



**South
Staffordshire
Council**

**HOUSING ASSISTANCE
POLICY**

2015-2017

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1 GENERAL BACKGROUND AND INFORMATION

- 1.1 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (the RRO), introduced a new wide discretionary power that allowed local authorities to formulate a Housing Assistance Policy (HAP) to provide a range of financial and other assistance for repairs, improvements and adaptations to private sector housing. The intention was to allow greater flexibility, innovation and discretion in delivering housing renewal and disabled adaptations in order to address local needs.
- 1.2 The Government's view is that responsibility for maintaining privately owned property should rest primarily with the homeowner. In some circumstances, however, help in the form of grants or loans may be needed to assist in carrying out essential repairs or improvements. The Order allows local authorities to target help to those who need it the most, and to encourage more effective and innovative use of resources.
- 1.3 South Staffordshire Council's previous Housing Assistance Policies have outlined a range of financial and other assistance available for repairs, improvements and adaptations to housing in the district. The policy has been updated as required following changes in circumstances and policy elsewhere.
- 1.4 The 2011 Housing Assistance Policy (HAP) introduced fundamental changes to the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), in order to provide a more responsive service to residents requiring adaptations to their homes. This led to the creation of the Adaptation Grant (AG) which mirrors the DFG but effectively removed it from the statutory DFG process and significantly speeded up delivery.
- 1.5 AGs have dramatically reduced waiting times for residents requiring adaptations whilst delivering high levels of satisfaction. It has however highlighted the demand for the grant and meant that significant pressure is now placed on that budget.
- 1.6 Since the implementation of the 2011 Housing Assistance Policy, and up until the 30th September 2014, both the DFG and Decent Homes Grant (DHG) budgets were delivered on behalf of the Council by the Home Improvement Agency Metropolitan Care and Repair, and managed via a Service Level Agreement.
- 1.7 This formed part of the previous arrangement, whereby the District and Borough Councils across Staffordshire contracted with a HIA individually, to deliver home improvements to their residents. Working in partnership with all eight District and Borough Councils of Staffordshire, Staffordshire County Council have sought to further improve home improvement services for residents and manage the increasing demand for grant aid across the county. It was therefore agreed that home improvement services across Staffordshire would be commissioned under a single contract.

- 1.8 Following a tender in late 2013, Revival Home Improvement Agency (part of Staffordshire Housing Group) was appointed to deliver home improvements across Staffordshire under this single contract. As of 1st October 2014, Revival will now deliver the DFG and DHG budgets on behalf of South Staffordshire Council. The contract will run until 31st March 2017, with an option to extend by one further year. This policy has been refreshed to reflect these changes, and also to outline the additional services Revival will be providing to residents of South Staffordshire under the new contract.
- 1.9 Under the Council's Empty Property Strategy 2012-2017, the Empty Property Grants scheme was introduced in order to provide funding to homeowners to enable them to bring their property up to Decent Homes Standard and ultimately back into use. Following a review of the grant scheme in June 2014 due to a lack of interest from empty homeowners in the district, the decision was taken to discontinue the scheme. This policy has been refreshed to also reflect these changes.
- 1.10 This policy came into force on Wednesday 15th April 2015.

2 POLICY PROCESS AND REVIEW

- 2.1 This policy has been approved by the Council, and will be reviewed and updated as required in the future.

3 POLICY CONTENT

- 3.1 In accordance with central government guidance, this policy document details the assistance that will be made available under Article 3 of the RRO and the reasoning behind it. It therefore includes or directly refers to the following:-

- (i) Local strategic context. The Council's Corporate, Housing & Homelessness, Crime and Disorder, and Sustainable Development Strategies and the Local Strategic Partnership Sustainable Community Strategy.
- (ii) The regional/sub-regional context
- (iii) The national context
- (iv) Current private sector housing issues in the district
- (v) The resources committed to implementation of this policy
- (vi) Complementary services from partner organisations
- (vii) Details of the types of assistance available, the amount of loan / grant and eligibility
- (viii) The procedures to be followed, and service standards
- (ix) The policy implementation plan.

4 STRATEGIC CONTEXT

The policy and its priorities have been reviewed to reflect ever changing local, regional, and national policy and the subsequent impact this has had on public funding for housing.

4.1 South Staffordshire Council Plan

- 4.1.1 The Council Plan sets out the aims and priorities that the Council intends to pursue, reflecting the requirements of the residents of the District.

The Strategy has three corporate aims each having their own priorities - Your Place, Your Community, Your Council.

'Your Place' includes:

- Providing good quality affordable housing

'Your Community' includes:

- Supporting the ageing population to be healthy and independent
- Improving people's health and wellbeing

- 4.1.2 By improving the standard of their living accommodation, this policy will make a major contribution towards the health, wellbeing and independence of elderly and/or vulnerable people living in unsuitable or non-decent properties.

4.2 South Staffordshire Locality Commissioning Partnership

The South Staffordshire Locality Commissioning Partnership provides an integrated commissioning infrastructure that delivers prioritised outcomes based on local need. The partnership is currently focusing on improving health and wellbeing outcomes for residents and businesses around the following five themes:

- Carers of and people with Dementia
- Obesity
- Rural Isolation
- Mental Wellbeing
- Alcohol

A South Staffordshire commissioning prospectus is launched annually allowing organisations to submit applications that will improve outcomes for residents and businesses around the five themes. It is possible for housing related applications to be submitted and awarded, specifically where improvements impact on people's wellbeing.

4.3 South Staffordshire LSP Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-2017

- 4.3.1 The 2014-2017 Housing and Homelessness Strategy has been developed by South Staffordshire Council and its partners to encompass the wide range of organisations that help to deliver housing and homelessness support services to our residents.

4.3.2 The Housing Strategy has 2 key priorities which feed into delivering the Council's strategic aims relevant to this Policy as outlined above. The priorities are:

- Ensure that a variety of housing options are available for our most vulnerable residents
- Target poor quality housing and ensure that everyone has access to a decent house.

4.3.3 The key issues contained in the Housing and Homelessness Strategy that relate to this Policy are:

- The provision of discretionary expenditure of £44,000 per annum up to 2015 to provide emergency grant aid to owners of non-decent properties, targeting these resources at those who are most vulnerable and unable to access funding from other sources.
- Using these grants, together with loans, statutory action, advice and encouragement to improve living conditions and thereby reduce the incidence of housing-related illness.
- Ensuring that the allocated budgets for adaptations for disabled persons and Decent Homes Grants are fully utilised.
- Maximising take up of insulation and heating works under the Green Deal and other schemes
- Increasing the number of empty properties brought back into use.

4.3.4 The Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2014-17 was adopted at Full Council in May 2014.

4.4 The Crime and Disorder Strategy

Within the Community Safety Partnership Plan 2014-15, priority crimes including burglary are to be tackled. This policy will contribute to the Council's work under Crime and Disorder by providing assistance towards more secure external doors and windows where they are replaced in conjunction with grant aided works.

4.5 Energy Efficiency

4.5.1 The Council has an 'Energy and Our Local Environment 2012-2017' Framework which seeks to reduce the impact our energy usage has on the environment through 3 plans. This includes a 'Warmer Homes Plan 2012-2017' which incorporates the Home Energy Conservation Act 1995.

4.5.2 **Home Energy Conservation Act (HECA) 1995:** local authorities have to play a role in reporting on their aims to improve the energy efficiency of the residential accommodation in their areas and thereby aspiring to reduce domestic carbon emissions. Local authorities were required to produce reports by March 2013 setting out the energy conservation

measures that the authority considers practicable, cost-effective and likely to result in significant improvement in the energy efficiency of residential accommodation in the district. The Council produced the HECA Report in March 2013, which includes the following projects and activities that the Council will undertake and facilitate in the next few years:

- Energy Efficiency and Energy Savings Awareness
- Involvement in National & Local Initiatives such as Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

Identifying areas to target through HECA Further Reports, aspires to enable the Council to attract energy companies seeking to discharge their obligations under the government's new Green Deal and ECO.

4.5.1 The Council's 'Affordable Warmth Strategy' for 2014-2017 was adopted at Full Council in February 2014, as a sub strategy of the Housing and Homelessness Strategy. The strategy has three key aims:

1. To identify and help people at risk of fuel poverty.
2. To help increase the energy efficiency of our homes making them warmer and help reduce the rising fuel bills faced by households.
3. To motivate and facilitate homeowners to undertake efficiency.

The strategy aims to develop, deliver and monitor initiatives that will help reduce fuel poverty and winter deaths in the district. The key action in the strategy relating to this policy is the provision of energy efficiency improvements to homes in South Staffordshire, through facilitating national and local initiatives including the governments new Green Deal and Energy Company Obligation (ECO).

