

Warwickshire
Housing
Authorities



Housing Financial
Assistance Policy
2017

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Key definitions, references and abbreviations

RRO – Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2002/1860/article/3/made>

The 'Act' (1996) – Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

<http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1996/53/contents>

The 'Guidance' (2003) – Circular 05/2003 from the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM)

<http://webarchive.nationalarchives.gov.uk/20120919132719/www.communities.gov.uk/documents/corporate/pdf/145088.pdf>

DFG – Disabled Facilities Grant.

DDFA – Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance

BCF – Better Care Fund

WCC – Warwickshire County Council

NBBC – Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council

NWBC – North Warwickshire Borough Council

RBC – Rugby Borough Council

SoADC – Stratford on Avon District Council

WDC – Warwick District Council

HEART – Home Environment Assessment and Response Team

DBEIS – Department for Business, Energy and Industrial Strategy

HHSRS – the Housing Health & Safety Rating System, the prescribed system under the Housing Act 2004 for measuring hazards associated with housing conditions

ECO – Energy Company Obligation

Certified Date – the date certified by the service on behalf of the Council as that on which the execution of eligible works is completed to the Councils (HEART) satisfaction. In this instance being the works complete date.

Dwelling – a building or part of a building occupied or intended to be occupied as a separate dwelling, together with any yard, garden, outhouse and appurtenance belonging to it or usually enjoyed with it.

Exempt disposal – a disposal or transfer of the whole or part of the premises to a person whose main residence is the property and who is (a) one of the joint owners of the dwelling, or (b) the wife, husband or partner (including same sex) of the owner or one of the joint owners of that property.

Relevant disposal – a conveyance of the freehold or an assignment of the lease, or the granting of a long lease (one of over 21 years, otherwise than at rack rent)

Member of family – a person is a member of the applicant's family if they are the spouse of the applicant or living together as partners, or is the grandparent, parent or dependent child of the applicant or their spouse or partner (inclusive of same sex partners, step-children, adopted and foster children).

Owner-occupier – whilst this term is self-explanatory, where appropriate it will include certain tenants with repairing type leases (sometimes called FRI or Full Repairing and Insuring Leases, of a suitable duration) who would otherwise be unable to insist their 'superior landlord' undertake renovations. Repairing lease tenants would qualify for DFG in their own right, with permission.

1 Introduction

1.1 HEART is a delivery body, a partnership between Warwickshire County Council (the 'welfare' authority) and the five District and Borough Councils of Warwickshire (the 'housing' authorities);

Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Council

North Warwickshire Borough Council

Rugby Borough Council

Stratford on Avon District Council

Warwick District Council

1.2 Each of the five District & Borough Councils are obliged, under the 2002 RRO, to publish a policy addressing any non-mandatory forms of private sector housing assistance, and only to deliver assistance in accordance with that policy.

1.3 Each Council developed local policies independently, though there will have been consultation between neighbours. Policies were then revised in different directions and at different times, being delivered in a variety of ways and with a distinct local focus. Not surprisingly, though the general aims of many policies may have similar roots, in practice they look quite different.

1.4 However, the HEART partnership is the delivery body for many of the forms of assistance which Councils can offer, and in order to do so effectively it is necessary to harmonise the aims and some of the details of those partner Councils.

1.5 This policy is being prepared by all five Councils for them to consider mutual adoption and consistent delivery through HEART. Once appropriate approvals have been given and delegated, the HEART service will act on behalf of the partner Councils and will take decisions on matters within this policy on their behalf. A decision by HEART will be a decision of the partner Council in that regard, and the HEART service will be responsible and accountable to the partner Councils and other authorities for the decisions and actions it takes. In this policy, therefore, unless stated otherwise any reference to a Council or Councils includes or means HEART.

1.6 The policy has been prepared as much as possible in accordance with withdrawn government guidance ODPM Circular 05/2003 ('the guidance'), which was not replaced but which still reflects best practice and thinking on the subject.

2 Context

2.1 Housing is in short supply, with a backlog of unmet demand exceeding supply, and first time buyers facing competition against buy to let investors in a harsh lending environment with slow wage growth. This has contributed to an increase in private rented accommodation which now stands as the second largest tenure in England, with social housing in third place. Property values (prices) and rents have also risen, increasing pressure on domestic finances. Changes in benefits rules are also contributing to an increase in the development of smaller shared accommodation. Central public funds for the renovation of private sector housing were cancelled in 2010, with limited local provision.

2.2 A changed definition of fuel poverty reduced the number of households falling into that group (without affecting the circumstances of those no longer counted), but whilst domestic SAP (the energy efficiency) ratings gradually improve, increasing fuel costs offset some of that progress and some families continue to struggle to achieve affordable warmth. Public investment in domestic energy efficiency including that required from utility companies has reduced, though ECO funding has been further extended to late 2018. Being 'hard to heat' is a feature of many older and solid-wall type properties and those not on mains gas networks, some of which are rented and/or occupied by vulnerable people who may be retired or with young children and few resources or choices. Some families find themselves overcrowded, whilst other older couples or single people find themselves in under-occupied homes which may be expensive to heat and difficult to clean, decorate and maintain, but are unwilling or unable to downsize.

2.3 With an ageing population, and people living longer with illness, disabilities and frailty, many homes are in need of some form of adaptation such as a stair-lift or wet room (level access shower) to reduce social care costs and the risks of unnecessary GP visits, expensive hospitalisation or supported care.

2.4 Nationally, housing legislation and finance has leaned towards new build for private sale and rent, and away from public provision, with little attention to the condition of existing privately owned homes as evidenced by the recent housing White Paper. Some other recent and current developments are looking to try to improve the rental market and specifically to address the most extremely inefficient homes in energy terms. Resources for joined up health based housing projects via the Better Care Fund has recently increased, with recognition of the true value of spend-to-save intervention measures in health, home safety and adaptations.

