

PROPOSED

**City of York Council Assistance Policy
for the Private Housing Sector**



Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996
The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)
(England & Wales) Order 2002

Effective from	1st April 2009
To be reviewed at the latest by	31st March 2011

Introduction

The Government's view is that it is primarily the responsibility of homeowners to maintain their own property but accepts some homeowners, particularly the elderly and most vulnerable, do not have the necessary resources to keep their homes in safe and good repair. This policy reflects this safety net approach and will develop future policies to provide advice and information to help homeowners arrange their own financial packages to maintain their homes.

The policy also recognises that the poorest conditions remain in the private rented sector and offers help to the owners. In particular it focuses on improving the energy efficiency of a properties and ensuring the maximum use of the private sector housing stock.

The following types of grants, loans & assistance are available subject to the eligibility criteria and conditions. The Housing Standards and Adaptations Manager will consider exceptional circumstances outside the scope of the policy.

Disabled Facilities GrantPurpose of the grant

The grant is to help people who have a disability adapt their home to make it easier for them to continue to live there or maintain their independence. The government sets out what the grant can be used for and a maximum amount that can be paid – this is called the mandatory grant. City of York council will in addition pay a discretionary amount for the reasons set out below.

Who is eligible for a grant?

The disabled person must be registered as disabled with Housing and Adult Social Services or meet the criteria for registration if they applied.

The applicant must be either an owner or private tenant. Owners or tenants of houseboats & park homes are included.

What work will the grant cover?

A recommendation is required from an occupational therapist employed by the council that the work is necessary & appropriate. The work needs to meet one or more of the following mandatory purposes. :-

- Facilitating access to and from the dwelling or building by the disabled occupant
- Making the dwelling or building safe for the disabled occupant
- Access to the principal family room by the disabled occupant
- Access to or providing a bedroom for the disabled occupant
- Access to or providing a room containing a bath or shower for the disabled occupant or facilitating the use by the occupant of such a facility
- Access to or providing a room containing a WC for the disabled occupant or facilitating the use by the occupant of such a facility
- Access to or providing a room containing a wash hand basin for the disabled occupant or facilitating the use by the occupant of such a facility
- Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled person
- Improving or providing a heating system for the disabled person
- Facilitating the use of power, light or heat by the disabled person by altering same or providing additional means of control
- Facilitating access & movement around the dwelling to enable the disabled person to provide care for someone.
- Access to gardens – see annex 1

An application is normally approved if it is considered reasonable & practicable to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age & condition of the dwelling, building, houseboat or park home.

How much grant will be given

Normally the disabled person and any partner are means tested to determine the amount of their contribution towards the cost of the work.

Where the grant is for eligible work for a disabled or the disabled person is on one of the qualifying benefits then the applicant will be passported through the means testing

The maximum mandatory grant is £30000

Other Conditions

Repayment of grant:

Property Charges will apply to all grant works that exceed £5000 (excluding any agency or professional fees)

The following exceptions will apply:

- External and internal lifts and through floor lifts.
- Permanent ramps within the existing footprint of the property
- Where a low-level wheelchair accessible kitchen has been installed.

- Where adapted bathing or toileting facilities have been provided within the existing footprint of the property.

Where multiple works have been carried out on one application and the works exceed £5,000 excluding any of the above named items then a charge shall be made.

The charges will last for **ten years** from the Certified date of the grant.

Multi application DFGs

Where a client has several Disabled Facilities Grants successively, each, if over £5000, will have its own land charge applied to it.

It is a condition of grant that if an owner (also being the recipient of the grant) to which the application relates, disposes of the property (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) then they shall repay to the Council on demand the amount of grant, over and above £5,000, that has been paid, subject to a maximum repayment of £10,000.

In addition, the normal conditions prescribed under the Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996 that relate to Disabled Facilities Grants will remain.

In the event of a breach of a condition, the owner for the time being of the dwelling shall on demand repay to the Council the amount of the grant.

Discretionary Adaptations Grant

Discretionary help may also be available for the following purposes: -

- For assisted purchase of a more appropriate property subject to the cost effectiveness of the scheme and means test of the applicant.
- For relocation expenses up to maximum of £5,000 if a more suitable property is available.