5 REVIVAL HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY

5.1 Following a tender by Staffordshire County Council in late 2013, Revival Home Improvement Agency was appointed to provide home improvement services across Staffordshire, commencing on 1st October 2014. Revival is a not-for-profit home improvement agency owned by the Staffordshire Housing Group. The Agency work with older, disabled and vulnerable people to help them maintain their independence and be warm, safe and secure in their homes. A full description of the services they provide can be found in Appendix 1.

5.2 A new contract is in place between Revival and the Staffordshire Local Authorities, which outlines the service specification for the delivery of home improvements across the county. The contract will run until 31st March 2017, with an option to extend by one further year.

5.3 As outlined in the new contract, Revival will deliver a holistic service to residents of Staffordshire, including housing options information, repairs, adaptations (including DFGs) and improvements to their homes.

5.4 Using the powers available under Article 3 of the RRO, the Council has delegated the power to approve and pay Adaptation Grants (see 6.5

below), including the approval of supplementary works and authorisation of interim payments, to Revival.

- 5.5 The Council has also delegated power to deliver its small Decent Homes Grant programme (see 7 below), which includes the power to approve and pay the grants, including the approval of supplementary works and authorisation of interim payments, to Revival.
- 5.6 The new contract sets out working arrangements and provisions for inspection of work and audit requirements. Staffordshire County Council will have an audit role, receiving quarterly performance reports (at county and District level) from Revival as outlined in the HIA specification. The case management system will also provide reports to the District Council as and when required to monitor performance.

6 ASSISTANCE FOR DISABLED PERSONS

- 6.1 Despite the current financial situation, the Government has stated that it sees the provision of adaptations for the disabled as a priority and has pledged not to reduce the allocation of funding to Local Authorities for these grants.
- 6.2 This Council likewise regards adaptations for the disabled as a high priority in its corporate aims and hopes to maintain its own budgetary contribution at current levels for 2012 to 2018.
- 6.3 The budget for all disabled adaptations for 2014-15 is therefore £556,000. This level of funding has been provisionally agreed for the next five years but will be subject to annual review.

6.4 Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

- 6.4.1 These grants given under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, are mandatory and are paid in accordance with the requirements of legislation towards the adaptation of all forms of qualifying living accommodation.
- 6.4.2 Previous Housing Assistance Policies sought to significantly improve the speed and quality of approach regarding adaptations for disabled people. Using the Regulatory Reform Order 2002, the Council, using its discretionary powers, created the AG (see section 8) which performs the same functions as a DFG but has removed the statutory process required. This has meant that applicants are now having considerably less time to wait for adaptations. All new applicants requiring adaptations are encouraged to apply for an AG because of the simpler, quicker process.
- 6.4.3 In addition to the new funding arrangements for adaptations for disabled persons detailed in section 8 below, mandatory DFGs given under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 will continue to be available from this Council. Although assistance from the Agency will be available to help applicants with their applications, DFGs will continue to be approved and paid by the Council.

6.5 Adaptation Grants (AGs)

- 6.5.1 Under the 2011 Policy, the Council introduced the AG. This is discretionary assistance towards the provision of facilities for disabled persons. Although similar in many respects to the DFG, by moving away from the statutory confines of the DFG process it enabled the Council to introduce innovative changes designed to streamline and simplify the process and reduce administration. The Council remains ultimately responsible as primary budget holder.
- 6.5.2 The minimum award (including fees) for eligible works is £1000 and the maximum payable £30,000.
- 6.5.3 The awarding of Adaptation Grants is subject to eligibility criteria, broadly the same as for mandatory DFGs. In brief summary:
- (i) The applicant must be registered disabled or registerable as disabled under Section 29 of the National Assistance Act 1948.
 - (ii) The applicant must have, or proposes to acquire, either an owner's or tenant's interest in the land on which the relevant works are to be carried out, or have the necessary permission of the landowner.
 - (iii) The property must be the disabled person's only or main residence, as defined in the Housing Rents and Subsidies Act 1975, and the applicant must intend to live in the property for at least 5 years.
 - (iv) Applications will be subject to a means test, unless the adaptation(s) are for a person aged under 19 in full time education.
 - (v) Any adaptations must be **necessary and appropriate** to meet the needs of the applicant.
 - (vi) Any adaptations must be **reasonable and practicable** to carry out.

Please note the full eligibility criteria should be consulted – see appendix 3.

- 6.5.4 The proposed works are required to meet one or more of the following identified needs of the disabled occupant:
- (i) Facilitating access by the disabled occupant to and from the dwelling or the building in which the dwelling or, as the case may be, flat is situated;
 - (ii) Making the dwelling or building safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with him;
 - (iii) Facilitating access by the disabled occupant:-
 - a. to a room used or usable as the principal family room;

- b. to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room used or usable for sleeping;
 - c. to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a lavatory, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
 - d. to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a bath or shower (or both), or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
 - e. to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a wash hand basin, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
- (i) Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant;
 - (ii) Improving any heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the disabled occupant or, if there is no existing heating system in the dwelling or any such system is unsuitable for use by the disabled occupant, providing a heating system suitable to meet their needs;
 - (iii) Facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of one or more means of access to or control of that source or by providing additional means of control;
 - (iv) Facilitating access and movement by the disabled occupant around the dwelling in order to enable him to care for a person who is normally resident in the dwelling and is in need of such care;
 - (v) Facilitating access to and from a garden by a disabled occupant or making access to a garden safe for a disabled occupant.

6.5.5 Please refer to Appendix 3 for the full eligibility criteria for AGs, and appendix 5 for details of how to apply for an AG.

6.6 Charges on the Property

6.6.1 In the cases where the recipient of an AG made under this policy or a DFG has a qualifying owner's interest in the premises, a charge will be placed on the property.

6.6.2 The charge will be equivalent to the amount of the grant above the first £5,000 paid towards constructing the extension of the property, up to a maximum of £10,000 (the statutory maximum). If the recipient of the grant disposes of the premises within 10 years of the certified date of completion of works, then, subject to the following considerations, repayment of the charge shall be required:-

- (i) the extent to which the recipient would suffer financial hardship if they were required to repay all or any of the adaptations assistance;
- (ii) whether the disposal of the premises is to enable the recipient to take up employment, or to change the location of their employment;
- (iii) whether the disposal is made for reasons connected with the physical, mental health or well-being of the recipient or of a disabled occupant of the premises; and
- (iv) whether the disposal is made to enable the recipient to live with or near any person who is disabled or infirm and in need of care, which the recipient is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of that the recipient is in need of by reason of disability or infirmity;
- (v) that it is reasonable in all circumstances to require the repayment.

6.6.3 In cases where permission is given by the Council for AGs to be given towards the purchase of alternative accommodation, then a charge will be placed on the new property equivalent to the amount of grant given towards the purchase of that property. If the recipient of the grant disposes of the premises within 10 years of the date of completion of purchase, then, subject to the considerations contained in 6.6.3 (i) to (v) above, repayment of the charge shall be required.

6.6.4 Any charges repaid to the Council will be recycled back into the DFG/AG budget.

6.6.5 It is the responsibility of Revival to notify the Council of any grant which incurs a charge on the applicant's property.

6.7 Client Own Funded Works

6.7.1 If a client is not eligible for a DFG/AG, Revival provides a service to private homeowners that wish to fund adaptations to their home themselves, through personal contributions. Revival will aid in adapting the disabled resident's home, enabling them to live more independently.

6.7.2 As with a DFG/AG, an Occupational Therapist will visit the resident to assess their needs and recommend what adaptations are needed to meet them. A Technical Officer will create a specification, complete with drawings, and oversee the works in progress. The works are paid for by the client, and are carried out by trusted contractors who are specialists in adaptations. Revival charge a fee to the resident for this service.

6.7.3 Contact Revival for further information on private adaptations (see Appendix 1).

7 DECENT HOMES GRANTS

7.1 Purpose

Despite a reduction in the grant resources available, the Council has maintained a small budget of £44,000 to provide emergency assistance at the discretion of the Council, for vulnerable residents in receipt of certain benefits. This is the policy framework for discretionary Decent Homes Grant assistance.

7.2 The maximum grant available is £6,000

7.3 As there is a limited budget for these discretionary grants, they are only available towards:

- (i) Emergency works to remedy Category 1 hazards where any delay could seriously affect the health and safety of the occupants.
- (ii) Emergency works necessary to meet the Decent Homes Standard, where the applicant will not be able to access the loan schemes due to the construction or type of their dwelling, i.e. mobile homes or houseboats, or where loan assistance is not available and finance cannot be accessed via a normal High Street provider because of the poor financial circumstances of the applicant and/or insufficient equity in the property.
- (iii) Works to bring the level of thermal insulation up to, or as close as practicable to, current Building Regulations requirements or to provide adequate heating where the applicant does not qualify for the Affordable Warmth or similar scheme, or the grant does not cover the full cost of the works.

