

REPORT TO: Health Policy and Performance Board

DATE: 11th February 2025

REPORTING OFFICER: Executive Director, Adults

PORTFOLIO: Adult Social Care

SUBJECT: Home Adaptations for Disabled People Policy and Home Assistance Policy

WARD(S): Borough Wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF THE REPORT

1.1 To present the Home Adaptations for Disabled People and Home Assistance Policies

2.0 RECOMMENDATION:

RECOMMENDED: That the report be noted.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

3.1 The Home Adaptations for Disabled People Policy is the internal policy for determining eligibility, approval and management of both minor and major housing adaptations requests. The Home Assistance Policy is the corresponding public-facing document, which we must have in place as per the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order (RRO) 2002.

3.2 A recent review of the policies has considered the government guidance published in March 2022 (*Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Delivery: Guidance for Local Authorities in England*).

3.3 The initial review was undertaken with input from Adult Social Care (Principal Occupational Therapist and Principal Manager Prevention and Wellbeing Service) and the Project Lead for the Home Improvements Agency. Revisions to the Home Adaptations for Disabled People policy, in relation to reflecting best practice from the guidance or updating the operational practice, were made (*and replicated, where appropriate in the Home Assistance Policy*).

3.4 In addition, views on the policy content were sought from a number of 3rd sector stakeholders; MND Association, Alzheimer's Society, Age UK Mid Mersey, Widnes and Runcorn Cancer Support Group, the M.S Society, Halton Carers Centre and the Walton Neurological Centre.

3.5 Stakeholders were invited to provide comment on the draft policies between 2nd October – 23rd October, with two reminder emails sent.

3.6 The only stakeholder organisation to respond was MND Association. Comments from their Service Development Manager are shown in full below;

'Thanks to HBC for developing this policy, given the current difficult climate it's a positive move.

It was great to see noted 4.4 Deteriorating conditions and example MND as potential for priority fast track. I just wondered if there is a policy or guidance around the fast-track process and how this is determined by the assessing professional and that they have awareness around life limiting conditions and especially MND.

I have had experience (not necessarily in Halton) where a person has been assessed but not prioritised as the person assessing hasn't flagged up the priority (no fault of the professional) so I was just interested from an operation perspective (not necessarily policy) on how this works and will work in practice.

Otherwise, many thanks for sharing this in providing the opportunity to feedback'.

3.7 MND Association were thanked for their comments and they were responded to with information provided the Principal Social Worker, as below:

...just wondered if there is a policy or guidance around the fast-track process and how this is determined by the assessing professional and that they have awareness around life limiting conditions and especially MND.

3.8 We cover this in the adult social care guidance around prioritising and use a prioritisation tool. As standard someone with MND is always prioritised due to the rapid life limiting effect this condition has. Screenings are completed by a qualified OT who has expert knowledge.

I was just interested from an operation perspective (not necessarily policy) on how this works and will work in practice.

3.9 As a safeguard, all referrals are overseen by the Practice/Principal Manager daily so even if a mistake did occur with the OT screening, this would immediately be picked up and actioned appropriately. The case is colour coded on Eclipse to highlight the priority. Again, this is falls within the adult social care guidance.

4.0 **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

- 4.1 The public-facing Housing Assistance Policy document must be published on our website. Whilst DGF is primarily for adaptations, by publishing a Housing Assistance Policy under the RRO, HBC can use Government funding for the DFG more flexibly to offer other forms assistance such as repairs, or assistance to move, if an applicant's home is unsuitable for adaptation.

5.0 **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 5.1 HBC has a statutory duty to approve DFG applications which meet the statutory requirements.
- 5.2 The DFG maximum award (£30k) has not changed since 2008 and recent plans to review this by the Government have been halted. Therefore as cost of living rising, including materials, labour etc it is having an impact on what adaptation work can be completed within the individual funding allocation. Historically extensions may have cost between £35-40k but are now routinely costing over £50k. With our aging population and increasing population of people with very complex needs living at home, this is an area of concern. This is also applicable to minor adaptations, particularly adaptations to accesses.

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

- 6.1 Improving Health, Promoting Wellbeing and Supporting Greater Independence
Adaptations under DFG can improve the health, wellbeing and ability to live as independently as possible, mitigating or delaying the need for further social care interventions.
- 6.2 Building a Strong, Sustainable Local Economy
None.
- 6.3 Supporting Children, Young People and Families
Adaptations under DFG can improve the health, wellbeing and ability to live as independently as possible, mitigating or delaying the need for further social care interventions.
- 6.4 Tackling Inequality and Helping Those Who Are Most In Need
None.
- 6.5 Working Towards a Greener Future
None.
- 6.6 Valuing and Appreciating Halton and Our Community
None.

7.0 **RISK ANALYSIS**

7.1 A risk Assessment is not required.

8.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

8.1 None.

9.0 **CLIMATE CHANGE IMPLICATIONS**

9.1 None.

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

Care Act 2014

Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order (RRO) 2002.