There is a limited budget each year for this assistance and each case will be considered on an individual basis.

Discretionary Adaptation Loan

Who is eligible for a loan?

A disabled person who is has been awarded a mandatory disabled facility grant but there is shortfall between the cost of the eligible work and the mandatory maximum grant of £ 30000.00

How much loan will be given?

Normally the maximum amount of loan is £10,000.00. Unless the applicant is able to demonstrate that they cannot access a commercial loan or a Home Appreciation Loan.

Other Conditions

Repayment of loan-It is a condition of loan that if an owner (also being the recipient of the grant) to which the application relates, disposes of the property (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) then they shall repay to the Council on demand the amount of loan that has been paid. In exceptional circumstances where the client has successive loans each, will have its own land charge applied to it.

Minor Adaptations

Who is eligible for help?

The disabled person must be registered as disabled with Housing and Adult Social Services or meet the criteria for registration if they applied.

The applicant must be either an owner or private tenant.

What work is covered?

Minor adaptations are simple adaptations that cost less than £1000.00 and the council arranges for their installation following an assessment and recommendation that it meets the disabled persons needs by an Occupational Therapist employed by the council or the North Yorkshire and York Primary Care Trust or the Acute Trust.

Types of work typically fitted include:

- Grab rails
- Hand rails
- Bannister rails
- Door entry systems
- Alterations to steps
- Widening of a door or path

Where there are multiple adaptations which exceed the £1000.00 these items will be considered as part of disabled facilities grant not individually.

Owner Occupied Sector

Help for owner-occupiers to carry out work to ensure that there are no health and safety hazards and that their home meets the decent homes standard

- The Home Safety Loan
- The Home Appreciation Loan (see end of policy)
- Energy Efficiency Grant

Home Safety Loan

Purpose of the loan

The loan is paid for items of disrepair and urgent works affecting the occupants' health or safety.

Who is eligible for a loan?

To qualify for assistance an applicant must normally: -

- a) Be aged 18 or over
- b) Be an owner or private tenant or an occupant with a right of exclusive occupation for a period of more than five years
- c) Have a power or duty to carry out the works
- d) Be either 60 or over, disabled, or have a child under 16 living with them **and** be in receipt of one of the qualifying benefits:
 - Income Support
 - Guaranteed Pension Credit
 - Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
 - Council Tax Benefit – not single person discount
 - Working Tax Credit
 - Child Tax Credit (if your household income is less than £15,460 per yr)*

* Or where the applicant earns more than the £15460 but less than 20K and is able to demonstrate that they cannot access a commercial loan.

e) Have lived in the property for 12 months prior to making the application (or three years if applying under an exclusive right of occupancy). Where an applicant lives in a mobile home (park home) on a licensed site or on a houseboat with mooring rights they must satisfy a three-year qualification period.

What work will the loan cover?

The purpose for which a Home Safety Loan may be approved is to help the applicant to remove a Category 1 hazard, arising from defects in the dwelling.

The Council may only approve a Home Safety Loan where it is satisfied that no other more specific or appropriate assistance is reasonably available. The types of work which normally can be loan aided include:

- Roof repairs
- Repair/replacement of doors & windows
- Defective electrical wiring
- Defective plumbing including lead pipe work
- Repair/replacement of gutters, down pipes etc
- Defective stairs/floors
- Remedying dampness
- Repairs to drains
- Repairs to dangerous boundary walls
- Structural faults (if not covered through insurance)
- Preliminary fees essential to arranging a loan to carry out repairs or fees charged by a Regional loans Service
- Security measures – where the work is recommended by the Safer York Partnership

The council will provide a schedule of work which will be eligible for the loan

Where the Council is considering an application for a Home Safety Loan and has identified a Category 1 Hazard and is satisfied that the most satisfactory course of action is to undertake works, these works will need to be carried out before any other works to remove a Category 2 Hazard or to meet the decent homes standard.

How much loan will be given

The maximum interest free loan will normally be £4000.00 and is restricted to one application within ten years. Any grant or loans paid under previous policies from the 1st April 2003 will be taken into account when determining eligibility to reapply.