2.5 At a local level:

2.5.1 Nuneaton and Bedworth Borough Councils Housing Strategy plays a vital role in determining the council's vision and priorities for housing in the future. The current Housing Strategy covers 2017-2022 and consists of a number of pledges, namely:-

To rise to the challenge of the changing legislation and maximise its use to improve housing conditions

To make best use of the capital resources available to address poor housing conditions or personal needs

To complete a Council Housing stock condition survey of all of our properties

To build more Council homes on Housing Services land to add to our social housing stock

To review and monitor housing needs in the Borough in order to keep our stakeholders informed and enable the appropriate delivery of housing types for our current and future population of the Borough

To continue to work in partnership with our statutory and third sector colleagues to deliver housing and housing related support to those vulnerable residents of our borough that require it

To endeavour to maximise the resources available to deliver these services by ensuring close and ongoing liaison with all partner agencies

2.5.2 North Warwickshire Borough Council is looking to adopt a Housing Strategy that complies with the vision required for the Borough and which fits in with our Sustainable Community Strategy 2009-2026.

Rural North Warwickshire is a community of communities. A place where people want to live, work and visit, now and in the future, which meets the diverse needs of existing and future residents, is sensitive to the local environment and contributes to a high quality of life. A place which is safe and inclusive, well planned, built and run and which offers equality of opportunity and good services to all. With this in mind, we are working towards the following aims:

- Encouraging the development of housing that meets the needs of our future population. Therefore making sure that there is a mix of open market, shared ownership, starter homes and affordable/social rent.
- Looking at where we can regenerate properties to bring them up to a good standard and in some cases, bring empty properties back into use.
- To help reduce/prevent homelessness by looking at triggers and seeing if there is any support that can bring about preventative measures.

2.5.3 Rugby Borough Council's private housing priorities are to improve:

- The quality of the private sector.
- Access for households to live in private-sector properties

Sitting under this are the following themes:

- Bring empty homes back into use
- Improved private-sector housing conditions (both private-rented and owner-occupied)
- Working more closely with private-sector landlords
- Increased support and housing options for potentially vulnerable home-owners and tenants.

The Strategy will help to meet the strategic objectives of the Council. The overall objective of the council is to achieve a *borough that is clean, green and safe*. Our priorities are to achieve outcomes for: People, Business, The environment, and how the council operates.

The outcomes which are sought by the Corporate Strategy that are most relevant to the private-sector housing strategy are:

- High standards of existing and future housing stock
- Regeneration of our priority neighbourhoods
- Improved health and wellbeing for all age groups

2.5.4 Stratford-on-Avon District Council has adopted a Housing Strategy that has a vision of being “a District of sustainable communities offering more people the opportunity to live in good quality housing of their choice”. As part of this, three key aims have been developed:

1. To support communities including the supply and choice of good quality affordable homes for local people
2. To improve existing housing and help people to live as independently as possible
3. To prevent homelessness and reduce the harm caused by it.

The Council’s financial assistance is primarily focused on the second of these, but does help support the other objectives too. The Council employs an Independent Living Officer, who signposts people to grant assistance. The Council also has an Empty Property Officer, who calls upon grant funding to deliver the Council’s aims.

2.5.5 The key objectives for Warwick District Council's Housing Strategy are:

- Providing suitable accommodation, information and advice for the homeless in an effort to prevent and reduce homelessness
- Meeting the need for housing across the District by addressing the need for new home provision
- Improving the management and maintenance of existing housing
- Ensuring people are supported to sustain, manage and maintain their housing

Our vision is to make Warwick District a great place to live, work and visit.

2.5.6 HEART Business Case

The HEART Business Case was adopted by all partner Councils during 2016. The business case can be found on each Council's web site within the Council report sections. The following aims were included within the document:

- A. To enable customers with multiple and complex conditions to maximise their potential and live in their chosen home environment.
- B. To reduce pressure on other expensive services e.g. residential homes, hospitals, and home care by postponing the need or reducing the amount of care and support required.
- C. To improve quality of life for older and disabled people and their carers (improved dignity, less stressful, empowering, and improved flexibility in daily tasks).
- D. To be proactive and avoid where possible, crisis situations for customers and carers in regards to managing in their chosen home environment.
- E. To promote positive health and well-being styles of living, prevention of falls, and reduce hypothermia in older people.
- F. To improve living conditions by reducing hazards in the home.
- G. To reduce demand elsewhere in the housing, health and care system.
- H. To prevent hospital admissions and/or facilitate timely hospital discharges.
- I. To develop practitioners with the skills and capabilities that enables them to provide the appropriate intervention, to minimise risk to their customers and carers, be outcome focussed and able to 'get it right first time'.
- J. To contribute to the following strategic drivers:
 - Integration & Partnership working.
 - New legislation – Care Act.
 - Safety, Well-being & Prevention.
 - Preventing & Facilitating hospital discharges.
 - Better outcomes for customers & carers in their home environment (Public Health, Social Care & NHS Outcomes Frameworks for 2015-16).
 - Maximising capacity to meet demand within existing or less resources, e.g. Avoidance of growth in Non-Elective Admissions.
- K. Potential for strategic thinking and planning in building accessible new homes, refurbishment programmes, and best use of stock with registered social landlords.

2.5.7 Better Care Fund Principles

The £5.3bn Better Care Fund was announced by the Government in the June 2013 spending round, to ensure a transformation in integrated health and social care.

The Better Care Fund (BCF) is one of the most ambitious programmes across the NHS and local government to date. It creates a local single pooled budget to incentivise the NHS and local government to work more closely together around people, placing their wellbeing as the focus of health and care services, and shifting resources into social care and community services for the benefit of the people, communities and health and care systems

National conditions are applied the BCF. In 2016/17 these conditions were:

NHS England will also require that Better Care Fund plans demonstrate how the area will meet the following national conditions:

- Plans to be jointly agreed;
- Maintain provision of social care services;
- Agreement for the delivery of 7-day services across health and social care to prevent unnecessary non-elective (physical and mental health) admissions to acute settings and to facilitate transfer to alternative care settings when clinically appropriate;
- Better data sharing between health and social care, based on the NHS number;
- Ensure a joint approach to assessments and care planning and ensure that, where funding is used for integrated packages of care, there will be an accountable professional;
- Agreement on the consequential impact of the changes on the providers that are predicted to be substantially affected by the plans;
- Agreement to invest in NHS commissioned out-of-hospital services, which may include a wide range of services including social care;
- Agreement on local action plan to reduce delayed transfers of care.

