



**South Staffordshire Council**

# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027



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<b>Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Legislative context</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Local context</b>	<b>4</b>
Housing Strategy	4
General principles of assistance	5
<b>Policy priorities and capital resources</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Equality and diversity</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>Summary of assistance</b>	<b>7</b>
Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)	8
Discretionary assistance	8
<b>How is assistance delivered?</b>	<b>13</b>
Option 1 - Fully managed application process	13
Option 2 - Customer contractor process	13
Option 3 - Customer managed process	13
<b>Fees and ancillary charges</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>Service standards and key targets</b>	<b>14</b>
<b>How will the assistance be paid?</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>What is not eligible for assistance?</b>	<b>16</b>
<b>Additional conditions</b>	<b>17</b>
<b>Decisions, notifications, and redeterminations</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Review of the council's decision</b>	<b>18</b>



# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## INTRODUCTION

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This policy sets out how South Staffordshire District Council (the council) will offer financial help for improving and adapting homes in the district, together with the conditions and eligibility criteria associated with each type of assistance. Its aim is to support residents to improve their health and wellbeing by addressing problems with unsuitable homes that do not meet their needs using the provisions of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

Ensuring that homes are decent, accessible, safe, and secure is not only important for the health and wellbeing of the occupants, but it is also vital for the sustainability of communities. Many residents have the necessary resources to maintain and repair their own homes; however, some may need some assistance to do this, especially those who are elderly, on a low income, or have disabilities.

This policy replaces all previously published housing assistance policies and will apply to all new applications from April 1st, 2023.

## LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

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Housing assistance is offered in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 with the underlying legislation governing the provision of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) covered by the 1996 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act. This enables the council to use its discretionary powers to make better use of its limited resources.

The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Part 1 as amended by the Disabled Facilities Grant Order 2008 states that the local authority has a statutory duty to provide adaptations to homes for disabled people. Funding for these adaptations is provided through DFG.

The Housing Act 2004 introduced the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) as a way of measuring Decent Homes and imposed a duty upon the council to act where Category 1 hazards as identified under HHSRS are present in a dwelling. Following this in 2006 the Department for Local Government and Communities published the standard for Decent Homes determining that a property must meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing, it must be in a reasonable state of repair, it must have reasonably modern facilities and services and it must provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort. The quality and standards of accommodation is an important factor in addressing health and wellbeing inequalities.

The Care Act 2014 states that local authorities must provide or arrange services, resources or facilities that maximise independence. DFG Guidance 2022 states that where the social care authority determines that a need has been established it is their duty to assist, even where the housing authority is unable to approve or to fully fund an application.

# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## LOCAL CONTEXT

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This policy links to the Council Plan 2020-2024 which outlines the strategic direction of the council and sets out the priorities and the vision for services. The overall life expectancy of residents in South Staffordshire is higher than the national average and the increase in the number of older people is also faster than the England average. This has significant implications for both social care provision and demand for adaptations funded via the Disabled Facilities Grant and other assistance available through this policy.

This policy aids to support vibrant communities through working with our communities to support the wellbeing of our residents.

## HOUSING STRATEGY

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This plan links to the Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2023-2027, in the priority “adapt existing homes and futureproof new homes to contribute to the health, wellbeing and independence of residents”. This is detailed in the objective “to deliver timely adaptations to existing homes.”

This Housing Assistance Policy can support upstream prevention of homelessness by providing funded adaptations and help with essential home improvements to ensure that disabled, vulnerable, and older people are not at risk of homelessness due to occupying unsuitable or unsafe homes.



# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## GENERAL PRINCIPLES OF ASSISTANCE

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All residents should have access to a safe, warm, and healthy home that meets their needs. The primary responsibility to maintain private homes lies with the owner. The council will support owners in fulfilling this responsibility by providing advice, support, and assistance to enable them to make use of their own resources to fund repairs and improvements and will only provide financial assistance where this is not possible or practical. In respect of residents with a disability and/or care needs, the council will assist residents who are owners and tenants to remain living independently within their homes where it is appropriate and practicable to do so.