Where the work exceeds more than £ 4000.00 then the applicant will be offered the home appreciation loan.

There is a limited budget each year for this assistance and enquiries will be dealt with in date order in a waiting list system.

Other Conditions

Repayment of loan-It is a condition of loan that if an owner (also being the recipient of the grant) to which the application relates, disposes of the property (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) then they shall repay to the Council on demand the amount of loan that has been paid. In exceptional circumstances where the client has successive loans each, will have its own land charge applied to it.

Energy Efficiency Grant

Purpose of Grant

To install loft and wall insulation, and upgrade heating to meet the decent homes standard

Who is eligible for the grant?

To qualify for the grant there must be at least one permanent resident in the household:

- a) over the age of 60 to be eligible for a cavity wall and loft insulation grant and where the applicant is

b) over 70 to be eligible for heating measures to meet decent home standards

The household must occupy a dwelling which is banded A, B or C Council tax purposes. It cannot be an unregistered annex or “granny flat”

The eligible occupant must own, or part own or be married to or partner the owner of the property

What the grant will be for

The type of work which normally can be grant aided include:

- Wall insulation where the construction of the building allows the external walls of the dwelling to receive cavity wall insulation. Walls of adjoining dwellings within the same building will not be insulated under the grant,
- Loft insulation where dwellings lie directly below an accessible loft space, the loft space above the dwelling will receive mineral wool insulation where it is practical and possible to install. Existing insulation will be increased to a depth at least 250mm from any thickness below 75mm.
- Heating will be upgraded to meet the decent home standard.

Top up Warmfront Grant

Purpose of a grant

Where a vulnerable customer is eligible for the national scheme Warmfront but there is shortfall in help to fund the specified work may be grant aided to a maximum of £500.00

Who is eligible for the grant

Customers who have an approved Warmfront grant

What work will the grant cover?

The type of work normally covered is:

- Work covered by the warm front grant

There will be limited budget each year for this assistance and enquires will be dealt with in date order in a waiting list system.

To ensure a simple and streamlined administrative system the council will use its partner the energy partnership through a service level agreement to administer the grant scheme.

Private Rented Sector

Help for owners of private rented accommodation to carry out work to ensure that there are no health and safety hazards and that their home meets the decent homes standard.

Introduction

There are three forms of help available to the owners:

- an empty properties grant and
- a loan for existing tenanted properties.
- or affordable warmth Grant

Empty Properties Grant

Purpose of grant

The grant is to help owners bring empty properties back into use as dwellings.

Who is eligible for a grant?

To qualify for assistance the owner must be the freeholder of the property or have a lease with at least ten years unexpired term at the time of application. The owner must either

- Option A: enter into a leasehold agreement with a partner housing association for a minimum of five years from the completion of the works or
- Option B: enter in to a written formal agreement for a minimum of three years with the Homeless Prevention Service

What the grant will be for

The grant is for the work that will make the empty dwelling meet the decency standard as determined by the Council.

How much grant will be given

Option A) Leasehold agreement

The grant limit is 75% of the cost of the eligible works up to a maximum of £20,000 of which £2000 is payable to the Housing Association for initial set up costs.

Option B) Formal Agreement

The grant limit is 75% of the cost of the eligible works up to a maximum of £10,000.

Additional capital finance for the improvement works necessary to meet the decent homes standard will be met either by the owner or by the housing association through negotiation with the owner. Evidence of this additional funding must be in place before the grant is paid.

Other conditions

The grant application will be made by the owner of the property but the Council will determine the eligibility of the proposed schedule of works.

- Only one grant approval per property will normally be available.
- These grants are repayable should the property be sold or no longer used for letting within the following time periods
 - Option A: Leasehold agreement- five years of completion of the works.
 - Option B: Formal agreement- three years of completion of the works-
- Lettings as holiday lets or to family members are not eligible. Existing tenanted properties.

Decent Home Loan

Purpose of Loan

The loan is to help owners bring existing licensed Houses in Multiple Occupation up to the decency standard as determined by the Council.

Who is eligible for a loan?

To qualify for assistance the owner must be the freeholder of the property or have a lease with at least five years unexpired term at the time of application. The property, must be an existing house in multiple occupations and licensed by the City of York Council in accordance with the Housing Act 2004.