7.4 The following criteria apply to all discretionary Decent Homes Grants

- (i) The applicant must be vulnerable and in receipt of one or more of the means tested benefits
 - (a) Guaranteed Pension Credit (NOT Savings Pension Credit)
 - (b) Income Support
 - (c) Housing Benefit
 - (d) Income Based Job-Seekers Allowance
 - (e) Employment and Support Allowance (ESA) – Income Based only, (not contribution based)
 - (f) Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit where the household income is less than £16040 or whatever amount is applicable at the time of application
 - (g) Universal Credit
- (i) The applicant must be a home owner or a tenant with a repairing lease with at least 7 years to run and who has been in residence at that property for at least 3 years.

- (ii) The applicant shall self certify the right to carry out the work.
- (iii) In exceptional cases where the grant limit does not cover the cost of emergency work required, applications for grant assistance above the limits set above will be determined by the Strategic Development & Planning Manager in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.
- (iv) There are no pre-occupancy conditions, except in the case of tenants with repairing obligations where there is a 3 year prior occupancy condition.
- (v) The grants are not registered as a local land charge and there are no post-occupancy conditions.
- (vi) All Decent Homes Grants are discretionary and are subject to budgetary provision being available.

7.5 For contact details regarding all grants and how to apply see Appendix 1.

8 HOME LOAN AND EQUITY RELEASE SCHEMES

8.1 Revival offer an equity release scheme in partnership with StepChange, in order to allow older people to unlock finance to fund home improvements and repairs.

8.2 StepChange provide a no-obligation advice service on equity release (as well as debt advice and other types of loans) for all residents. If a resident meets the qualifying criteria, Revival can help them to apply for equity release or other funding, such as charitable loans and grants, to fund home improvements or repairs.

8.3 The aim is to help older people to remain safely and independently in their own homes, helping to prevent poor health and reducing the need for residential care.

8.4 Equity release may involve a lifetime mortgage or home reversion plan. A personalised illustration will outline the features and risk associated with the scheme. For more detailed information on the equity release scheme, contact Revival Home Improvement Agency - see Appendix 1.

9 EMPTY PROPERTIES

9.1 The Council previously administered an Empty Property Grants scheme, in order for empty home owners to access finance to bring their property back up to Decent Homes Standard.

9.2 Following a review of the scheme in May 2014, this has now been discontinued due to a lack of interest from empty property owners in the district.

9.3 Further information on how the Council intends to bring empty properties

back into use in the district can be found in the Empty Property Strategy 2012-2017 and the Council website.

10 ASSISTANCE AVAILABLE FROM OTHER AGENCIES

10.1 The Trader Register

10.1.1 Residents who are funding their own work and would like information on reliable local contractors registered with the County Council should contact the Trader Register.

Staffordshire & Stoke on Trent Trader Register
c/o Staffordshire County Council
Trading Standards
20 Sidmouth Avenue
Newcastle-under-Lyme
ST5 0QN

Telephone: 01785 330888
(Monday to Thursday 8am-8pm, Fridays 8am - 6pm and Saturdays 9am - 1pm)
Web site: www.traderregister.org.uk

10.2 Housing and Care Options – FirstStop

10.2.1 In partnership with FirstStop Advice, an independent, impartial and free service provided by the national charity Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC), Revival provide local, tailored housing and care options advice to residents.

10.2.2 Funding secured from FirstStop has enabled a dedicated Home and Care Options Officer to provide free confidential advice and support to help residents remain living independently – either through adaptations or by moving home. They can advise on:

- How well your existing home matches your need
- How to get home adaptations
- What other housing is available locally if you want to move
- What care and support you can get
- What benefits you are entitled to

Funding is in place for this officer until 31st March 2015, when the service will be reviewed.

11 ADVICE AND INFORMATION

11.1 As financial assistance is paid on needs based priorities, the Council recognises that good quality advice is very important to those householders living in sub-standard accommodation but do not qualify for either a loan or grant aid provided by this policy.

11.2 Advice and information is available from Revival covering:

- Housing and care options
- Practical support such as adaptations and equipment
- Grants and funding
- Maintaining independence
- Other organisations that may be able to support the client

Revival caseworkers make use of the Independence Outcome Star support planning tool to devise a suitable action plan for each client. The Outcome Star consists of a number of scales covering a range of areas such as physical and mental health and social networks/relationships. The client is assessed and scored against each of these areas. This process is carried out both before and after support in order to measure the difference the service has made to their life, and whether any further support is needed.

- 11.3** Other ways of providing assistance, particularly in partnership with local and national agencies and financial institutions will continue to be investigated, and any schemes that could be developed as a result will be considered as part of the policy implementation plan for possible incorporation into the policy at the time of the policy review.

12 APPLICATIONS OUTSIDE OF COUNCIL POLICY

- 12.1** If there are exceptional circumstances which you feel might justify grant aid or assistance not available under the current policy, you may make a separate application in writing to the Strategic Development & Planning Manager, giving full details of the circumstances surrounding your application and the reasons why you think the Council should consider your application as a special case.
- 12.2** The Strategic Development & Planning Manager will then arrange for your application to be taken forward in discussion to the Relevant Cabinet Member.
- 12.3** You are advised to discuss your case with the Council before making an application and before incurring any costs.

13 PROCEDURES

- 13.1** The following Council procedures are included in the appendices to this Policy:

1. *The enquiry process and contact details(Appendix 1)*
2. *Definitions (Appendix 2)*
3. *Adaptation Grant eligibility criteria (Appendix 3)*
4. *The extent of adaptations (Appendix 4)*
5. *The process of application (Appendix 5)*
6. *Grant conditions including enforcing and waiving (Appendix 6)*
7. *Fees and charges (Appendix 8)*
8. *Service standards (Appendix 10)*
9. *Complaints procedure (Appendix 11)*

14 POLICY IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

14.1 The following stages will be involved in the implementation of this policy.

- (i) The policy will come into operation on **XXXXXX**.
- (ii) Unless circumstances necessitate an earlier revision (e.g. legislative changes or changes in government guidance) the policy will be revised by 1st October 2017.
- (iii) Reports on the outcomes of implementing this policy will be submitted to central government as and when required.

14.2 Further legislative changes and central Government guidance, new initiatives and partners, changes suggested following consultation with stakeholders, and information /data supplied by future House Condition Surveys will be considered as and when they arise.

15 APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 – Revival HIA Service
- Appendix 2 - Enquiry Process and Contact Details
- Appendix 3 - Definitions
- Appendix 4 - Adaptation Grant Eligibility Criteria
- Appendix 5 - Extent of Adaptations
- Appendix 6 - The Application Procedure
- Appendix 7- Grant Conditions including Enforcing and Waiving
- Appendix 8 - The Decent Homes Standard
- Appendix 9 - Fees and Charges
- Appendix 10 - Standards and Legislation
- Appendix 11 - Service Standards
- Appendix 12 - Complaints Procedure

APPENDIX 1: REVIVAL HIA SERVICE



Revival Staffordshire Home Improvement Agency Service

Service Description

Revival

308 London Road

Stoke on Trent

Staffordshire

ST4 5AB

Tel: 0333 014 3389

Fax: 01782 745829

Email: revival@staffshousing.org.uk

Web site: www.staffshousing.org.uk

Service Description

REVIVAL

Staffordshire Home Improvement Agency Service

The Staffordshire Home Improvement Agency Service is delivered by Revival (part of the Staffordshire Housing Group).

Who is the service for?

The service is commissioned to provide advice and support whether over the phone or in the person's home to help them to continue to live independently by helping with disabled adaptations, advice around housing options, repairs or home improvements to people living in the Staffordshire area.

Eligible customers for the service will be people who are aged 55 and over, have a disabled, or have a low income.

The service initially triages the person over the phone to identify whether urgent referrals are needed to health and social care, or other voluntary services such as Age UK for befriending or the Foodbank. Where appropriate, and the person wishes, a complete holistic caseworker assessment will be carried out in the person's home where elements of financial and home options will be discussed as well as any issues to do with maintenance and access to their home and facilities.

What Support is provided by the Service?

All customers who meet the criteria for the service will be allocated a dedicated advice worker or caseworker.

Customers will have a structured support plan that will be developed with the customer and will take into consideration their individual needs and the preferences and wishes of their relatives/advocates too.

