

To: Head of Regulatory Services and Community Safety (RS&CS)

Date: 23rd March 2020

Report of: Home Improvement Agency Manager

Title of Report: Update of Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy due to Coronavirus 2020

Summary and recommendations	
Purpose of report:	Temporary increase to Safe & secure Grant to allow more people to be discharged from hospital and reduce hospital admission to vulnerable groups.
Key decision:	No
Cabinet Member:	Councillor Mike Rowley, Board Member for Housing
Corporate Priority:	Meeting housing needs, Strong and active communities, An effective and efficient council.
Policy Framework:	Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy
Recommendation(s): That Head of RS&CS resolves to:	
1. Approve the proposed changes to the Safe & Secure Grant attached at Appendix 2 on a temporary basis whilst we are dealing with the Coronavirus pandemic.	
Appendices	
Appendix 1	Current - Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy 2020
Appendix 2	Proposed - Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy 2020 – Coronavirus proposed
Appendix 3	Risk register
Appendix 4	Equalities Impact Assessment

Introduction and background

1. The Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy was introduced on 24th January 2018, after being agreed by the then City Executive Board in January 2018. Changes were made to this policy by Executive decision in January 2019, and further changes agreed by Cabinet in March 2020. The policy is made under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 which gives general power to introduce policies for assisting individuals with renewals, repairs and adaptations in their homes through grants or loans.

2. The main funding for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) now comes from pooled budget arrangements between top tier local authorities and Clinical Commissioning Groups (CCGs) via the Better Care Fund (BCF). The County Council holds the budget and provides DFG funding to each district council. As funding is now received from the BCF, the policy reflects the BCF's aims of achieving better health and wellbeing outcomes and helping with the prevention agenda.
3. The government have issued guidance following the recent Coronavirus pandemic regarding Hospital Discharge Service Requirements for all NHS providers below <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-hospital-discharge-service-requirements>

Main relevant points are

- Unless required to be in hospital, patients must not remain in.
- Based on these criteria, acute and community hospitals must discharge all patients as soon as they are clinically safe to do so. Transfer from the ward should happen within one hour of that decision being made to a designated discharge area.
- Discharge from hospital should happen as soon after that as possible, normally within 2 hours.
- Implementing these Service Requirements is expected to free up to at least 15,000 beds by Friday 27th March 2020, with discharge flows maintained after that.

Proposed Changes to Policy

Safe & Secure Grants

4. Increase the maximum amount of the grant to £2,000, to enable a wider scope of safety works to be carried out to help support hospital discharge and reduce falls leading to admission
5. Allow most Safe & Secure works to be carried out by Oxford Direct Service (ODS) who can react quickly, apart from specialist works.
6. Specialist works are those which have to be carried out by a specialist contractor not covered by ODS, such as, but not limited to Stairlifts, Wash-dry toilets, etc.

Other implications

7. None.

Financial implications

8. By approving the policy all the additional spend will be funded using BCF money so there will be no direct cost to the Council. Any additional funds for the HIA contract, once agreed, will be additional income for the service.

Legal issues

As set out in the Policy the Council has a duty to approve applications made under section 23(1) of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 that satisfy the requirements of that Act. The Regulatory Reform (Housing

Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) provides freedom and opportunities for the Council to address housing issues. The Council has discretionary powers under the RRO to provide assistance in any form for the purpose of improving living conditions.

9. No legal issues have been identified from the proposed amendments to the Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptation Policy.

Level of risk

10. A risk register is attached as Appendix 3.

Equalities impact

11. An EIA has been completed and attached as Appendix 4. The impacts are positive as the policy directly relates to assisting vulnerable and disadvantaged members of the community.

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Background Papers: None