### Applicants for assistance must:

- **be aged 18 or over, although applications for grants can be made on behalf of children under the age of 18 by a parent or guardian, and;**
- **be a UK citizen or able to prove they have the right to remain in the UK and;**
- **be permanently resident within the South Staffordshire District.**

Funding calculations are based on what the council considers to be a reasonable price for necessary work (known as the eligible expense). Grant/loan eligible expense will always exclude labour carried out by the applicant or a member of their family.

Please note, ongoing maintenance and repair of home improvements, adaptations and any equipment provided will become the responsibility of the applicant or landlord as relevant. The application may be refused if ownership of the property cannot be verified.

Payment will only be made if acceptable invoices are submitted upon completion.

Once approval has been given the applicant has 12 months from the date of the approval in which to complete the works, unless otherwise stated.

Financial assistance cannot be given retrospectively. Applicants are strongly advised not to start any eligible work before their application for assistance is approved.

The council may enter partnership or contractual arrangements with other organisations or agencies to deliver assistance in an effective and timely manner, such as a Home Improvement Agency or Energy Advice Service. Agencies engaged to provide support to applicants may help with sourcing suitable needs assessments, identification of solutions, specifications, documentation, engagement of contractors, works supervision and monitoring through to completion, sign off and managing payments.

Payment will normally be made direct to the main contractor(s) not their sub-contractors or grant applicant(s).



# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## POLICY PRIORITIES AND CAPITAL RESOURCES

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The following capital financial resources may be available to support the delivery of this policy:

- **Annual capital grant from central government distributed through the Better Care Fund (2022 -2023 an allocation of £1,126,662 was received and this grant level is forecast to be available until 2024 - 2025).**
- **Where capital monies are provided through the BCF they will be allocated for spending in line with decisions regarding capital expenditure agreed with the Health and Wellbeing Board.**
- **Money which may be provided from partners or other public sector organisations to address specified problems.**
- **Money obtained from charitable or other sources on behalf of customers.**

Local Housing Authorities are obliged first and foremost to deliver mandatory DFGs either via the 1996 Act route or an equally effective parallel pathway. Alternative discretionary assistance should not normally be promoted at the expense of delays to the statutory grant.

Where funding allows and subject to meeting the requirement for mandatory and discretionary assistance part of the funding may be allocated for specified capital projects to meet specific identified social care housing related needs.

Information regarding budget spend and service demand will be used to make necessary changes to the range and financial level of each type of grant assistance and/or the development of new types of assistance.

This Policy is designed to contribute towards the council's and partners strategic aims and objectives by assisting with:

- **Supporting the improvement of housing quality in accordance with the grant provisions.**
- **Enable older and disabled people to stay well, safe, connected to the community and independent at home for longer through supporting the provision of aids and adaptation or an appropriate move to suitable accommodation.**
- **Safeguard the health and well-being of residents by removing unnecessary hazards to health in the home with prioritisation towards the older, disabled, and vulnerable.**
- **Support the reduction in demand for services from social care, health and support social wellbeing.**
- **Improving the environment and using sustainable materials and recycling adaptations where possible and working with contractors who work in a sustainable way.**

# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY

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The council recognises the importance of fair treatment and the positive promotion of equality and to prevent discrimination on any grounds.

This policy will be applied fairly and consistently to all our residents and will act sensitively towards the diverse needs of individuals and communities. It will not directly or indirectly discriminate against any person or group of people, and we will take positive action to reduce discrimination and harassment.

The Housing Assistance Policy has been written in line with legislation and covers all the 'protected characteristics' as detailed in the Equalities Act 2010.

## SUMMARY OF ASSISTANCE

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In addition to mandatory DFGs, the council has determined our local priorities to offer a range of discretionary grants to assist residents, where there is sufficient funding available.

The Policy grants discretion to make minor amendments to the eligibility criteria, level of grant or assistance and delegates that authority to the DFG Support Service if it can be demonstrated that any such changes will help the council meet its strategic housing objectives and/or better care fund metrics.