The advice or caseworker will use the Independence Outcome Star™ support planning tool and will focus on supporting customers to:

- consider their housing and care options and help them to decide what is best for their needs
- access practical support such as adaptations, equipment /assistive technology for those living with physical disabilities/hearing/vision impairments

- assist with applying for grants and charitable funding where available to pay for needed adaptations and repairs
- help them to maintain independence by ensuring their home is safe, secure and in a state of good repair
- support the person with specifying the work needed and procuring a trusted contractor
- project manage larger works
- make referrals to other services in Revival and elsewhere in order to help the person to:
 - manage their money and personal administration
 - develop a social network, relationships and engagement in the community they live in to reduce their isolation and fill their time positively
 - explore volunteering opportunities
 - engage with specialist support

How is the service accessed?

Referrals to the service are accepted from GP's, community health, social care professionals, hospitals staff and other appropriate sources including self referrals.

Customers or agencies wishing to make enquiries or refer to the home improvement agency service can do so by either:

- visiting Staffs Housing reception at 308 London Road Stoke ST4 5AB between 8:30 am-5:30 pm Monday-Friday
- by post
- via Staffs Housing Website where information referral and risk assessment documentation is available for download.
- or telephone 0333 014 3389 and speak to a member of the Revival Advice Team who will undertake an initial telephone- based assessment of the customers needs and determine which team is best placed to meet those needs.

Depending on the type of advice or work required, this could be dealt with over the phone by the Advice Worker taking the call, or be passed to an appropriate caseworker.

If a caseworker assessment is appropriate, customers will be contacted (within 48 hours) to arrange an appointment and a visit will take place (within 10 working days) either in the customer's home or any other preferred venue. A more comprehensive needs assessment and risk assessment will be completed with the customer and can, with the customer's consent, involve key family members.

Together with the customer, an action plan will be created to detail the next steps that the customer wishes to take and how they will be supported by their caseworker.

The caseworker will ascertain whether a technical officer needs to visit and specify the works needed. If requested, the technical officer will visit within 2 weeks and draw up a schedule of the work to be carried out in conjunction with the client and for disabled adaptations' work, the Occupational therapist. If needed, the technical officer will complete drawings and apply for planning permission and building control. The caseworker will have identified the funding source at the first visit and will then support the customer to apply for grants, loans or charitable sources of funding as appropriate.

The caseworker and/or technical officer will select contractors from our panel of trusted contractors to visit and quote for the work to be done and will then select the winning contractor with approval from the customer.

Once the funding is in place, the caseworker and/or technical officer, as appropriate, will oversee the works including site visits as needed until the work is completed to the required standard and the customer is satisfied with the work completed. The contractor will then receive payment.

A final outcome star is completed to see how far the customer has travelled in the areas of their life that were identified on the action plan and to see if there is further support needed.

APPENDIX 2 - THE ENQUIRY PROCESS AND CONTACT DETAILS

AGs and DFGs

In the first instance you should contact:

Staffordshire Cares
Staffordshire County Council (People)
Histons Hill
Codsall
South Staffordshire
WV8 1AA
Telephone: 0300 111 8010
e-mail: codsall.socialservices@staffordshire.gov.uk

For children with disabilities, contact:

First Response Team
Children and Lifelong Learning
Wedgewood Building
Tipping Street
Stafford
ST16 2 DH
Freephone: 0800 131126
Email: firststr@staffordshire.gov.uk

Enquiries regarding grant aid for disabled persons can be made to:

Revival Home Improvement Agency
308 London Road
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST4 5AB

Telephone: 0333 014 3389
Fax: 01782 745829

By email to: revival@staffshousing.org.uk

Revival are open Monday to Friday, from 8.30am-5.30pm.

Or for a mandatory DFG, contact:

Regeneration Team
South Staffordshire Council
Council Offices
Wolverhampton Road
Codsall

Staffordshire
WV8 1PX
Telephone: 01902 696000
By email to: regeneration@sstaffs.gov.uk

Decent Homes Grants

Enquiries regarding Decent Homes Grant aid can be made to:

Revival Home Improvement Agency
308 London Road
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST4 5AB

Telephone: 0333 014 3389
Fax: 01782 745829

By email to: revival@staffshousing.org.uk

APPENDIX 3 - DEFINITIONS

“Living accommodation” means any of the following –

- (a) a building or part of a building;
- (b) a caravan, within the meaning of Part 1 of the Caravan Sites and Control of Development Act 1960 (d) (disregarding the amendment made by section 13(2) of the Caravan Sites Act 1968 (e)); and
- (c) a boat or similar structure,

occupied or available for occupation for residential purposes (whether in the case of a building , in single or multiple units); and includes any yard, garden, outhouses and appurtenances belonging to the building or, as the case may be, the caravan, or the boat or similar structure, or usually enjoyed with it.

APPENDIX 4 – ADAPTATION GRANT ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

The eligibility criteria for Adaptation Grants will remain broadly the same as for Mandatory DFGs and are as follows:

1. The applicant must have, or proposes to acquire, either an owner's or tenant's interest in the land on which the relevant works are to be carried out, or have the necessary permission of the landowner.
2. The property must be the disabled person's only or main residence, as defined in the Housing Rents and Subsidies Act 1975.
3. The disabled occupant must intend to live in the dwelling or flat as his only or main residence for a minimum period of 5 years from the date of application.
4. Any adaptations must be **necessary and appropriate** to meet the needs of the applicant and **reasonable and practicable** to carry out.
5. The following adaptations would not normally be considered as eligible for funding as part of an application for a DFG:
 - (i) full central heating systems;
 - (ii) a dropped kerb (including crossover) for vehicle access;
 - (iii) a dropped kerb (including crossover) for wheelchair access;
 - (iv) a hard standing for a vehicle;
 - (v) a storage shed with power points for powered wheelchairs/mobility scooters;
 - (vi) safe outside play areas;
 - (vii) window locks;
 - (viii) double glazing;
 - (ix) TV sockets;
 - (x) garage door openers;
 - (xi) garages and extensions to garages for car use;
 - (xii) car ports;
 - (xiii) soundproofing;
 - (xiv) Dermaguard (or similar) coverings for windows;
 - (xv) fencing;
 - (xvi) repairs to paths and other property repairs; or
 - (xvii) additional bedrooms to alleviate overcrowding.

It is felt that these adaptations are works which should be undertaken by any householder. However, the OT or the Home Improvement Agency can give advice regarding design, location, etc., as part of an overall assessment.

6. Maintenance and Repair

Equipment

Where through-floor lifts, stair-lifts, track hoists, and wash/dry toilets have been installed using a grant from a District/Borough Council, on expiry of the initial warranty period the County Council will pay for their servicing, maintenance and repair subject to an annual review and further terms and conditions. The County Council will not usually pay where repairs are due to damage or neglect

Where through-floor lifts, stair-lifts, track hoists, and wash/dry toilets have been installed using a grant from a District/Borough Council and serviced and maintained by the County Council – a replacement unit will be eligible for DFG funding subject to a valid application being approved.

Building Works

Where adaptations have been provided by construction, any defects liability period (during which any faults will be rectified free of charge) would depend upon the terms of the contract signed between the grant applicant and the building contractor. After this period, responsibility for dealing with all maintenance and repair is the responsibility of the homeowner or landlord of the property

7. In the case of other works recommended by Social Services which are not included in 6.5.4 of this policy, applications for discretionary assistance will be determined by the Strategic Development & Planning Manager in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member.
8. In cases where it is not reasonable and practicable to adapt the living accommodation currently occupied by the disabled person, then consideration will be given by the Council towards allowing AGs to be given towards the purchase of more suitable living accommodation. Applications for such funding will be determined by the Strategic Development & Planning Manager in consultation with the relevant Cabinet Member. Should such funding be agreed by the Council, then any further grant assistance towards the adaptation of the living accommodation so purchased will be limited in that the total amount of grant given towards the purchase and subsequent adaptation of that living accommodation shall not exceed £30,000.

9. Necessary and Appropriate

All applicants for AGs or DFGs will be required to have an initial assessment carried out by an Occupational Therapist (OT). In order to receive this assessment, the applicant must be:

“handicapped” within the meaning of the National Assistance Act 1948, i.e. someone who is blind, deaf or dumb, and substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or from birth; and

registerable under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Person Act 1970; and

“ordinarily resident” within the administrative area of Staffordshire County Council, under the above 1948 Act.

The OT will ensure that the works recommended are **necessary and appropriate** having regard to the person’s disability.