As DFG is allocated through the BCF then Housing authorities are included in agreeing the local plans and using the funding to work towards delivery of BCF metrics.

For Housing this included where feasible:

Contributing to the transfer of care from the NHS to Social Care – delayed discharge.

Contributing to preventing admissions to hospital – through prevention of accidents and ill health from unsuitable housing conditions.

2.6 Councils are obliged, under the 1996 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act, to facilitate the delivery of the last remaining mandatory grant for private housing assistance – the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). However, if they wish to go further, they are required to do so under an adopted and published policy via the 2002 RRO (see above). Whilst reference to the mandatory DFG is not required in this policy, it provides useful context through which some of the other forms of assistance can be framed and understood.

2.7 The context of this policy is therefore to deliver safer and appropriate housing which is affordable to heat, and which reduces the risks of ill health, accidents and the costs of their impacts on residents and wider society. Further, it is to do so in a county-wide consistent and harmonised way, through a joint delivery partnership – HEART.

3 Priorities and capital resources

- 3.1 The following capital financial resources are available to apply and deliver through this policy:

Capital grants from central government distributed through the Better Care Fund or otherwise.

Where capital monies are provided through the BCF they will be allocated for spending in line with decisions regarding capital expenditure agreed with the Warwickshire Cares Better Together Board and the Capital Annex of the HEART partnership agreement.

Local capital from the Boroughs and Districts which each Council may provide for any specified purpose.

Monies from national schemes such as energy company obligations.

Money provided from partners or other public sector organisations to address specified problems.

Money obtained from charitable or other sources on behalf of customers.

- 3.2 The above will be targeted in accordance with the following priorities;

Local Housing Authorities are obliged first and foremost to deliver mandatory DFGs either via the 1996 Act route or an equally effective parallel pathway. Alternative discretionary assistance should not normally be promoted at the expense of delays to the statutory grant. They may then consider measures which will prevent injury or ill health, and/or limit harmful effects, reduce risks, reduce care costs and negative impacts etc., to promote recovery and improve quality of life and support carers.

- 3.3 In addition to mandatory DFGs, Councils will therefore determine their local priorities to offer;

- Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance (DDFA)
- Relocation assistance
- Hospital discharge support
- Home Safety Check Scheme
- Warm and Safer Homes (WaSH) Grant
- Energy efficiency support

3.4 Not all of the above forms of financial aid can or will be delivered or deliverable via HEART, and some partner Councils may pick and choose from the discretionary menu to suit their local circumstances, priorities and resources. However, those partner Councils wishing to deliver assistance outside of HEART and not contained in this policy will need their own local policy to do so. Partner Councils may choose to NOT offer any of the assistance types detailed in this policy – with the exception of mandatory DFG – or to modify conditions, criteria, limits etc. ONLY IF they have provided a codicil to this policy if they require the HEART service to act differently in their local area.

3.5 Budgets will be set for each form of assistance based on available resources and some forms of assistance may not be funded in any particular year. To ensure the delivery of mandatory DFGs and maximum impact of resources the budgets for each form of assistance will be transferrable. Each Councils funding will be ring fenced for spending within their local areas.

4 Assistance types – details

4.1 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (included for context and for a small number of variable options)

4.1.1 The Council will award mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) according to the governing legislation – principally the 1996 Act and subordinate Regulations and Orders as amended - and guidance issued by central Government, and which details amongst other matters the types of work that are to be funded, the maximum grant payable (currently £30,000), and the test of financial resources where applicable. A more detailed information leaflet is available on request, along with online materials.

4.1.2 Qualifying criteria – all owner-occupiers and tenants, licensees or occupiers who are able to satisfy the criteria in sections 19-22 of the 1996 Act are eligible to *apply* for DFG, but applicants must be aged 18 or over (this does not apply to the disabled person, who may be younger). Tenants of Council and other Social Housing are also eligible to apply, but Councils and some social landlords (Registered Providers) may have parallel and equally effective systems which can be no less effective or generous than DFG. Being eligible to apply does not automatically confer approval – some cases will not meet statutory tests as described below, and others may have significant means tested contributions in excess of the cost of works. Other (private) landlords may also apply for mandatory DFG on behalf of their disabled tenants.

4.1.3 As a part of the application process, the Councils will require certificates relating to property ownership and future occupation, and will request permission from the owner as standard legislation does not specify owner's permission for grant aided works to tenanted property. The Council would reasonably want to ensure the tenant has the right to carry out the works and that the landlord would not object or attempt to reinstate the property and evict the client. The Council can also waive the owner's certificate requirement if it is considered 'unreasonable in the circumstances'.

4.1.4 Qualifying works – eligible works for mandatory DFG are set out in section 23(1) of the 1996 Act, as amended. These are;

(a) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to and from the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or qualifying park home, (now including the garden) or

(b) making the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or qualifying park home safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with him;

(c) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to a room used or usable as the principal family room;

(d) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room used or usable for sleeping;

- (e) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a lavatory, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
- (f) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a bath or shower (or both), or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
- (g) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a wash hand basin, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
- (h) facilitating the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant;
- (i) improving any heating system in the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or qualifying park home to meet the needs of the disabled occupant or, if there is no existing heating system or any such system is unsuitable for use by the disabled occupant, providing a heating system suitable to meet his needs;
- (j) facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of one or more means of access to or control of that source or by providing additional means of control;
- (k) facilitating access and movement by the disabled occupant around the dwelling, qualifying houseboat or qualifying park home in order to enable him to care for a person who is normally resident and is in need of such care;

4.1.5 The Councils will include as part of the mandatory DFG the cost of a maintenance agreement for a period of five (5) years from the certified date for stair lifts, through-floor lifts, Clos-o-mat type toilet, step-lifts and similar equipment installed with the assistance of that grant. Where installing a reconditioned stair lift, any unspent warranty will be increased to a full 5 years if possible and affordable.