The following tables provide a summary of the assistance provided through each of the schemes available under this policy.





# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## MANDATORY DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS (DFGs)

This grant is set out within legislation and is included for completeness and to outline the local variations that South Staffordshire Council has adopted regarding the inclusion of warranty costs and council tax support as a passporting benefit.

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants	
<b>Eligible applicants</b>	Anyone with a permanent disability aged 18 or over or anyone applying on behalf of someone under 18 with a permanent disability.
<b>Tenure</b>	All tenures.
<b>Land charge</b>	All works over the value of £5,000 will be subject to the statutory land charge for a period of 10 years from the date of completion.
<b>Warranty provision</b>	An extended warranty is included in the purchase cost of all lifts and wash/dry toilets. Generally, this will be for a five-year period.
<b>Maximum value</b>	£30,000 or as per the current statutory limit if this changes.
<b>Means test</b>	Works are subject to the statutory means test. Local amendment to the means test: <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• To include council tax support as a passporting benefit.</li></ul>
<b>Application form</b>	Standard DFG application form and accompanying paperwork.



## DISCRETIONARY ASSISTANCE

Further assistance is available with the following aims:

- To speed up administration and the processing of grant funded work.
- To broaden the scope of works available.
- To provide financial assistance that is not covered by mandatory funding.

Grants labelled discretionary may be revised, prioritised, or withdrawn, without prior notice as they are subject to the council having sufficient financial resources.



# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## 1. Top-Up Grant in additional to the mandatory grant

Eligible Applicants	Those eligible for Mandatory DFG, using the same assessment criteria.
Tenure	All tenures.
Land Charge	The full value of any grant awarded would be placed as a 10-year land charge from the date of completion of works. This land charge is in addition to any Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant Land charge or charge incurred as a result of other forms of discretionary assistance.
Maximum Value	Up to an additional £25,000 (£55,000 in total) can be approved by the Welfare and Benefit Team Manager. Amounts above £25,000 (£55,000 in total) will be considered on an exceptions basis by the Cabinet Member and Assistant Director for Welfare Services.
Means Test	No additional means test applied.
Eligible works	Available towards the cost of mandatory scheme eligible building works only. Not available for equipment that isn't normally provided via the DFG.
Limitations	One application in any five-year period.
Application Form	A short application form to include consent to the additional land charge.

## 2. Discretionary Contribution Support

Eligible Applicants	Those eligible for Mandatory DFG, using the same assessment criteria.
Tenure	All tenures.
Land Charge	No land charge will be placed.
Maximum Value	£5,000.
Means Test	Mandatory DFG means test.
Eligible works	Mandatory DFG works.
Limitations	Funding will be reviewed on an individual case basis.
Application Form	Eligibility for funding will be assessed based on the mandatory DFG application form.

## 3. Professional Fees Grant

Eligible Applicants	Those determined as eligible for Mandatory DFG.
Tenure	All tenures.
Land Charge	No.
Maximum Value	£2,500.
Means Test	No additional means test.
Eligible works	Fees approved by Manager of the DFG service where the DFG does not proceed. Fees are paid directly to Professional providing the service.
Limitations	Fees will not be eligible for payment under this scheme unless the application cannot proceed due to circumstances beyond the control of either the applicant or the council's DFG Service.
Application Route	No additional application paperwork required.

# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## 4. Major Equipment Grant

Eligible Applicants	Those assessed as having eligible needs under the criteria for Mandatory DFG.
Tenure	All tenures.
Land Charge	No.
Maximum Value	£10,000.
Means Test	No means test.
Eligible works	The installation of fixed equipment including lifts, hoists, wash/dry toilets, and modular ramps to enable the purposes of DFG.
Limitations	Only one application will be considered in any three-year rolling period, if further fixed equipment is required then it will be considered for Mandatory DFG assistance. The applicant must be a permanent resident in the property where adaptations are required.
Application Route	Application will be identical in every way to a Mandatory DFG, but there will be no means test applied.