The assessment of ‘necessary and appropriate’ must take into account:

- (i) the diagnosis, prognosis and long term implication of the person’s disability;
- (ii) if mobile aids or equipment would be more appropriate;
- (iii) the family size and its acceptance of disability;
- (iv) the disabled person’s ability to carry out activities (this should be assessed by means of a functional assessment whenever possible in accordance with the specific criteria for the type of adaptation identified);
- (v) an assessment of the role and needs of the carer;
- (vi) any ethnic and cultural aspects of the household (it may be necessary to consult with appropriate advisor); and
- (vii) that adaptations should not be considered to overcome social or economic problems.

A consensus over the provision should be sought with the disabled person, household members, and other appropriate agencies or as part of a care package. Where the disabled person or other household members seek to include additional adaptations and/or other works that the District/Borough Council would not consider to be reasonable and practicable, assistance from the Home Improvement Agency should be recommended.

Confirmation of the disabled person's diagnosis and prognosis should be sought in complex schemes or where the medical condition is unclear. The disabled person's written permission must be obtained to seek medical information.

Where a disabled person has disagreed with the recommendation made by IF/SSOTP for adaptations, and their perceived needs differ, advice from other individual agencies will be sought in all instances.

Disabled persons who formally inform IF/SSOTP of their refusal to give permission to seek medical advice will be informed in writing that IF/SSOTP is unable to complete the assessment of their needs.

Following the assessment, if it is decided that an adaptation is needed, the O.T will refer the case to Revival. As part of the assessment the disabled person will be allocated a priority band, according to Revival’s Priority Matrix.

10. Reasonable and Practicable

To be eligible for an Adaptation Grant, the proposed works need to meet the needs of a disabled person and must be assessed as being both **reasonable and practicable** to deliver, having regard to:

- (i) The construction and condition of the property including if the property is safe, i.e. there are no category 1 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System Standard;
- (ii) the location of the property;
- (iii) the age of the property;
- (iv) planning and building regulation restrictions;
- (v) the impact of any adaptations on the rest of the property;
- (vi) any limitations due to the size or layout of the property;
- (vii) the age of other occupants and if the dwelling is overcrowded; and
- (viii) the extent of the adaptations and the use of the accommodation by the disabled person
- (ix) The other options that have been considered are less practical to be carried out
- (x) The cost of the proposed work being reasonable having regard to the likely cost of any alternatives.
- (xi) Successful adaptations carried out in similar types of accommodation.

Meeting the Housing Health and Safety Rating System Standard

Normally the property should be free from any category 1 hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System Standard before the adaptations are made (see A1.1(iv) for details).

In some cases it might not be reasonable to remedy the hazards before the adaptations are made. For example, where:

- (i) the works are of a relatively minor nature; or
- (ii) the adaptation works are urgently required, e.g. for a terminally ill person.

Any decisions to relax this requirement will be made on the merits of the individual case by the responsible officer at the District/Borough Council.

The District/Borough Council may be able to provide grant funding or other help to remedy the hazards through their Housing Assistance Policy.

Where the property is in a Clearance Area, or the District/Borough Council intends to serve a Demolition Order or Prohibition Order, a grant would not normally be approved. The District/Borough Council will determine if this is the case as part of an application.

Location of the Property

The location of a property can be an issue where it is difficult to get in or out safely. It may not be 'reasonable or practicable' to adapt a dwelling where:

- (i) it is on a hillside with long flights of steps to the entrance;
- (ii) it has a very steep access drive/path which cannot be re-graded;
- (iii) the approach to the dwelling is an unmade track or road;
- (iv) the dwelling is accessed directly from a highway/pavement which cannot be obstructed by ramps/lifts etc.;
- (v) the dwelling is an upper floor flat and permission cannot be obtained for adaptations to common entrance passageways or staircases etc.; or
- (vi) the dwelling is a houseboat or mobile home with poor means of access.

Age of Property

The property may be listed as an historic building, which prevents certain alterations. Some older buildings may have design features which make adaptations very difficult, e.g. narrow, winding staircase, narrow passageways, or numerous changes in floor level.

The age of the property in itself will not affect eligibility for a grant.

Planning/Building Regulation Requirements

Where the proposed adaptations require an extension or substantial structural alterations they must comply with planning requirements and building regulations.

An extension or alteration may not be acceptable in local planning terms due to its design or location. The applicant must be made aware of this following assessment. Any issues in relation to planning can be investigated by the Home Improvement Agency.

Ground investigations

Staffordshire's industrial heritage has left a legacy of old mine shafts and mining activities in parts of the County which can affect the stability of land. Where the proposed adaptations require an extension with a floor area greater than 9 sqm a ground investigation may be required. This will be determined by the District/Borough Council's building control officers upon receipt of an application.

Ground investigations are expensive and can result in further work being required to stabilise the ground. The additional costs involved can mean that an extension is not considered practicable.

Impact on Existing Facilities

Adaptations should not introduce unacceptable hazards to the amenities or facilities enjoyed by other occupants of the dwelling, for example the widening of a passageway should not have the effect of reducing living or sleeping space below the minimum standard, or an alteration to layout should not result in the dwelling becoming overcrowded.

Adaptations should not reduce or restrict the independence of other occupants with a permanent or substantial disability who normally live in the property.

Physical Constraints

It may not be reasonable or practicable to alter a very small dwelling to provide full wheelchair use.

Limited space may also mean that the necessary adaptations could cause a category 1 hazard under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System Standard. This type of adaptation would not normally be deemed as practicable.

Overcrowding

District/Borough Councils would not consider it reasonable and practicable to adapt a dwelling which is currently overcrowded and DFG funding cannot be used for adaptations to reduce an overcrowding problem. For example, DFG funding cannot be used to build a bedroom or bathroom extension for a person who already has access to these facilities simply to reduce overcrowding for the rest of the household.

An adaptation will always be provided in the most cost effective manner to meet the needs of the person. In most cases this will involve using existing rooms rather than building an extension.

The Council would not fund an extension to create additional bedroom space where a dwelling has an adequate number of rooms to sleep all of the occupants and the disabled person can access a suitable bedroom.

The Council would normally ask for other occupants of a dwelling to share bedroom facilities to allow a disabled person access to a bedroom provided that by doing so the other occupants would not exceed the occupancy limit for the bedroom.

Consideration will be given to the use of rooms other than bedrooms for sleeping purposes. Where appropriate a living room may be used as a bedroom either by the person or another occupant, provided that the remaining living rooms are big enough to accommodate all the occupants.

However, if it is proposed to adapt some of the existing living space and that would create overcrowded conditions for the first time, then it would be allowable to extend the property if it is otherwise reasonable and practicable. This applies if there is not a separate bedroom for each:

- (i) married/co-habiting couple;
- (ii) other person aged 21 or over;
- (iii) pair of adolescents aged 10-20 of the same sex;
- (iv) pair of children aged under 10; and
- (v) unpaired child/adolescent.

11. Test of Financial Resources (Means Test)

With the exception of an instance where the disabled person is a dependent child under the age of 19 in full time education, all applications for AGs will be subject to a test of resources of the disabled person (and their partner, if any) or the relevant person. This is the same test of resources that is used for mandatory DFGs and is in accordance with the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and the relevant Regulations and other Statutory Instruments made thereunder.

Where an applicant is in receipt of one of the following income-related benefits their contribution will automatically be nil:

- (i) Income Support
- (ii) Council Tax Benefit
- (iii) Housing Benefit
- (iv) Guaranteed Pension Credit
- (v) Income-Based Job-Seekers Allowance
- (vi) Working Tax Credit with an annual income of less than £15,050
- (vii) Child Tax Credit with an annual income of less than £15,050
- (viii) Income Related Employment and Support Allowance

The intention to live in the property for five years does not apply where person is terminally ill.

Adaptations for children will be considered when a child has additional functional/practical needs due to their disability. Provision will only be considered when the normal milestones of development have not been reached and are unlikely to be reached within the foreseeable future.

The most cost effective solution will be pursued considering the current assessment and possible deterioration of the disabled person's abilities.

Ethnic and cultural aspects of the household will be taken into consideration, it may be necessary to consult with an appropriate adviser.

A consensus over the provision should be sought with the disabled person, household members and other appropriate agencies as part of the care package.

The disabled person's written permission must be obtained to access medical information. Confirmation of the disabled person's diagnosis and prognosis should be sought for:

- (i) specialist pieces of equipment; or
- (ii) when medical conditions are unclear.

APPENDIX 5 – EXTENT OF ADAPTATIONS

Access in and around Dwellings

Ramps	
Criteria	<p>ALL of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person's only means of mobility is with a wheelchair. • The person has a prescribed manual powered wheelchair. • The person's prognosis indicates a future need.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Temporary ramps will only be considered if the provision is for short-term use only or where technical reasons prevent the construction of a permanent ramp. Permanent ramps will be offered in all other situations. • Ramps to storage areas will not be provided. • Ramps can be provided to enable access to electrical supply for charging purposes for powered wheelchairs recommended by the Wheelchair Service. • A ramp will not be provided where the person is able to step in and out of the property. • Raising/regrading adjacent ground levels should be considered as an alternative to kerbs and/or handrails as appropriate.