4.1.6 A DFG will only be made if the works are both 'necessary and appropriate' and 'reasonably practicable', where the housing authority has consulted the welfare authority or its agents. Where an applicant prefers a different scheme of works to that approved by the Councils, the Council may offer to 'offset' the value of the original scheme towards those greater works with appropriate safeguards. This is at the discretion of the Council (HEART).

4.1.7 Works which have been commenced prior to the approval of an application will not be eligible for financial assistance without prior written consent from the Local Authority/HEART by a person authorised to give such consent.

4.1.8 Unexpected works which arise during the carrying out of eligible works will be considered for assistance if the works could not have been reasonably foreseen before commencement and if they are vital to the completion of a safe and effective scheme. Unforeseen works carried out without prior approval of the Council will not be eligible for assistance. Approval should always be sought in writing, timed and dated with details of the

extra items and costs. Where unforeseen works are necessary these will be added to the grant up to the specified maximum for mandatory DFG. Costs above the mandatory grant maximum may be supported as discretionary DDFA in accordance with this policy. Care must be taken when agreeing to schemes of works on third-party property such as tenanted accommodation, that the property owner is fully engaged with the decision process. This is also particularly important where an architect or similar is acting on the customers behalf, and where issues such as planning permission, building control and other regulation are involved. Specialist advice from a private occupational therapist may be necessary to ensure that the objectives of the original scheme are being effectively met.

4.1.9 Councils are funding the HEART service in part through agency fees which have been harmonised at 15%. Where those fees take the cost of works above the specified maximum, then these will be paid as Discretionary DFA. HEART fees have no impact on an applicant's assessed contribution – the applicant does not contribute towards the fees. An applicant's actual costs may exceed their assessed contribution if the works cost exceeds the maximum, or the applicant has arranged for a wider scope or better quality of works or product, or has chosen a more expensive contractor.

4.1.10 The Council's DFG award is for a sum of funding only, and is not inclusive or exclusive of using particular contractors or products. Customers may specify and choose their own contractors, agent, products and design – but take responsibility for those choices which may fall outside of the remit of any HEART contractors, as long as the result meets the Council's and Occupational Therapist's requirements.

4.1.11 Financial Assistance - Mandatory DFG will be subject to a means test in accordance with the regulations made under the 1996 Act, as amended. The maximum mandatory DFG award is £30,000 minus any contribution required by a 'means test' (test of financial resources). Successive applications may be awarded for those persons whose condition is degenerative, or they develop additional needs, or the delivered scheme fails to meet the needs. Where successive applications are awarded, the applicants contribution to the first grant award will be taken into account if within the time period of the contribution originally calculated (10 years if owner, 5 years if tenant). NOTE: where an applicant is in receipt of a recognised, qualifying, means tested benefit they will not be further means tested and they will have no calculated contribution to make. Where works are for the benefit of a child or young person of 19 years age or younger at the date of application – they too will be exempt a means test.

4.1.12 Where works are being carried out to Council properties, the Council will carry out or arrange those works directly without a formal DFG application based on the recommendation of the welfare authority directly or through HEART). Local policies and procedures will determine whether that recommendation can be approved and how.

4.1.13 Public and private DFG applications or recommendations will usually be processed in chronological order, excepting in emergency circumstances at the discretion of the Council or HEART service. Enquiries for DFG will initially be assessed to determine if alternative services, equipment, support or advice are more appropriate as well as or initially instead of more significant works. The purpose of the screening assessment is to support residents to improve or maintain their capability and to reduce, delay or otherwise avoid creating dependency where independence is a viable, healthier and better long-term option.

4.1.14 Recovery of Assistance Awarded – Some mandatory DFG may be recoverable in accordance with permitted values. Where the customer is an owner-occupier and not a tenant, a sum of up to £10,000 may be recovered for works in excess of £5,000. This sum would only be recovered if the property was sold or title otherwise transferred within 10 years of the certified (completion) date of works, subject to the Council's discretion to reduce or waive in the case of financial hardship. NOTE: this is separate and different to the potential repayment of grant in the event of a breach of occupancy conditions or detected fraud. Also, Councils are entitled to recalculate grant awards in limited circumstances, such as for example if any relevant insurance claims are pending, and to cease making payments and to seek repayment in some cases as detailed in sections 40-42 of the 1996 Act.

4.1.15 The Council will also impose a standard condition that it may recover specialised equipment, such as stair lifts, where no longer required. For clarity – the equipment is the property and responsibility of the customer, both during and after any warranty period, but in the event it is no longer required for the customer the Council have an automatic first right to recovery for re-use, subject to the condition of the equipment and any making-good costs. Such equipment recovery, assessment, repair, refurbishment, cleaning, storage and reinstallation is at the Councils discretion, cost and risk, and not at the customers. The customer or their family, executor or heirs should notify the Council in such circumstances, and the Council will endeavour to provide a swift assessment and decision. The Council may also waive this recovery requirement if it considers it appropriate to do so, and is not obliged to remove or dispose of unwanted equipment.

4.1.16 Conditions relating to Contractors, Standard of Works and Invoices –

- In approving an application for financial assistance, the Council will require as a condition that the eligible works are carried out in accordance with any specification it has decided to impose.
- An applicant must take all reasonable steps to pursue any relevant legal or insurance claim (e.g. medical negligence or accident) which can be made in relation to the eligible works and must notify the Council of the outcome of such a claim and repay the equivalent financial assistance so far as is appropriate, in the Councils view.
- The eligible works must be carried out by the contractor(s) upon whose estimate the financial assistance is based, or if two estimates were submitted, by one of

those contractors. The Council's consent must be obtained prior to the works if a contractor who did not submit an estimate is to carry out the works, and if an agreement is given, an estimate from the new contractor must be submitted to the Council (this does not automatically convey a difference in revised grant award – any additional costs must be separately financed by the client).

