
Environmental Health

Financial Assistance Policy Disabled Facilities Adaptation and Private Housing Improvement

1 Introduction

- 1.1 This policy sets out how Mole Valley District Council (the Council) will provide financial assistance to support the provision of decent and safe housing within the district and promote independent living.
- 1.2 The policy, which replaces the previous Housing Assistance Policy (April 2014), will support working with partners to deliver the right services to our residents to reflect an integrated approach to health, social care and housing.
- 1.3 The Council's obligations, powers and duties in relation to the provision of financial assistance for the repair and adaptation of peoples' homes are contained within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.
- 1.4 The overall aims and objectives of this policy are to:
 - support the adaptation of disabled peoples' homes to enable them to live independently in their own homes for longer and ensure their homes are suitable for their needs
 - assist Mole Valley residents to achieve early discharge from hospital back to their homes, to minimise bed blocking and support health outcomes and recovery from illness.
 - provide a subsidised home repair service through a Handy Person Service to enable residents to maintain a safe and secure home environment.
- 1.5 Central Government Funding for the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) and the Handy Person Service (HPS) is allocated to the Council through the Better Care Fund (BCF). The funding is allocated annually and is passed to Mole Valley from Surrey County Council.

2.0 Conditions

- 2.1 The Council is required to provide funding for DFGs. The provision of funding to assist residents with the cost of home repairs and improvements, to make the home safe and secure, is discretionary. This is also currently funded through the Better Care Fund. The availability of any discretionary scheme is dependent on the funding being available and schemes may be withdrawn at any time.
- 2.2 Where assistance is provided, the Council is able, in some instances, to recover the grant and recycle the funding so that it may be used for the benefit of residents in the future. Certain grants are registered as a local land charge against the property and in some limited circumstances, a proportion of the grant is repayable on the sale of the property.
- 2.3 The contract to provide DFG grants, discretionary assistance and the HPS is delivered by a Home Improvement Agency, on behalf of the Council. The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) is paid an agreed sum for the provision of these services.
- 2.4 The DFG grant and access to use the HPS are only available for properties which are located within the boundaries of Mole Valley.
- 2.5 The Council will attach specific conditions to grants and tell applicants what these conditions are before it gives an approval for a particular grant.
- 2.6 The Council will not accept grant applications from the owners or occupants of commercial premises, such as hotels or guest houses.

3.0 Types of Assistance

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant

- 3.1 The Council has a statutory obligation to administer mandatory DFGs to provide aids and adaptations to enable disabled residents to live independently in their own homes.

- 3.2 The eligibility criteria, scope of the works and general requirements governing DFGs are prescribed by the Government and the Council is unable to deviate from these requirements.
- 3.3 The Council is required to administer DFGs to all eligible applicants irrespective of their tenure, with the exception that DFG funding is not available to use on properties owned by councils. The Council aims to work collaboratively with housing associations to fund aids and adaptations within social housing.

Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant Top-Up

- 3.4 In some cases the extent of the aids and adaptation required for a disabled applicant is extensive. The total cost of the work may exceed the amount available under the DFG regime. Where the additional funding cannot be met by Surrey County Council, the housing association (where applicable) or the disabled resident and all other sources have been exhausted, consideration will be given to providing the necessary top-up funds.

Assistance to Facilitate Hospital Discharge

- 3.5 This grant is available to fund those essential aids or minor works required to enable a patient to return home from hospital. Where a Mole Valley resident is awaiting discharge from hospital but is unable to return home because additional aids are required to make the home safe, funding is available for these emergency improvements.
- 3.6 The availability of this discretionary grant helps to minimise bed blocking and supports health outcomes and recovery from illness.
- 3.7 Please see table below which provides further details of each type of assistance.

4.0 Home Improvement Agency & Handyperson Service

- 4.1 The Council provides a dedicated service for elderly and disabled residents who need extra help to undertake repairs and/or adaptations to their homes. This service is currently contracted to a local Home Improvement Agency (HIA). The HIA also provides the Handy Person Service (HPS).