## 5. Dementia Friendly Dwelling Grants

Eligible Applicants	Residents with a diagnosis of dementia or associated condition.
Tenure	All tenures.
Land Charge	No land charge.
Maximum Value	£5,000.
Means Test	There will be no means test applied.
Eligible works	The types of works available may include: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provision of a safe space.</li> <li>• Colour and contrast decorating.</li> <li>• Carbon monoxide/cold/heat alarms.</li> <li>• Lighting.</li> <li>• Safety flooring.</li> <li>• Digital assistive technology.</li> </ul> <p>This list is not exhaustive, and each case will be considered with advice from an Occupational Therapist or Dementia specialist.</p>
Limitations	Only one application in any three-year rolling period will be considered. The applicant must be a permanent resident in the property where adaptations are required.
Application Route	Applications will be managed by the DFG Support Service for the council using a specific application form. All applications must be supported by a confirmed diagnosis and works supported by either an Occupational Therapist or Dementia Specialist worker.



# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## 6. Second Property Grant

Eligible Applicants	Parents of a disabled child who is subject to a Court Order regarding residency following family breakdown.
Tenure	All tenures.
Land Charge	The full cost of works funded under this grant will be placed as a land charge for a 10-year period from the certified date of completion.
Maximum Value	£30,000.
Means Test	No means test will apply, as works must relate to a disabled child.
Eligible works	Adaptations determined as the mandatory scheme under the DFG criteria.
Limitations	<p>In cases where families separate, and a Court Order provides that residency of the subject disabled child is split between two households, the Authority may consider the award of discretionary DFG to one property.</p> <p>Mandatory DFG can only be provided to the 'sole or main residence' of the disabled applicant; main residence is determined by which party receives Child Benefit.</p> <p>Under this discretion, adaptations may be provided in a second home, which is not the primary residence of the disabled individual, but which facilitates access to necessary respite care (including foster placements).</p> <p>Factors to be considered include the specific details of any order, likely time to be spent at each property, whether the child will stay overnight at the subject property and for what period. Advice will be taken from the Occupational Therapist and Children's Social Worker where relevant.</p> <p>The principles of mandatory DFG funding apply.</p>
Application Route	Applications will be managed by the DFG support service for the council.

## 7. Hospital Discharge Grant

Eligible Applicants	Disabled people who have been admitted to hospital and don't live with related, non-vulnerable adults.
Tenure	All tenures.
Land Charge	No land charge will apply.
Maximum Value	£10,000.
Means Test	No means test will be applied.
Eligible works	<p>Works must be necessary to facilitate a hospital discharge, where issues within the home are identified as a reason for delayed discharge.</p> <p>The type of works may include but are not limited to repairs to reduce hazards or risks that are likely to cause serious harm or injury, modifications to stairs, floors and steps, repairs to remove identified Category 1 hazards, (including heating repairs), house clearances and disinfestations.</p>
Limitations	<p>The property must be the permanent residence of the disabled person.</p> <p>The work must be required to facilitate hospital discharge.</p>
Application Route	Applications will be managed by the DFG support service for the council.

# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## 8. Admission Prevention Grant

Eligible Applicants	Disabled people who do not live with related non-vulnerable adults. It is aimed at residents with arthritis (requiring ongoing treatment and monitoring), respiratory and cardiovascular conditions.
Tenure	All tenures may apply.
Land Charge	The full cost of works funded under this grant will be placed as a land charge for a 10-year period from the certified date of completion.
Maximum Value	£10,000.
Means Test	Applicants must be in receipt of a means tested benefit as identified as a statutory passporting benefit within the mandatory DFG.
Eligible works	<p>Works should be identified as preventing admission to hospital, residential or nursing care by assisting with adaptations or works that reduce the likelihood of slips, trips and falls in and around the home.</p> <p>The type of works may include but are not limited to, repairs to reduce hazards or risks that are likely to cause serious harm or injury, modifications to stairs, floors and steps, repairs to remove identified Category 1 hazards, (including heating repairs), house clearances and disinfestations.</p>
Limitations	<p>The property must be the permanent residence of the disabled person.</p> <p>The works must meet the identified criteria regarding admission prevention and the applicant must meet the eligibility criteria in full.</p>
Application Route	Applications will be managed by the DFG support service for the council.