- An invoice, demand or receipt will not be acceptable if it is given by the applicant or a member of the applicant's family. Where works are carried out by the applicant or a member of their family, only the cost of materials used will be eligible for financial assistance.
- It is a condition of the financial assistance that the eligible works are carried out within 12 months of the date of approval of the application. This period may be extended by the Council if it thinks fit, particularly where it is satisfied that the eligible works cannot be completed for good cause – requests for additional time must be made in writing before the 12 month period ends, and approved extra time will be confirmed in writing by the Council.
- The payment of the financial assistance to the applicant will be dependent upon the works being carried out to a standard that is satisfactory to the Council and upon receipt of a satisfactory invoice, demand or receipt for the works and any preliminary or ancillary services or changes.
- The Council will usually make payments direct to the contractor on behalf of the client, and not usually to the applicant. Where the applicant disagrees with a payment made direct to a contractor, no payment shall be made until any dispute is resolved. Legislation permits the Council to make payment by delivering to the applicant an instrument of payment in a form made payable to the contractor, OR by making payment direct to the applicant in accordance with information provided prior to grant approval. NOTE: Contractors receiving direct payment may be required to provide sufficient information to be set up on the Council's financial systems – BUT this should not frustrate the client's choice, as the mandatory DFG grant (only) is an award of funds and not an award tied to a specific contractor with additional financial conditions. Other discretionary awards and forms of assistance may allow different rules on payment in kind etc.

4.1.17 Recovery of compensation – it is a condition of the grant that the applicant must take all reasonable steps to pursue any relevant claim for personal injuries which caused the applicant to apply for a DFG or related assistance, and to repay to the Council the grant or assistance, so far as is appropriate, out of the proceeds of any claim, or to use that award directly to fund the adaptations work.

4.1.18 Future occupation of the dwelling – it is a condition of the grant that throughout the grant condition period (that is 5 years from the date of certification) the dwelling is occupied in accordance with the intention stated in the certificate of owner occupation or availability for letting, or intended tenancy. NOTE: There are no provisions regarding the possible

repayment of a mandatory DFG in the event of an exempt disposal of the property. No conditions apply in respect of future occupation of a dwelling where a DFG is approved for works to the common parts of a dwelling.

4.1.19 Recovery of specialised equipment –

- Where a mandatory DFG is approved for the installation of a stairlift, or a through-floor lift, or other specialist equipment the applicant shall notify the Council if, and as soon as, the equipment is no longer needed within a period of 5 years after the certified date.
- The Council, HEART service or its agents shall be entitled upon reasonable prior written notice given to the applicant or their representative either following the giving of notification above, or at any time during the 5 year period after the certified date, to inspect the equipment and to remove it at their discretion.
- The Council agrees, within a reasonable time following an inspection of the equipment, to:
 1. notify the applicant in writing whether the equipment is to be removed, and
 2. if the equipment is to be removed, to remove it or arrange for it to be removed and forthwith make good any damage caused to the property by its removal by the Council or its agents,
- the Council agrees that where the applicant has contributed to the cost of installing equipment which the Council intends to remove, to pay him/her within a reasonable time of that removal the proportion of the reasonable current value of its original cost (residual value – at time of removal) which represents the proportion of their contribution to the cost of the installation.
- Subject to the Council giving prior written notice in accordance with the above, the applicant agrees, within their power, to give reasonable access to the property to the Council and its agents for the purposes of inspection and removal of equipment, and will not act to prevent, delay, prohibit or frustrate such activity.

4.1.20 Where a charge (repayable grant or loan) is due for recovery, on receipt of a written request from the responsible person the HEART or Private Sector Housing Manager will consider the options to reduce or waive repayment in particular circumstances to be determined in accordance with the following criteria;

- (i) the extent to which the recipient of the grant would suffer financial hardship were he to be required to repay all or any of the grant;
- (ii) whether the disposal of the premises is to enable the recipient of the grant to take up employment, or to change the location of his employment;

- (iii) whether the disposal is made for reasons connected with the physical or mental health or wellbeing of the recipient of the grant or of a disabled occupant of the premises;
- (iv) whether the disposal is made to enable the recipient of the grant to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or infirm and in need of care, which the recipient of the grant is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the recipient of the grant is in need by reason of disability or infirmity.

If that initial decision is not accepted and further appealed, details of that appeal will be determined by the Head of Home Environment Services as the head of the HEART service, together or in consultation with the appropriate Head of Housing from the Council for that address or area.

4.1.21 Where funds are repaid, they will return to the home Council for that property who may determine to redirect back into their local HEART capital resources, or otherwise.

4.1.22 All recoverable charges will be recorded as local land charges. Any Council wishing to record charges on the national Land Registry may do so directly themselves, either at their expense or added to the repayment cost ONCE HAVING INFORMED THE LIABLE PARTY. Residents will need to seek permission from their mortgage provider and potentially seek independent financial advice prior to agreeing to charges placed against their property.

4.2 Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance (DDFA)

4.2.1 The Council will consider applications for discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance (DDFA), subject to terms and conditions. A means test of financial resources similar to that applied to mandatory DFG will be applied to all applications for DDFA, excepting applications where the works are for the benefit of a disabled child or young person as defined by the relevant regulations.

4.2.2 DDFA may be awarded and will be subject to the availability of resources. An extra £10,000 may be available as a top-up to owner occupiers* with sufficient equity (works costing £30-40,000). A further £10,000 may be available as a 0% repayable loan (charge) for when works cost £40-50,000 and there is no viable alternative such as relocation support.