4.2 The HIA is contracted by the Council to assist residents through the whole grant application process and provide advice on other assistance available. The officers and surveyors visit the client in their own home to:

- assist with completing application forms
- undertake the financial check to establish the client's eligibility for grant
- meet with the Occupational Therapist (OT) to agree how the adaptation will be done in accordance with the OT assessment.
- prepare schedules of work, detailed drawings and contract documents.
- help in finding suitable and reliable builders/ contractors and in obtaining competitive quotes.
- supervise the works and
- Obtain the required Local Authority Planning and Building Regulations approvals where necessary for more major works.

4.3 The HIA service is non-profit-making. It is jointly funded by Surrey County Council and Mole Valley District Council. It is also partly funded through the fees it charges for its services.

4.4 The HIA is also contracted to provide a subsidised, low-cost Handy Person Service for elderly and disabled residents to undertake minor works of home repair and home safety such as:

- minor plumbing or electrical repairs
- fitting shelves
- installing smoke or carbon monoxide alarms
- fitting grab rails or banisters, and
- installing key safes.

This service is open to homeowners or private tenants in Mole Valley who meet any of the following criteria:

- are aged 70 or more
- have a disability
- are vulnerable in some other way, or
- are on a means-tested benefit.

5.0 ENQUIRIES AND APPLICATIONS

For more information please contact call Mole Valley District Council on 01306 885001 or email env.health@molevalley.gov.uk

For more information about the assistance provided by the HIA or to use the Handy Person Service, please call 01737 845630, or email: info@ihscic.org.uk or send your enquiry to:
Independent Home Solutions CIC, The Old Crumpet Factory,
16 Brockham Lane, Brockham, Surrey, RH3 7EL

Applicants will be required to provide satisfactory documentary evidence of qualifying status in respect of any claim for assistance. All grant approvals will be issued in writing and the qualifying works must not be commenced prior to grant or loan approval being issued. Failure to comply with this requirement could result in the application being refused.

6.0 Appeals

Where financial assistance is refused, the applicant can appeal against the decision, in writing, to:

The Strategic Partnership Manager - Environmental Health & Licensing,
Mole Valley District Council,
Pippbrook
Dorking RH4 1SJ

Appeals should be received within 28 days of a decision being issued. Appeals will be determined within a further 28 days.

7.0 Review of the Policy

The Policy takes effect from 1 November 2018 and will be reviewed periodically thereafter.

For further information about this policy please contact:

Nicky Thomas
Team Leader, Residential and Environment

Environmental Health

Telephone: 01306 879124

email: nicky.thomas@molevalley.gov.uk

Types of Assistance

Form of Assistance	Description – Eligible works	Client eligibility	Amounts	Other conditions
<p>Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)</p>	<p>All works that are necessary for one or more of the following purposes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • make it easier to get into and out of the dwelling by, for example, widening doors, installing ramps and creating hard standings and dropped kerbs; • make access easier to the living room; • provide or improve access to the bedroom, toilet, washing facilities or kitchen (e.g. by installing a stair lift or providing a ground floor level access shower room.) • improve or provide a heating system in the home which is suitable to the needs of the disabled person; • adapt heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use; • improve access and movement around the home to enable the disabled person to care for another person who lives in the property, such as a spouse, child or another person for whom the disabled person cares; and • improve access to and from the garden of your home where feasible. 	<p>The applicant must be either an owner-occupier or a tenant.</p> <p>The relevant person for whom the adaptation is required must be a disabled person living at their home address.</p> <p>The relevant person must be registered or registerable with Social Services as being disabled.</p>	<p>There is a limit of £30,000 for each DFG grant.</p> <p>The disabled person, any partner, and any dependants are means tested to determine the amount of any contribution they may need to make towards the cost of the works. (See Appendix A).</p> <p>If the disabled person is a child, the parents or legal guardian are not means tested.</p>	<p>Two itemised and individually priced quotations from suitable contractors must be submitted to ensure that best value can be demonstrated.</p> <p>Where the value of works exceeds, or is likely to exceed £20,000, three such quotations will be required.</p> <p>On receipt of an invoice on satisfactory completion of the works, payment of grant will usually be made direct to the contractor(s) undertaking the works.</p> <p>DFG grants paid to owner occupiers are registered as a local land charge.</p>