Steplifts	
Criteria	<p>ONE of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person is eligible for provision of a ramp to gain access and egress to the property; but this is not possible due to technical difficulties. • A wheelchair user needs to negotiate step(s) within the property, and due to technical difficulties a ramp is not possible.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The maximum height of the lift should not exceed manufacturer's recommendations. • Family's acceptance of this mode of access.

Seated Stairlift (Straight / Curved)	
Criteria	<p>ALL of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person is unable to climb stairs due to physical and/or medical limitations which may result in a risk to their health, and use of second stair-rail will not overcome the difficulty. • The toilet, bathroom and bedroom are all upstairs and are suitable or adaptable; or • The disabled person sleeps downstairs and the WC and bathing facilities etc are upstairs and are suitable or adaptable; or • The disabled person sleeps upstairs, the WC and bathing

	<p>facilities are on the ground floor and there is no space for sleeping downstairs; or</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The disabled person is at risk if sleeping on separate floor to carer's and the risk is not eliminated with provision of an intercom system. • The person needs to be able to transfer independently and safely, operate the controls, and be aware of the dangers of the equipment.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A stairlift should be considered as an option before provision of a vertical lift or an extension to a property. • A representative visit to establish suitability, feasibility and costs must be made.
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contra-indications: degenerative conditions, impaired balance, poorly controlled epilepsy, vertigo, weight. • Stair-rail may need to be installed for other stair users. • Electricity meter - a mains powered stairlift must not be installed if there is a coin operated meter. A battery operated stairlift must be considered in this instance or a meter exchange arranged by the disabled person. • Consideration should be given to the person's course of action should their lift break down whilst in use, i.e. if living alone, would they be able to summons assistance through the use of a pendant alarm, able to climb safely off the lift, or should a battery operated stairlift be installed.

Stairlift with a Wheelchair Platform

Criteria	<p>ALL of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person is a permanent wheelchair user. • Requires access to basic facilities but, use of stair lift, through floor lift or ground floor extension, are not possible because of the person's condition and technical considerations.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A stairlift should be considered as an option before provision of a vertical lift or an extension to a property. • A representative visit to establish suitability, feasibility and costs must be made.
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is sufficient turning space at top bottom to access the platform. • The hazard to other stair users must be taken into consideration due to the need for a pit to accept the platform. • Permission must be sought from the Fire Officer to assess the fire risk in all instances.

Vertical (Through Floor) Lift	
Criteria	<p>ALL of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person is unable to climb stairs due to physical and/or medical limitations, which may result in a risk to their health. • The stairs are not suitable for the installation of a stairlift and/or a stairlift is contra-indicated because of the person's medical condition and the person requires access to basic facilities.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A vertical should be considered as an option before provision of an extension to a property. • A representative visit to establish suitability, feasibility and costs must be made.
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A carer's ability to assist person in/out of lift and climb the stairs. • Type of meter - mains powered lift should not be installed in property with a coin/card operated meter. A hydraulic lift must be considered in this instance or a meter exchange arranged by the disabled person. • Lifts on contract are suitable for both wheelchair and seated use and should be used as the first option, but if insufficient space is available a seated lift may be used, as long as it meets the person's long term needs. • Consideration should be given to the person's course of action should their lift breakdown whilst in use, i.e. if living alone, would they be able to summons assistance through use of a pendant alarm. • Consideration to the siting of integral smoke alarm to enable person and/or carer to reach in the event of a false alarm.

Ceiling Track Hoist	
Criteria	<p>ALL of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person's ability is such that there are difficulties with transfers. • Under moving and handling regulations a risk assessment has been completed and a manual lift is deemed to be suitable. • Mobile hoists, monkey poles, and other similar lifting equipment have been considered/tried and are inappropriate due to person's ability, capacity of carers or lack of space.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A representative visit to establish suitability, feasibility and costs must be made.
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Disabled Facilities Grant can cover the cost of strengthening the ceiling and provision of a dedicated electrical spur. • A minimum of 2 slings should be issued. • The person should be assessed prior to ordering a hoist and slings using the representative gantry hoist/sling in their own home. This should enable potential users, clients and carers to assess its usefulness.

Bathing Adaptations

Over-bath Showers	
Criteria	<p>The following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person must have been assessed to have met the criteria for bathing equipment; and • The person must have a non-progressive, stable condition where an overbath shower will meet their long-term needs. The person must be able to transfer over the side of the bath with or without bathing equipment; or • Medical needs - sitting in the bath to wash is contra-indicated.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Preference alone cannot be considered as the only factor for provision. • Shower curtains, not shower screens, should be provided. • Maintenance of the shower unit will be the responsibility of the owner or landlord of property

Level Access Showers	
Criteria	<p>ALL of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person must have been assessed to have met the criteria for bathing equipment • The person must be registerable as a severely disabled person and/or have a medical need to shower. • The person is unable independently or with assistance to use their existing facilities with use of board, seat, bathlift.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Appropriate seating facilities may need to be provided. • Provision of adequate space and protection to the carer through use of a curtain and/or screen. • There can be disadvantages for carers in assisting people to shower. • The adaptation must be considered in the existing bathroom in the first instance. • Level access can be achieved by either floor drainage or a variety of level access shower trays • Weight limits on shower trays must be taken into consideration.

Shower Cubicle Units	
Criteria	<p>ALL of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person must have been assessed to have met the criteria for bathing equipment • The person must be registerable as a severely disabled person and/or have a medical need to shower. • The person is unable to use their existing facilities with provision of bath equipment, i.e. a board, seat or bathlift. • Their existing facilities cannot be adapted through use of a floor drainage shower/ or specialist level entry shower

	<p>trays.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision must be a long-term solution for that person or there is an expedient need to provide shower facilities with minimal disruption.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A representative visit to establish suitability, feasibility and costs must be made.
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • These cubicles should not be sited in place of an existing bath unless drainage is impossible elsewhere. • If new flooring is included, it needs to be slip resistant and impervious to water. • A maintenance and insurance agreement will need to be set up. • Use of a shower chair with small casters may be difficult if the cubicle is sited onto carpet. • Adequate ventilation must be provided.

Shower in Existing W.C. Area

Criteria	<p>ALL of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person must have been assessed to have met the criteria for bathing equipment • The person must be registerable as a severely disabled person and/or have a medical need to shower. • The person meets the criteria for a level access shower • There is insufficient space in which to site a shower elsewhere in the property and an extension to the property is not practical. • Provision will meet long term needs and is the only available solution. • There is sufficient circulation space for the disabled person to use their mobility equipment when necessary.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adequate ventilation must be provided. • This adaptation must conform to building regulations and water by-laws.

Specialist Baths

Criteria	<p>ALL of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person must be unable to use their existing bathing facilities with the provision of bath equipment i.e. a board, seat, bath-lift (electric, battery, hydraulic). • The person needs to bathe because of their medical condition, with written confirmation from a GP or consultant that the person has a medical need to be immersed in bath water as opposed to being showered, or is significantly intolerant of the sensation of a shower. • The person needs assistance to bathe from their carers and any other provision will put the carer at risk. •
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A representative visit to establish suitability, feasibility and costs must be made.
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Any maintenance/insurance agreement would be the responsibility of the homeowner/landlord.

Toileting Adaptations

Additional WC (Upstairs / Downstairs)	
Criteria	<p>ALL of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of a commode is inappropriate, due to the persistent and unresolvable extent of the continence difficulties (continence of urine and/or faeces) and this has been medically confirmed as long term and leading to urgency; and • Access to an existing toilet(s) is not possible due to the length of time taken to get to them. • Provision will promote the independence of the person and no other major adaptation will be required in the long-term. • Length of time spent using an existing toileting facility, ie due to the need for a manual evacuation and so preventing reasonable use by rest of family.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • This will not be provided if other provision, e.g. stairlift, will give access to all facilities.
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • People who have a history of breaking standard toilets/seats should be provided with a reinforced one. • A suitable toilet to meet the needs of the person.

Wash/Dry Toileting Systems	
Criteria	<p>ALL of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person has a physical condition which prevents them from maintaining personal hygiene. • The provision will provide the person with independence in toileting and/or enhance personal dignity. • All other options such as bottom wipes, toilet top bidet, bidet, have been considered and are not suitable. • The person must have used one before ordering.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A representative visit to establish suitability, feasibility and costs must be made.
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Methods of operation must meet the disabled person's needs and increase their independence. • Systems must comply with Water bylaws and regulations. • A maintenance and Insurance contract will need to be set up. • The person and/or carer must be able to operate the system.