*tenant cases depending on particular circumstances – as tenants have no equity and landlords may decline charges, Registered Social Landlords (RSL's) may be requested to accept charge against property. Whilst tenants should not be disadvantaged, nor should their landlords be rewarded with improved properties with no security of tenure for the tenant. Offers should represent good value, but be prudent and low risk.

Where the landlord is a private landlord or Registered Social Landlord, options will be explored with the owners of the property depending on circumstances.

4.2.3 DDFA will be registered as a local land charge against the property and any sum over £40,000 will be recovered on the sale or transfer of the property, subject to rules regarding exempt sales. Note – this is separate to the £10,000 recoverable DFG which expires at 10 years from certification of works completion.

4.2.4 Councils are required first to consult the 'welfare authority' to consider what assistance would be necessary and appropriate for the client, and then apply a test of what is reasonable and practicable in the circumstances of the property (as at 4.1.6). The service must consider viable alternative solutions which appear more cost effective. Such solutions may include contributions towards alternative house purchase and moving costs to an adapted or more economically adaptable and suitable property.

Moving and house purchase finance will be determined on a case by case basis determined by:

- the tenure and location of the original and new properties,
- the residual equity and any increased mortgage debt,
- whether moving within the District/Borough, or the County, or beyond,
- whether the original property is unadaptable, unaffordable or poor value to adapt,

or that moving is purely an occupier choice or as a result of a landlords refusal to permit adaptation – see examples at 4.2.14.

DFG of up to £30,000 is available for adaptations in properties residents have moved to (within the local or County area only), but may be reduced by any contributions to moving costs and purchase contributions.

DDFA is available to owner-occupiers with sufficient equity, but also to tenants subject to individual determination and equitable opportunities dependent on the attitude of RSL or private landlords as regards repayable charges as above. Note – neither tenants nor owner occupiers will be disadvantaged and the system will be equitable as far as possible, to be ‘tenure blind’. Tenants, however, with works projected to cost in excess of £30,000 will be encouraged or required to consider housing options such as relocation in priority to actual works to their rented home. Case workers may have similar options conversations with owner-occupiers.

As there are too many variables to set a fixed policy on awards for moving or buying property, each case will be determined on its merits subject to resources by recommendation from the Case Officer to the HEART Manager with sufficient discretionary authority to approve works of that value.

4.2.5 Qualifying criteria – these are the same as for mandatory DFG.

4.2.6 Qualifying works – applications within this heading will be considered for the following purposes;

To top up the financial assistance for adaptation works where the reasonable cost of the required work exceeds the set maximum for mandatory DFG (currently £30,000). The amount of DDFA in such circumstances shall be reasonable. The Council reserves the right to consider alternative solutions where they appear more cost effective, reasonable, practicable or appropriate. NOTE: Welfare Authorities (Warwickshire County Council) also have resources and responsibility for adaptations and equipment under other legislation, e.g. the Care Act. HEART service staff may also assist with charitable applications.

Assist the disabled person to move to a more suitable property where it is impracticable to adapt or more cost effective than adapting the current home of a disabled person to make it suitable for his or her present or future needs, even though the new property may need some adaptation.

4.2.7 Rehousing options include trying to identify and offer suitable accommodation in the social rented sector. The Council will, however, bear in mind that for many disabled people the location of their home is a key consideration – often they have an established support system and network of friends, family and local organisations that, understandably, they will wish to maintain.

4.2.8 Works which have been commenced prior to the approval of an application, and unforeseen works – the same conditions apply to DDFA as to DFG.

4.2.9 Financial Assistance – all DDFA will be subject to a means test the same as that for mandatory DFG, including the exemptions for young people. DDFA to meet the difference between the maximum mandatory grant that can be awarded and the total eligible cost of the qualifying works, inclusive of HEART fees, will not incur any interest charges to maintain or increase its value over time (i.e. the liability will not grow).

4.2.10 Unless specified below, where properties are owner occupied the DDFA awarded will be placed as a charge on the property and will be recoverable on the sale or transfer of the property title, subject to the rules regarding exempt sales.

4.1.11 Circumstances where DDFA it may be considered NOT to be registered as a charge against the property;

- Applicants for DDFA who are not owner occupiers will be referred for a financial assessment for a commercial loan. If it is not possible for the applicant to obtain affordable loan finance, then the DDFA may be in the form of a grant award, subject to conditions.
- Applicants who have transferred ownership of a property to others within the previous 10 years or where the transfer did not involve a sale at market value, or those who are not owners but who are living with family, then the family will be asked to register the DDFA loan as a charge which may or may not be a viable option depending on the family circumstances.

4.2.12 Conditions relating to contractors, standards of work and invoices – as for mandatory DFG

4.2.13 Conditions restricting future use and ownership of the property – the following additional conditions will apply where the Council has made an award of DDFA;

- The owner will notify the Council in writing if a relevant disposal of the property is proposed.
- The owner of the property will provide, within 21 days of a written notice from the Council, a statement confirming the ownership and occupancy of the dwelling. If the property has been sold or transferred the statement will include the date of transfer of ownership.
- DDFA will be registered as a charge against the property and will be repayable on sale or transfer of the property, subject to exempt sales. The charge will be binding on successors in title.
- It is a condition of DDFA that where an owner makes a relevant disposal of the dwelling, other than an exempt disposal, the DDFA shall be repayable subject to above.

- If a relevant disposal takes place after a period of 5 years after the certified date of completion of works, no amount shall be recovered which, after repayment of all charges registered against the property, results in owner(s) having a residual equity of less than £10,000. No account will be taken by the Council of charges subsequent to the charges registered by the Council.
- If the property is transferred, or the sale price does not reflect the market price, the Council will have the right to seek an independent valuation of the market value, which will be binding on both parties, in order to recover the grant repayable.

