

REPORT TO: Executive Board Sub Committee
DATE: 7 February 2008
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director – Health & Community
SUBJECT: Disabled Facilities Grant
WARD(S) Borough-wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To seek approval to consult on a charging policy for the repayment of 'Top ups' to facilitate adaptations to people's homes.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That:

- i) Consultation on the introduction of repayment of 'Top ups' provided to facilitate adaptations to people's homes be approved.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 If a Halton resident aged 19 years or over is assessed as needing to have their home adapted so that they can carry on living there then the Council may grant a 'Top up' towards the cost of the work. This is either because the person has insufficient funds to pay for it themselves or the work will cost more than the current £25,000 ceiling that is available to them in the form of a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

3.2 The Council adopted a Fairer Charging Policy in 2003 for Social Care provision. It is proposed to consult service users and carers about applying this policy to financially assess people who receive a 'Top up'. This would determine if they can afford to repay the 'Top up' granted back over a period of time but under the Fairer Charging Policy.

3.3 It is also proposed that service users and carers be consulted on whether people who own property that is adapted using 'Top ups' paid by the Council have a deferred charged placed against their property. Consultation will also take place on the circumstances under which a property could be sold without repayment of the 'Top up' being sought e.g. to move to another area to be nearer carers or to maintain employment.

3.4 The consultation exercise will take place from mid April to mid May with a range of people including past 'Top up' recipients, current

adaptation applicants and some disabled and older people. CSCI will be invited to observe this process.

3.5 A variety of mechanisms will be used during the consultation process including survey questionnaires, open days for discussion purposes and 1 to 1 interviews where requested.

3.6 The process will also be used to devise a debt repayment policy and to determine which benefits people are in receipt of will give automatic eligibility for payment of 'Top ups'.

3.7 Halton has an annual budget of £125,000 a year, which can be granted to service users/carers who need their homes adapted for works.. This budget also funds all minor adaptations, the majority of which are carried out through a contract. Details of payments made as "Top ups" in previous years are provided below:

Year 'Top up' allocated	£ Total granted	£ granted to those aged 19 and over
04/05	83,500	70,500
05/06	75,000	70,700

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

4.1 The consultation exercise will result in the need to devise a new policy governing the allocation and repayment of 'Top ups'.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

5.1 A high level of demand for 'Top ups' to fund major adaptations with no repayment clauses could impact on the provision of funds to other people who need essential adaptations to their homes.

5.2 The minor adaptation budget is under increasing pressure and consultation on whether adults should be asked to repay 'Top ups' granted to adapt homes will assist in the long term management of that increased demand on the budget.

6.0 **IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES**

6.1 **Children & Young People in Halton**

The proposed charging framework being consulted on does not involve charging children for adaptations made to properties to enable them to live there.

6.2 **Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton**

The proposed charging framework being consulted on would not

include proposals to take any money from the earnings of disabled people towards the cost of 'Top ups' granted to adapt their properties.

6.3 A Healthy Halton

Income raised from repayment of 'Top ups' would be used to fund adaptations to other people's properties.

6.4 A Safer Halton

Adaptations made to properties enable people to live in them more safely as they ensure a safe living environment.

6.5 Halton's Urban Renewal

Adaptations made to properties enable people to continue to live in their own communities.

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

7.1 Some users may choose not to proceed with adaptations if they are obliged to repay any "Top up" element or if a charge is to be placed on property. This equates to people choosing not to accept personal care services for which they will be charged. The assessment process would identify the level of risk and provide an opportunity to consider alternatives in situations where people choose not to proceed.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 Introducing the systems outlined in this report would ensure that limited resources for adaptations are used efficiently enabling more disabled people to continue to live at home independently.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9.1 None