Additional Rooms

Additional Bedroom / WC/ Bath / Shower Room	
Criteria	<p>ONE of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person is a long term wheelchair user or has a condition that is likely to lead to long term wheelchair use or severe mobility problems and use of a lift is medically contra- indicated. • The person is a long term wheelchair user or has a condition that is likely to lead to long term wheelchair use, or severe mobility problems. The person's home facilities are not suitable or adaptable for wheelchair use upstairs and/or a lift cannot be accommodated. • A person whose challenging behaviour is so disruptive that they require their own facilities: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recommendations will require confirmation of an intrusive or non-adaptable behavioural problem. This behaviour can either be regular or occasional but "boisterous" or "violent" in nature causing harm to self, others or property. • This information must be obtained by involving all agencies with whom the person has contact, e.g. family, school, respite care, medical and specialist teams.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Use of existing space and facilities (including garage space) within the ground floor of property will be considered first • The change of use of a second living room into a bedroom is expected before a bedroom extension is agreed. • Bedroom extension will only be considered if there is not a second living room or use of this room is contra-'indicated by size and/or family size. . • Gas Fire Regulations will need to be considered.

Other Adaptations

Kitchen Adaptations	
Criteria	<p>ALL of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person has a primary responsibility for the preparation of food for self or others in the household. • The person uses a wheelchair or is likely to use a wheelchair
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Disabled Facilities Grant is not able to include funding for appliances, only for gas, electricity and plumbing installations. • Disabled Facilities Grant provision allows for alterations to kitchens for people who are not the primary user to permit preparation of drinks and light meals, e.g. lowering/raising a work surface.

Sterile Areas	
Criteria	<p>ALL of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person uses continuous Ambulatory Peritoneal Dialysis (CAPD). • There are no existing facilities which could be utilised for a sterile area. • Medical opinion confirms that the person has a condition which requires provision of a sterile area.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •
Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Areas for Peritoneal Dialysis are considered discretionary by Housing Authorities as it is considered as a Health Authority responsibility to make suitable provision. • Storage space for equipment is not considered.

Heating	
Criteria	<p>ONE of the following criteria needs to be met:</p> <p>Change of Heating System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The person is unable to operate the existing facility safely, lives alone or spends substantial periods of the day by themselves, and has no one capable of operating it for him/her. • The existing facility is medically contra-indicated and considered detrimental to a person's health. Confirmation will be sought from a consultant. <p>Additional Heating System</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • When the person is having a major adaptation creating additional facilities, the existing system should be extended if possible or local heating should be used (a new boiler will not be recommended). <p>Installation of Heating</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The lack of provision is medically contra-indicated and considered life threatening, for example a person who is immobile due to spinal injury or a severe heart condition. Confirmation will be sought from a consultant.
Requirements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> •

Considerations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Medical confirmation of the person's condition must be obtained to ensure that the provision is essential rather than desirable.• Heating will only be provided to rooms used by the person.• The District/Borough Council is to be consulted to establish if they are operating a policy of installing heating systems as a general improvement.• Upgrading and/or repair to existing heating facilities will not be considered.
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APPENDIX 6 - THE APPLICATION PROCEDURE

AGs and DFGs

1. In most cases Revival will provide the necessary application forms for AGs and assist applicants with completion. Otherwise if an applicant decides to pursue the formal DFG route the forms are available on request from the Council Offices (see Appendix 2).
2. The application for grant shall be on the standard application form and the applicant shall complete all relevant sections of the form and sign and date the application.
3. The applicants shall make available to the Council all relevant documentation required to support their application and in particular that required to verify title to the property and entitlement to and receipt of any named benefit, income, savings and any other information required for the purposes of carrying out a test of financial resources.
4. The applicant shall provide either on the form or on a separate letter, the consent of the owner(s) or other joint owners of the living accommodation that the works for which assistance is being sought can be undertaken.
5. The following shall form part of a valid application and must be provided with the application.
 - (i) The relevant application form fully completed, signed and dated.
 - (ii) Estimates
 - a. one estimate for AGs and DFGs where the adaptation (e.g. stairlift), is procured through Staffordshire County Council.
 - b. one estimate where it is provided through a schedule of rates
 - c. at least two estimates in all other cases, including adaptations provided by extension.
 - d. the Council or Revival reserve the right to require further estimate(s) if they consider it necessary
 - (iii) Details of any fees and charges that have been or are likely to be incurred.
 - (iv) A copy of any necessary plans of the works.
 - (v) The relevant certificates of owner-occupation, or availability for letting (landlords only) or tenant's certificate as appropriate and a Certificate of compliance with ownership and/or occupation conditions.
 - (vi) Proof of title to the property in the form of the completed Certificate "A" provided, a letter from a solicitor, mortgager or financial institution, or appropriate land registry certificate. In cases where the deeds are presented to the Council's legal department for verification, notification of the proof of title document will be arranged internally.
 - (vii) Notification of any required Planning or Building Regulation approvals
 - (viii) Referral or comments from the Social Services Authority

- (ix) An assessment that the proposed works are 'necessary and appropriate' and 'reasonable and practicable'.

Decent Homes Grants

1. As above except that the appropriate grant forms will be given to you by Revival.
2. One estimate will normally be accepted unless Revival consider further estimate(s) necessary.
3. The application form together with all other required documentation should then be either brought or posted to Revival at the address in appendix 1.
4. An acknowledgement will be sent to you on receipt of your application.

APPENDIX 7 - GRANT CONDITIONS RELATING TO ADAPTATIONS GRANTS AND DECENT HOMES GRANTS INCLUDING ENFORCING AND WAIVING

The Council's Policy in relation to applications for, and conditions attached to, AGs approved under the Council's Housing Assistance Policy shall be to determine such applications and set such conditions by reference to the pre-existing provisions of Part 1 Chapter 1 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, in the same manner as such provisions applied to DFGs previously approved by the Council under the aforementioned Act.

The Council does, however, reserve the right to use its discretion to review or decide any particular case having regard to the circumstances of that case.

The interpretation of the provisions set out below shall be by reference to the Act, regulations and other subordinate legislation made thereunder and case law relating to those provisions.

Conditions of payment of Adaptation Grant

Where an application for an AG has been approved, any payment will be subject to the following conditions:

1. Entitlement to payment

Where an application for an AG is approved and it is subsequently found that the applicant(s) was not at the time of the application entitled to the AG in accordance with the eligibility criteria, no AG shall be paid. If instalments have already been made then no further monies will be paid and South Staffordshire Council and/or Revival may demand that any monies already paid shall be repaid forthwith, together with interest from the date on which it was paid until repayment, at such reasonable rate as the authority may determine.

2. Where AG is re-calculated, withheld or repaid

Where an application for AG has been approved and Revival and/or South Staffordshire Council ascertain that:

- (i) the amount of AG was determined under on the basis of inaccurate or incomplete information and exceeds what the applicant was entitled to; or
- (ii) without their knowledge and/or consent, the eligible works were started before the application was approved; or
- (iii) the eligible works are not completed to their satisfaction within 12 months of the date of approval; or

- (iv) the aggregate of the cost of completing the eligible works and the costs incurred with respect to fees is or is likely to be lower than the estimated expense; or
- (v) without their knowledge or consent the eligible works were carried out by a contractor other than the contractor on whose estimate the AG was based.

Revival or the Council may:

- (i) refuse to pay the AG or any further instalment of adaptation assistance which remains to be paid, or
- (ii) make a reduction in the AG which, in a case falling within subsection (2)(d), is to be a reduction proportionate to the reduction in the estimated expense;
- (iii) demand repayment by the applicant forthwith, in whole or part, of the AG or any instalment of the AG, together with interest at such reasonable rate as the authority may determine from the date of payment until repayment.

3. Change of circumstances affecting the disabled occupant

Where an application for Adaptations Grant has been approved and before the certified date of completion of the works:

- (i) the works cease to be necessary or appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, or
- (ii) the disabled person ceases to occupy the property or it ceases to be the intention that they should occupy it, or
- (iii) the disabled occupant dies.

Revival and/or South Staffordshire Council may decide having regard to all the circumstances that:

- (i) no AG shall be paid or, as the case may be, no further instalments shall be paid,
- (ii) the relevant works or some of them should be completed and the AG or an appropriate proportion of it paid, or
- (iii) the application should be re-determined in the light of the new circumstances.