4.2.14 Criteria for consideration in cases of help-to-buy/move; (this is not an exclusive or exhaustive list, as other factors may become apparent with experience):

- The disabled person may wish or need to move to give or receive care, or to receive medical treatment.
- The disabled person may wish or need to move to maintain or gain employment.
- The cost of works to the property may exceed the benefit to the client.
- The cost of works may exceed the available grant and loan maximum and any available client or third party contribution.
- The client's calculated contribution may be unaffordable and moving/buying is a better financial solution.
- The client may need to move to reduce rent and/or release spare bedrooms which they can no longer afford (e.g. benefits cap and/or the spare room subsidy).
- A different property may provide a greater benefit for the client for the funds.
- The current property may not be adaptable, and another property may be more amenable to adaptation.
- The current property may contain hazards or defects which would not be sufficiently addressed by the works or otherwise by the client or owner.
- The property owner (landlord) refuses to permit the adaptation.
- The property is for sale, or pending foreclosure, bankruptcy (as security against debt) or repossession.
- The tenancy is due to end and not be renewed, or is otherwise unstable.
- Relationship breakdown.
- The client wishes to downsize and/or release equity (some of which could be used towards adaptation and moving costs).
- The client wishes to move to or purchase in another Council area and may be entitled to mandatory DFG in addition to support to move or buy (this may be within or outside of Warwickshire).

4.3 Hospital Discharge Grant

4.3.1 Hospital Discharge Grant (HDG) of up to £10,000 will be payable where housing defects or adaptation works are preventing discharge from hospital as assessed by professionals attached to either Social Services, Acute or Primary Care Trust, or a senior officer working in the recognised hospital discharge process, or to reduce the risk of re-admission or address significant difficulties in providing safe and dignified home based care. Works may include adapting the living environment to accommodate a disability, remedying defects including safety hazards including security, and thermal comfort measures (insulation, heating).

4.3.2 Hospital Discharge Grants will NOT be subject to a test of applicant's financial resources (i.e. NOT means tested) where it facilitates rapid discharge and the release of a hospital or care bed resource. In such cases, clients may be assessed ahead of date order and as a priority – which will impact on other less urgent cases. Contractors may also be asked to prioritise or re-schedule works to accommodate the need for a rapid adaptation, and may charge a premium for such. Additional works that may assist with reducing re-admission may also be included within the considered works, or other forms of assistance included within this policy.

4.3.3 Conditions;

The works must be necessary in order to facilitate discharge from hospital or care or reduce readmission, to save or reduce hospitalisation or residential care costs or to facilitate safe and dignified home care and avoid or reduce the cost of a care package,

Assessment for HDG will take priority over other casework at the discretion of the HEART Team Manager or Head of Home Environment Services.

The Council reserve the right to refuse this award if there is doubt or another form of assistance is more appropriate, or where the primary responsibility lies with an alternative organisation.

All other conditions e.g. relating to repayment, contractors, standards of work and invoices etc. that apply to DFG will apply to HDG.

4.3.4 HEART and Councils will work with other agencies including Health and Social Care to provide a flexible and rapid offer for genuine and needy cases where other assistance types are likely to be ineffective. This will include exchange of information, getting approval of the customer and family / carers, access to the property for assessment, completion of appropriate records, liaison with contractors and the conduct of work. The form of this flexible package cannot be prescribed in greater detail – each case will have its own merits and opportunities, some of which may be fluid in any event.

4.4 Home Safety Grant and 'Handyperson'

4.4.1 A free home safety check (inspection) will be offered to any qualifying resident assessed by HEART for other services or as a stand-alone request or referral. Qualifying criteria defining the vulnerable target group are; available to those of any tenure aged 55 or over, or a household containing a disabled person.

4.4.2 Assessment may indicate a need below the level that qualifies for statutory intervention through Social Care, for equipment (aids), and/or minor works or adaptations (half step, grab rail, ramp, key safe, smoke and CO alarms etc.). Assessed minor works are not means tested, up to financial limits.

4.4.3 If NO Care Act need is assessed but preventative works are strongly indicated, equipment and minor works of up to £500 can be funded, reimbursed if agreed prior to works being commenced or otherwise provided via any approved 'handy-person' scheme or directly purchased by or on behalf of the customer if suitability is agreed. This can fund both labour and materials – see examples at 4.4.7. Fees on the value of each works / equipment will be applied by HEART and in addition to the maximum award where necessary. Cases costing more than the maximum sum may be referred if eligible for DFG, or WaSH grant and subject to means test. Provision of assistance is a *spend-to-save* measure intended to reduce more expensive accidents and their consequences.

4.4.4 HEART processing fees for handy-person type works and services will be 15% (2021) or whatever standard fee rate applies.

4.4.5 To facilitate a better service, it is proposed to explore the options to establish, procure or contract one or more Handy-person services. To fully explore the opportunities would delay the agreement of the principal tools of this policy, and thus will be addressed retrospectively.

4.4.6 The service will make award(s) to a maximum of the £500 of Home Safety Grants within a 3 year period. The awards are per household, not per person.

4.4.7 The safety check aims to provide a free Home Environmental risk assessment to identify potential hazards, such as -

- Falls Prevention; Advise on safe clear floor pathways, ill-fitting carpets, trailing electrical wires, uneven floors, furniture obstructions, garden paths and shed / garage access, access to main doors (front, side, rear), bins etc.
- Mobility and use of facilities; Freedom of movement within home, identify ill-fitting doors and windows, stair & grab rails, steps, lighting, switches and sockets, changing a lightbulb, putting up or adjusting curtains / blinds and fittings,
- Hazards from hot surfaces and materials; Radiators, gas fires, hot water cooker arrangements,

- Warm Home Assessment; Identify damp & mould, insulation (cavity & loft), lack of central heating, draught proofing, water cylinder jacket, fuel poverty assessment, tariff/supplier choice, meter position and readability
- Security checks; Window & door locks, fitting key safes,
- Fire Safety; Smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors.

Provision of remedial work once agreed by the Service User

- Grab rails
- Stairs rails
- Internal ramps (half steps)
- Refitting and/or easing doors
- Easing windows
- Key safes
- Fit smoke alarms
- Door safety chains
- Access to property (minor trip hazards)
- Change & fit light bulbs
- Tack loose fitting carpets
- Re-route trailing wires
- Fixing loose floor boards (or refer on to others)
- Relocate small items of furniture
- Remove minor slip trip or fall hazards within the home or garden.