What the loan will be for

The Council will provide a schedule of works eligible for grant assistance.

How much loan will be given

The loan limit is 50% of the cost of the eligible works up to a maximum of £4,000.

Other conditions

Only one loan approval per property will be available. The maximum interest free loan will normally be £4000.00 and is restricted to one application. Any grant or loans paid under previous policies from the 1st April 2003 will be taken into account when determining eligibility to reapply.

Lettings as holiday lets or to family members are not eligible.

Affordable Warmth Grant

Purpose of Grant

The grant is to help owners of tenanted properties to carry out the work as determined by the Energy Performance certificate

Who is eligible for a Grant?

To qualify for assistance the owner must be the freeholder of the property or have a lease with at least five years unexpired term at the time of application.

What the grant will be for

The Council will provide a schedule of works eligible for loan assistance based on the improvement work specified in the Energy Performance certificate for the property

How much grant will be given

The grant will cover the cost of the eligible works up to a maximum of £2,000.

Other conditions

Only one grant approval per property will be available.

Lettings as holiday lets or to family members are not eligible.

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Home Appreciation Loan

Purpose of the loan

A home appreciation loan (HAL) is an equity release loan to assist vulnerable homeowners in bringing their homes up to health and safety standards and decency standards or to assist with adapting the property.

Who is eligible for a loan?

To qualify for assistance an applicant must normally: -

- a) be aged 18 or over
- b) be a home owner **and**
- c) be either 60 or over, disabled, or have a child under 16 living with them or 26 weeks pregnant and be on one of the following qualifying benefit

THIS IS A LIST OF QUALIFYING BENEFITS	
For people over 60, or at least 26 weeks pregnant, or with children under 16:- and at least one of the following: -	For anybody else
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auto qualify - Income Support • Auto qualify - Guaranteed Pension Credit • Auto qualify - Income Based Job Seekers Allowance (over 60s only) • Council Tax Benefit – not single person discount • Attendance Allowance • Disability Living Allowance • Working Tax Credit (if including a disability element and household income is less than £15,460 per year) • Child Tax Credit (if your household income is less than £15,460 per yr) • Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (including Constant Attendance Allowance) • War Disability Pension (including Mobility Support) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Auto qualify - Income Support • Council Tax Benefit (including disability element) • Housing Benefit (including disability element) • Attendance Allowance • Disability Living Allowance • Working Tax Credit (if including a disability element and household income is less than £15,050 per year) • Child Tax Credit (if your household income is less than £15,050 per yr) • Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (including Constant Attendance Allowance) • War Disability Pension (including Mobility Support)

and unable to access commercial loans

What work will the loan cover?

- The HAL can only be used to cover works that have been specified and agreed on the schedule of works provided by the local authority. The types of which work which will be considered:
- To meet the health and safety and decency standards – examples are rewiring, roof repairs and window replacements
- Energy efficiency works such as central heating boilers, replacement radiators

- Works to meet the decency standards such as replacing the kitchen or bathroom including tiling to these rooms if required. The amount will not normally be restricted for kitchen bathroom however only reasonable costs of these items will be considered to include a reasonable quality of fixture and fittings, the local authority to determine the reasonable amount. Kitchen appliances such as cookers, washers fridge freezers etc are not covered by the loan scheme.
- To cover the costs of any shortfall on mandatory disabled facilities grants that have been agreed by local authorities including any clients contribution, which is more than £2000.00 pounds.
- Any disabled adaptations that a client may have to pay for themselves.
- Consideration will also be given to homeowners that wish to use the HAL for overcrowding purposes e.g. loft conversions if it will provide necessary space for a family. There is a limit to the amount of HAL which will be considered for this purpose and it must be agreed by the Local authority and the Yorkshire Region equity release and loan officers

How much of a loan will be given?

The minimum loan that will be available is £2000 and the maximum loan is normally £30,000.

The loan must not normally exceed 50% of the unimproved value of the property and

The total borrowing (including any out standing mortgages or secured loan) must not exceed 70% of the unimproved value of the property.