## 9. Relocation Grant

Eligible Applicants	Those eligible for Mandatory DFG.
Tenure	All tenures.
Land Charge	The full cost of works funded under this grant will be placed as a land charge against the property moved into (where the applicant is an owner) for a 10-year period from the certified date of completion.
Maximum Value	£10,000.
Means Test	The Mandatory DFG means test will apply.
Eligible works	<p>The specific eligible relocation eligible expenses are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Estate agent fees.</li> <li>• Solicitor costs.</li> <li>• Survey costs.</li> <li>• Stamp duty.</li> <li>• Removal expenses.</li> <li>• Disconnection/reconnection of appliances.</li> <li>• Occupational therapy assessment costs for assessing properties.</li> </ul>
Limitations	<p>Applicants must be moving from a property which is their main residence to a property which will be their main residence within the South Staffordshire District.</p> <p>Assistance will not be given towards the purchase price of a property.</p> <p>Applications must be supported by an Occupational Therapist who must confirm that the new property will meet the needs of the disabled person or be suitable for adaptation at a reasonable cost.</p> <p>If the move is aborted at the fault or choice of the applicant, costs will not be paid.</p>
Application Route	Applications will be managed by the DFG support service for the council.



# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## HOW IS ASSISTANCE DELIVERED?

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All types of discretionary assistance offered through this policy will be managed by the council's DFG support service.

For the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant only there are three options available to residents regarding the way in which a DFG application can be supported and made.

### **Option 1 - Fully managed application process**

The council's DFG support service will fully manage the application on behalf of the applicant through an agreement between the applicant and the service. This is the easiest and least stressful option for an applicant, particularly for more extensive adaptations, as the service will organise and manage both the application and the work.

The Team will:

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

### **Option 2 - Customer contractor process**

This option is where an applicant may wish to use the services of the council's DFG support service to prepare their application for a grant, including the preparation of drawings, but wishes to use their own choice of contractor to carry out the works.

A comprehensive information pack will be provided to any applicants who wish to pursue this option including the role that the DFG support service and the responsibilities regarding the works which will transfer to the applicant.

### **Option 3 - Customer managed process**

This option is where an applicant may wish to complete all elements of the application, supporting information and building management themselves. An applicant can use their own architect or draftsman and contractors to plan, develop or build a preferred scheme.

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

# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## FEES AND ANCILLARY CHARGES

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The council will consider reasonable fees for financial assistance. The following fees will be eligible for financial assistance if they have been properly incurred in making an application or seeking approval for the proposed works, or to ensure the satisfactory completion of works assisted under this policy when funded through Mandatory DFG funding or any associated grants.

- Land Registry check
- Relevant legal fees
- Technical and structural surveys
- Design and preparation of plans and drawings
- Preparation of schedules of relevant works
- Assistance in completing forms.
- Applications for building regulations approval (including application fee and preparation of related documents), planning permission, listed building consent and conservation area consent (and similar)
- Obtaining of estimates
- Consideration of tenders
- Supervision of the relevant works
- Disconnection and reconnection of utilities required by relevant works
- Payment of contractors
- In a case where the application is for adaptations support, the reasonable services, and charges of a (private) Occupational Therapist in relation to the relevant works.

## SERVICE STANDARDS AND KEY TARGETS

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There are no national standards for the services provided through this policy excepting a statutory requirement for councils to determine valid and fully made applications for Mandatory DFG's within six months.

In practice, when an application is fully prepared by the DFG support service and is submitted for funding approval it will be at a point where, subject to funds being available, a grant approval determination should be available within 10 working days.

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

The DFG support service is committed to ensuring good quality customer service and the performance measures used are based around measuring and improving the quality of service and customer outcomes as well as ensuring improvements in the speed of service delivery.

The service aims to apply the funding it receives fully each year with minimal waiting lists and with maximum benefit to customers.



# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## HOW WILL THE ASSISTANCE BE PAID?

