any of the above