Loan referral outside of these limits may be considered in exceptional circumstances

Other Conditions

The loan would be provided by Sheffield City Council on behalf of York City Council via the Yorkshire and the Humber Regional Loans Service (YHRLS). The loan will be subject to the conditions and operating practices and policies of YHRLS.

General conditions applicable to all grant/loans applications

- The following general conditions will normally apply to grant/loans applications:
- Properties eligible for grant/loans assistance (excluding Disabled Facilities grants) must be more than ten years old.
- Two competitive estimates are required for all eligible works.
- Applicants or members of their families who wish to carry out grant/loan-aided works themselves will be eligible only for the cost of materials. Satisfactory invoices or receipts will be required before payment is made.
- Grant/loan approvals will be valid for 12 months from the date of approval.

- Work must not be started before written grant/loan approval is received, as grant/loan aid is not available retrospectively.
- Additional or unforeseen works identified during works in progress will only attract grant/loan assistance if the works are approved by the Council following a written estimate from the contractor.
- Payment of grant/loan monies will be made direct to the contractors or supervising agent on completion of the specified works, receipt of a satisfactory invoice and a satisfactory final inspection. Any works that may be covered by an insurance policy will need to be pursued through the customers insurance company and the outcome confirmed in writing before works commence.

Fees for Preliminary and Ancillary Service Charges

In the provision of any form of help involving the carrying out of building works, the Council will make a service charge for the following types of service:-

- Preparation of schedules of works
- Assistance in the completion of forms and the application process
- Assistance in the appointment of a builder
- Regular contact with the applicant during work in progress. The amount charged will be set out prior to the charge being incurred and the level will depend on the level of service being provided. The level of charges will be reviewed periodically.

Where the charges are incurred in conjunction with the provision of any form of grant/loan assistance, the charges will form part of the financial assistance being provided

Where the cost of the works exceeds the maximum level of grant/loan assistance, financial assistance to cover the cost of the charges will be paid in addition.

- For the disabled facilities grant Local authority administrative fees of 15% will be included in the grant approval (excluding grants for empty properties) in accordance with section 169 of the Local Government & Housing Act 1989.
- For the Home Safety loan local authority administrative fee of £400.00 will be included in all loans applications.
- For the Home Appreciation Loan local authority administrative fee of 12% will be included in all loans applications.

These fees are not payable by the applicant and will be paid via an internal recharge by the Council on completion.

Repayment conditions

Type of grant/loan	Period within which grant/loan would be required to be repaid if property sold	Other conditions
The disabled facilities grant	10 years	

The discretionary adaptations loan to help "disabled facilities grant applicants	On disposal of the property (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise)	
Home Safety Loan	On disposal of the property (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise)	
Owner – empty properties Leasehold Agreement	5 years	If property sold or no longer let to housing association
Owner – empty properties Written formal Agreement	3 years	
Decent homes loans – tenanted properties	On disposal of the property (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise)	

A local land charge will be registered following final payment of these grants/loans

Exceptional Circumstances

The Housing Standard and Adaptations Manager will consider, in exceptional circumstances, applications not covered by the policy, where there are health or safety risks or other relevant circumstances.

Appeals and Complaints

If an applicant is not satisfied with the outcome of an application then it will be dealt with through the council's complaints procedure. The applicant should contact the council's complaints manager on York 551550

Transitional Arrangements

This policy has effect from 17th March 2009 and replaces the previous grants and assistance policy last amended 8th December 2008 which ceases to have effect on the same date subject to the transitional arrangements detailed in paragraph below:

The grants and assistance policy continues to have effect in the following circumstances.

- The application for a grant assistance was approved on or before **16th March 2009**
- The Council's Housing Standards and Adaptation Service received the enquiry for grant assistance on or before **16th March 2009** but a decision whether grant assistance will be provided has not yet been made.
- The enquiry for grant assistance is received by the Council's Housing Standards and Adaptations Service on or after **16th March 2009** the enquiry will be dealt with under the provisions of the new Policy.

Enquiries : All enquiries regarding this policy should be made to :

Housing Standards & Adaptations Service, Housing And Adult Social Services Department PO Box 402, 10 George Hudson Street, York, YO1 6ZE.

Telephone 01904 551550 extension 4092 or 4023