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The assistance will only be paid if.

- The assisted works are completed within 12 months from the date of the approval unless the delay was caused by the council, or an appropriate approval time-extension has been agreed due to exceptional circumstances. Applications for extensions will be considered on a case-by-case basis.
- The assisted works are carried out in accordance with the specifications set out in the formal approval or as varied with the prior agreement of the council.
- The assisted works are carried out to the satisfaction of the council and the applicant.
- The council is provided with an invoice, demand, or receipt for payment in an acceptable format.

Invoices from the contractor(s) must be addressed to the applicant and must contain sufficient detail for the council to identify in full, the works carried out, the price charges and any variations previously agreed with the council.

The payment of the assistance to the contractor may be made via the applicant, or directly to the contractor engaged by the applicant.

The assistance may be paid in one lump-sum on satisfactory completion of the works or by staged payments as the work proceeds. Stage payments (interim payments) will only be made where the council, is satisfied that the value of work completed exceeds the value claimed. A maximum of two stage payments and final payment will be considered.

The council will not enter any form of contract with a builder or contractor, and, in the absence of any agency agreement with the applicant, it is a matter for the applicant to agree any contract with the builder or contractor. Whilst the council's Standing Orders on procurement do not directly apply as no contract exists with the council, the principles of the Standing Orders will be referred to for determining the administration of procedures regarding the obtaining of quotes, etc.

The provision of assistance other than Mandatory DFG is subject to the availability of funding. All applications will be considered based on the identified needs and circumstances of the applicant or household.

Assistance may be offered in a variety of forms including, but not restricted to, financial assistance, advice, provision of materials and carrying out of works. Advice offered may include Housing Options advice to ensure the most appropriate option for the applicant or household is considered and may include advice on housing rights, benefits entitlement, repairs or improvements, energy efficiency, re-housing or signposting to other agencies or services.

The council may, in the future, enter a partnership or contractual arrangements with other organisations or agencies to deliver assistance in an effective and timely manner.

The provision of mandatory grants and discretionary financial assistance will be subject to internal and external auditing to ensure adequate procedures are in place and followed and that there is appropriate use of public funds.

# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## WHAT IS NOT ELIGIBLE FOR ASSISTANCE?

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1. Works that the owner has a statutory duty to carry out and it is reasonable for them to do so.
2. Works on a property that is not regarded as a permanent residence.
3. Assistance will not normally be given for work started before formal approval of an application, except that:
  - d. The council may in exceptional circumstances exempt an application from this condition for example where a defect may present a serious risk to health and safety.
  - e. The council may, with consent of the applicant, treat the application as varied so exclude any works that have been started before approval.
4. Works covered by insurance, where during the application process, it is found that an applicant can make an insurance claim, the insurance company will be requested to confirm in writing the level of their liability, if any. The level of assistance will be reduced by an amount equivalent to the insurance company's liability. Where assistance is approved, a condition will be imposed requiring the applicant to pursue any relevant claim against an insurance company or third party.
5. If a subsequent insurance claim is successful, any financial assistance that has been given should be repaid out of the proceeds of such a claim.
6. Where works are required as part of a personal injuries claim, and funding has been provided within the settlement.
7. Where the applicant is the owner at the point the assistance is agreed but ceases to be the owner before the works are completed, the amount of assistance already paid must be repaid to the council.
8. Where there are common parts of a dwelling the council will only consider assistance for the reasonable sum or proportion of the applicant's liability. The applicant must prove a repairing liability for the common parts.
9. Assistance is allowed for caravans and houseboats used as a main residence, subject to meeting other eligibility requirements. Holiday residencies, caravans on holiday sites or sites with restricted occupancy, second homes (as defined by council revenue's criteria) and sheds, outbuildings or appurtenances will not qualify for assistance.
10. The council may refuse any application for assistance where the required information is not provided.

# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## ADDITIONAL CONDITIONS

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1. The council will determine whether prices provided by contractors meet value for money. In determining this, similar jobs priced within the last year will be considered. The DFG support service may liaise with the relevant body or contractor to check the specification and any estimates, as part of the procurement procedure.
2. If the DFG support service believes the price for contracts are too high and identifies an appropriate price for this work (which is lower) they will advise the client that the total eligible assistance will be the lower amount. The client is under no obligation to use the lower priced contractor but must be aware the council will only make a grant or assistance payment up to the value of the lower price.
3. In the case of an application for a DFG, where the client chooses to pursue a different scheme of works or an enhanced scheme of works the client will be advised the council will only provide assistance to the value of the scheme of works that satisfies the basic primary requirement(s) identified by the report of the Occupational Therapy Service, subject to the preferred scheme also meeting the primary requirements.
4. Where the client deviates from the scheme of work(s) submitted and subsequently approved by the council without prior consultation or agreement with the DFG support service, the council may rescind the approval or refuse to make any further payment of assistance. The council may also seek to recover any interim assistance payments previously made against the approved scheme.
5. Where a grant condition imposes a liability to repay the assistance, or a part thereof, the condition will be registered by the council as a land charge.
6. Where assistance has been approved the works must be completed within 12 months of the approval date, except where an extension of time, not exceeding six months has been agreed by the council. Where no extension is agreed the council may rescind the approval or refuse to make any further payment of assistance. The council may also seek to recover any interim assistance payments previously made against the approved scheme.
7. The council may, where financial or operational demands dictate, defer payment of a Disabled Facilities Grant for a period not exceeding 12 months. Any deferment will be detailed in the approval notice.
8. The council reserves the right to impose additional conditions when making a grant/assistance approval. These may include but are not restricted to:
  - i. A contribution to the cost of the assisted works by the applicant.
  - ii. The right to nominate tenants to housing accommodation available for rent.
  - iii. Housing accommodation being maintained in a good state of repair after completion of the assisted works.
  - iv. The right of the council or its appointed agent to recover specialised equipment when no longer needed.
9. The council recognises that this policy cannot cover every likely situation and there may be persons who genuinely need some form of urgent support that are precluded from accessing assistance due to a specific aspect. In these situations, applications may be considered, where support would help the council meet its strategic objectives.



# Housing Assistance Policy 2023 - 2027

## DECISIONS, NOTIFICATIONS, AND REDETERMINATIONS

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The council will notify the applicant in writing when their application has been approved or refused. The decision will be notified as soon as reasonably practical and, in any event, no later than six months after receipt of a full and valid application.

If the application is approved, the notification will specify the eligible works, the value of the assistance and the builder/contractor who will execute the works. In the case of a Disabled Facilities Grant the council may, where financial or operational demands dictate, defer payment of the assistance for a period not exceeding 12 months. Any deferment will be detailed within the grant approval notice.

If the application for assistance is refused, the council will give the reasons for the refusal and confirm the procedure for appealing the decision.

Where assistance has been approved and the council is satisfied that changes in the assisted costs could not have reasonably been foreseen, the council may, at their discretion re-determine the assistance given and notify the applicant accordingly by issue of a re-approval notice.

Additional works or deviations from the approved works carried out without prior approval of the council will not be considered for any increased financial assistance and would remain the responsibility of the applicant to fund.

## REVIEW OF THE COUNCIL'S DECISION

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Any person having made a valid application for Mandatory DFG or Discretionary Assistance may request a review of the decision not to consider or to refuse an application.

A request for a review of the decision of must be submitted to the council within 21 days of the date of the decision letter. The request must be in writing. A review of the decision will be undertaken, and the decision will be notified to the applicant in writing. If the person remains dissatisfied with the review decision, they have the right to go through the council's Corporate Complaints procedure or approach the Local Government Ombudsman.

Complaints about service delivery rather than Policy must be made to the council who will investigate the complaint in accordance with their Complaints Procedure which is available on request. A copy of the council's complaints process can be found at

**<https://www.sstaffs.gov.uk/contact-us/comments-compliments-complaints>**



**South Staffordshire Council**

[www.sstaffs.gov.uk](http://www.sstaffs.gov.uk)

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