Where any instalments have been paid the Council may demand that any instalment of the AG which has been paid be repaid forthwith, together with interest from the date on which it was paid until repayment, at such reasonable rate as the authority may determine.

4. Payment of AG to a contractor

Payment of the amount of AG due will be made directly to the contractor carrying out the work or other person whose invoice was supplied in support of the request for payment.

Interim payments will be made at the discretion of Revival or the Council as appropriate. No more than 90% of any grant will be paid prior to the certified completion of the work.

Conditions of payment of Decent Homes Grant

The conditions of payment of AGs as detailed in 1) to 4) above will also apply to Decent Homes Grants.

APPENDIX 8 - THE DECENT HOMES STANDARD

These Decent Homes Assessment Criteria for dwellings are taken from the Housing, Health and Safety Rating System ODPM Guidance (version2) November 2004:

Criteria A: Housing Health and Safety Rating system

Dwellings failing to meet this criterion are those containing one or more hazards classed as 'category one' under the Housing Health and Safety Rating system. The principle behind the Housing Health and Safety Rating system is that a dwelling, including the structure, the means of access, any associated outbuildings and garden, yard and/or other amenity space, should provide a safe and healthy environment for the occupants and any visitors.

To satisfy this principle:

- (i) A dwelling should be free from unnecessary and avoidable hazards; and,
- (ii) Where hazards are necessary or unavoidable, they should be made as safe as reasonably possible.

Criteria B: It is in a reasonable state of repair

Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those where either:

- (i) one or more of the key building components are old, and because of their condition, need replacing or major repair; or
- (ii) Two or more of the other building components are old and, because of their condition, need replacing or major repair.

Criteria C: It has reasonably modern facilities and services

Dwellings which fail to meet this criterion are those which lack three or more of the following:

- (i) a reasonably modern kitchen (20 years old or less);
- (ii) a kitchen with adequate space and layout;
- (iii) a reasonably modern bathroom (30 years old or less);
- (iv) an appropriately located bathroom and WC;
- (v) adequate insulation against external noise (where external noise is a problem);
- (vi) Adequate size and layout of common areas from blocks of flats.

A home lacking two or less of the above is still classed as decent therefore it is not necessary to modernise kitchens and bathrooms if a home passes the remaining criteria.

Criteria D: It provides a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

This criterion requires dwellings to have both effective insulation and efficient heating.

APPENDIX 9 - FEES AND CHARGES

The following fees and charges relating to all grant applications and the preparation for and carrying out of works will be allowed for grant purposes where necessarily and appropriately incurred in the provision of a full and valid grant application.

- (i) Architects and surveyors fees
- (ii) Fees relating to an assessment by a Professional Occupational Therapist
- (iii) Planning and building regulation fees
- (iv) Solicitors fees, bank and building society etc charges
- (v) Agents and agency fees if and when appropriate
- (vi) Charges for electrical, gas, damp and timberwork reports and surveys
- (vii) VAT at the standard rate on works and services

The level of fees and charges allowable will be at the discretion of the HIA Manager at Revival or the Strategic Development & Planning Manager at the Council if the application is for a DFG.

APPENDIX 10 – STANDARDS AND LEGISLATION

Standards

Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People: A Good Practice Guide (ODPM, November 2004).

Guidance from the Department of Health encourages local authorities to build in the principle of prevention – so as to avoid the situation where a failure to meet an apparently lower level of need at one point in time, will result in that need escalating in the foreseeable future. For instance, provision of bathing equipment in January may avoid the person falling and fracturing a limb in April when trying to get in and out of the bath – and so avoid the greater expense to both the NHS and social services in dealing with the accident and its aftermath.

Legislation

The Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (CSDPA) is the main piece of legislation governing the provision of equipment and home adaptations by local authority social services departments. This applies to both disabled children and adults who are ordinarily resident in the area of the local authority.

The CSDPA states that a local authority must provide help to arrange the following if it is satisfied that it is necessary to meet a disabled person's needs:

- (i) any equipment or adaptations; or
- (ii) any other additional facilities designed to secure their greater safety, comfort or convenience.

Disability is defined with reference to s.29 of the National Assistance Act 1948 which in turns characterises it as:

- (i) blindness;
- (ii) deafness;
- (iii) dumbness;
- (iv) a mental disorder of any description; or
- (v) a substantial and permanent handicap through illness, injury or congenital deformity.

The definition of a 'substantial and permanent handicap' can be found in the Disability Discrimination Act 1995. This refers to an impairment that has a substantial and long-term adverse effect upon a person's ability to carry out normal day-to-day activities. The activities listed are:

- (i) mobility;
- (ii) manual dexterity;
- (iii) physical coordination;
- (iv) continence;

- (v) ability to lift, carry or otherwise move everyday objects;
- (vi) speech;
- (vii) hearing;
- (viii) eyesight;
- (ix) memory or ability to concentrate, learn or understand; and
- (x) perception of risk of physical danger.

The definition of a long-term effect of an impairment is:

- (i) as having already lasted for at least 12 months; or
- (ii) as likely to last for at least 12 months; or
- (iii) as likely to last for the rest of the person's life.

Where an older person is not regarded as being disabled, s.45 of the Health Services and Public Health Act 1968 gives the local authority the power to make adaptations to their home and provide additional facilities for their greater safety, comfort or convenience.

The NHS and Community Care Act 1990 established the requirement for a needs assessment to be carried out for any person that may be in need of community care services. This right to an assessment is extended to carers under The Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995, and further expanded for the carers of disabled children in The Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000.

The current legislative framework for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) is provided by The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. This gives local housing authorities a statutory duty to provide grant aid to people with disabilities for a range of adaptations to their homes.

Community Care (Delayed Discharges etc) Act 2003 states that any equipment that is assessed as necessary and costs less than £1,000 should be provided free of charge. There is discretion to charge for adaptations costing over £1,000.

Local Authorities' other legal duties relating to equipment and adaptations are set out in the following acts of Parliament:

- (i) Disabled Persons (Services, Consultation and Representation) Act 1986
- (ii) Children Act 1989
- (iii) Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002
- (iv) The Housing Health and Safety Ratings system was introduced in the Housing Act 2004.
- (v) Housing Rents and Subsidies Act 1975.

APPENDIX 11 - SERVICE STANDARDS

South Staffordshire Council have developed a Customer Charter which sets out our customer service standards that we are aspiring to achieve. We aim to be an organisation that is:

- Courteous, helpful, open and easy to contact
- Professional in our approach, taking pride in what we do
- Well informed, so that we can give customers the right information
- Committed to a 'one council approach' when delivering services
- Effective in listening and understanding different customers' needs
- Striving to continuously improve and engage with our customers to do so.

The full charter can be found on the Council website at www.sstaffs.gov.uk

In terms of housing assistance, both the Council and Revival aim to provide a high standard of service and as such you can expect: -

- A speedy response to enquiries
- Staff that are courteous and helpful
- To be kept informed of progress
- A survey and schedule of works
- Help with application forms if required
- Support in dealing with contractors
- Regular inspection of works up to and including completion
- Prompt payment of grant on satisfactory completion of works.

Revival's and the Council's targets for dealing with AGs, DFGs, and Decent Homes Grants are:

- To respond to your initial enquiry within 3 working days
- To inspect your living accommodation within 28 days of this response
- To provide a schedule of works within 14 days of the inspection in cases where grant aid is available
- To give a decision on a full and valid application within the following time scales:
 - AGs and DFGs – 1 month
 - Decent Homes Grants – 21 days to authorise payment of grant monies, including interim payments, within 14 days of the inspection of works subject to the satisfactory completion of relevant works and the provision of proper invoices and any other required documentation.

APPENDIX 12 - COMPLAINTS PROCEDURE

Whilst we will always do our very best to offer the high quality service that the public deserves, we are aware that sometimes things do go wrong.

If you do have a complaint you are encouraged to firstly discuss the matter with the Revival Case Officer or the Council Officer dealing with the grant application or enquiry who will attempt to address the problem.

If you are still dissatisfied you can either write to, or discuss the matter with:

Home Improvement Agency Manager
Revival Home Improvement Agency
308 London Road
Stoke-on-Trent
Staffordshire
ST4 5AB

Telephone: 0333 014 3389

Email: revival@staffshousing.org.uk

If you are unhappy with the performance of Revival, you can write to the Council's Strategic Development & Planning Manager at:

Strategic Development & Planning Service
South Staffordshire Council
Council Offices
Wolverhampton Road
Codsall
South Staffordshire
WV8 1PX

Telephone: 01902 696000

Email: regeneration@sstaffs.gov.uk

If you remain dissatisfied, the Council has an official complaints procedure, details of which are available on request from the Council Offices, or via the Council website: www.sstaffs.gov.uk.