	<p>A recommendation is required from a registered Occupational Therapist that works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the 'relevant person'.</p> <p>An application is only approved if it is considered reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling or building.</p>	<p>A landlord may apply for a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant on behalf of their disabled tenant.</p>		<p>If the property is sold within ten years of completion of work, the Council may seek to reclaim part of the grant. It will only reclaim the funding that exceeds £5,000 but will not seek to recover more than £10,000 in total.</p> <p>Disposals for reasons of changes in employment, financial circumstances, physical or mental health, or to provide care for another person will be dealt with sympathetically.</p> <p>The council will not seek to recover monies where significant reasons are present in this respect, or where financial hardship will be caused.</p>
<p>Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant Top -Up</p>	<p>In the case of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants where the eligible expense*** exceeds the mandatory grant limit of £30,000, if all other sources of funding have been exhausted, the Council will consider a discretionary 'top up' grant of up to £15,000.</p> <p>***NOTE: Eligible expense: the reasonable cost of the required works identified by the Occupational Therapist combined with eligible fees and expenses.</p>	<p>The applicant is eligible for a mandatory DFG but the eligible expense is over £30,000.</p>	<p>A Discretionary top up of up to £15,000 will be considered to cover mandatory grant works and eligible expenses over and above those works assisted through the mandatory DFG.</p>	<p>Where the property is sold within the grant condition period (ten years for owner occupier applications), the Council will consider the requirement to recover the full amount of Discretionary DFG top-up.</p> <p>No interest will be charged.</p>

<p>Assistance to Facilitate Hospital Discharge</p>	<p>Funding to carry out minor works to a property which are necessary to remedy disrepair, improve a home or provide aids to enable a patient in hospital to return home. Works may include the provision of rails or a temporary ramp as recommended by the Occupational Therapist or Hospital Discharge Team</p>	<p>A Mole Valley resident who is currently awaiting discharge from hospital but is unable to return home due to unsuitable conditions there.</p>	<p>Grant up to £3,000.</p>	<p>Subject to budgetary availability</p> <p>Repayable in full if property is sold or disposed of within 10 years of grant payment.</p>
---	--	--	----------------------------	--

APPENDIX A: Means Test for Disabled Facilities Grant

For Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) applications made on behalf of a child, or for adult applicants who are in receipt of a 'passporting benefit' *, the mandatory DFG grant will pay for the reasonable cost of works and fees up to a maximum of £30,000.

In all other cases, DFG applications are subject to a statutory financial means test. The assessment looks at the resources of the disabled person (the relevant person) and their spouse/ partner and their dependants. The test is used to determine how much, if anything, the relevant person is required to contribute towards the cost of the works. The applicant must pay their contribution (calculated by the means test) towards the cost of grant-eligible expenses.

Where the applicant (the owner or tenant of the property) is not the disabled person, it is the disabled person (together with their spouse/ dependants etc.) who will be means tested and who will be required to declare, and provide documentary evidence of, all income, savings and capital.

The income, savings and capital figures will be used in conjunction with a table of fixed allowances, set by Government, to calculate the amount of contribution required. Certain pensions, benefits and capital are disregarded in the calculation.

If the calculated income is less than the assessed needs of the relevant person, the Council will grant-aid the total eligible costs of the works and fees. If the relevant person's income is more than their assessed needs, a proportion of the income will be used to calculate how much they could contribute towards the cost of the works. If this assessed amount is less than the cost of the works, the difference between the two is paid as DFG.

*** Passporting Benefit**

Adult DFG applicants who are in receipt of one of the following benefits will be 'Passported' to receive the reasonable cost of the eligible works and fees, without undergoing a financial means test.

1. Income Support
2. Income based job seekers allowance
3. Income related employment and support allowance
4. Guarantee pension credit
5. Working/Child tax credit – income (for tax credits) below £15,050
6. Housing Benefit
7. Universal Credit