4.5 Warm and Safer Homes (WaSH)

4.5.1 The Decent Homes Standard contains four elements, that dwellings¹;

1. meet the current statutory minimum standard for housing (that a property is free of category 1 hazards as identified by an appropriately trained professional under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System - Housing Act 2004)
2. are in a reasonable state of repair
3. have reasonably modern facilities and services
4. provide a reasonable degree of thermal comfort

4.5.2 Further detail is available at section 4 of the linked document;

https://www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/7812/138355.pdf. This standard was originally introduced for social housing, then adopted as an aspirational target for private housing – but not as an enforceable standard excepting the first element.

4.5.3 All partner Councils agree that reducing category 1 HHSRS hazards is a key aim along with element 4 on thermal comfort, which has significant crossover with fuel poverty and health risks particularly to vulnerable groups. Elements 2 and 3 are important but less vital, and in the context of existing budgets, staffing and priorities there is no intention to include them in any current discretionary scheme as stand-alone items (i.e. excepting where they also meet element 1, HHSRS hazard). Element 4, thermal comfort, would be treated under the separate Energy Efficiency support (details following) except where it also constitutes a category 1 hazard which takes priority. Offers may be combined at the discretion of the service. NOTE: at the discretion of HEART, a category 2 hazard that will deteriorate over time or adversely affect the occupant due to health conditions will be considered for assistance. See 4.5.6 below for an indicative list of HHSRS hazard categories and circumstances which should be recognisable to Housing Assessment Officers, and circumstances suggesting escalation to more experienced surveyors.

4.5.4 For **owner-occupiers** partner Councils will award SUBJECT TO RESOURCES a discretionary sum for works identified or agreed by the service, as follows;

1. Grant of up to £10,000 for works agreed by service.
2. Full costs awarded if a member of the household is in receipt of a qualifying means tested benefit, otherwise
3. where the applicant has a qualifying health risk (to be agreed and varied as appropriate by HEART Board members) which can be alleviated or improved

¹ excludes certain mobile homes, houseboats as defined in legislation (Housing Act 2004)

by works to the home, subject to the DFG test of financial resources – an applicant's calculated contribution is offset against the cost of works. Where Board members agree to provide assistance based on designated health conditions such as dementia, then they will agree the specific details and criteria of any assistance under this section.

4. Minimum property ownership period of 3 years before award, no repeat application or further award within 3 years of certification (completion)
5. An expectation of reasonable care, not due to deliberate or negligent damage, use of insurance award

Qualifying means tested benefits;

- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance
- Support under Part IV of the Immigration and Asylum Act 1999
- The Guarantee element of State Pension Credit
- Child Tax Credit (provided you are not also entitled to Working Tax Credit, and your annual gross income does not exceed the threshold as assessed by Her Majesty's Revenue and Customs)
- Working Tax Credit run-on (paid for 4 weeks after you stop qualifying for Working Tax Credit)
- Universal Credit (during the initial roll-out of this benefit) – or equivalent

4.5.5 For **private sector landlords**, there is not just an expectation but a legal obligation for their properties to be free of category 1 HHSRS hazards. Action on category 1 and relevant category 2 hazards will be referred to local private sector housing teams for enforcement consideration in accordance with their policies.

4.5.6 The Housing Health & Safety Rating System classifies 29 hazard types, split into four broad groups; physiological, psychological, protection against infection, and protection against accidents. Within each hazard profile (see HHSRS Operating Guidance), properties are allocated an average risk rating dependent - in some cases - on property age, tenure, HMO or non-HMO, house or flat. Certain hazard profiles identify a 'vulnerable client group', based on age. The top four hazards, by average HHSRS score, are excess cold, falls on level surfaces, falls on stairs and entry by intruders. The remaining 25 hazards score on average very low, and conditions would have to be severe to escalate towards a category 1 score. A numerical score is calculated by a function of the probability of an incident occurring within the next 12 months (based on observable or reported data), together with the severity of

harm types resulting from the incident, and range from zero to several thousands. The cut-off between category 2 hazards and the more severe category 1 hazards is a score of 1000 points or more. Councils have discretion to act on category 2, but **MUST** act on category 1 hazards, and can do so regardless of tenure – but not in the Council’s own stock.

The other 25 hazards are;

- Damp and mould growth
- Excess heat
- Asbestos and manmade fibres (MMF)
- Biocides
- Carbon monoxide, Nitrogen Dioxide and Sulphur Dioxide
- Lead
- Radiation, including Radon
- Un-combusted fuel gas (asphyxiation, not explosion of fire)
- Volatile Organic Compounds (VOCs)
- Crowding and Space
- Lighting
- Noise
- Domestic hygiene, pests and refuse
- Food safety
- Personal hygiene, sanitation and drainage
- Water supply
- Falls with baths
- Falls between levels
- Electrical hazards
- Fire
- Flames and hot surfaces
- Collision and entrapment, including low architectural features
- Explosions
- Position and operability of amenities
- Structural collapse and falling elements

Housing Assessment Officers may consider the following to be likely category 1 hazards;

1. Excess cold - ineffective or lack of heating systems, occupier(s) unable to maintain comfortable temperatures, lack of radiators or central heating to commonly used rooms, sole means of heating to a room is electric on-peak fires or convector heaters, uncontrollable draughts, exacerbating factors such as broken window(s), windows which cannot be closed, lack of insulation (loft, cavity wall or hot water tank).
2. Slips, trip, falls - Very uneven or unstable flooring or external yards/pathways, holes and/or rot to floorboards, dangerous changes in level, poor slip resistant surfaces to external steps, missing balustrading/guarding to stairs or external steps.
3. Lack of security - Insecure windows and doors, faulty/broken locking mechanisms or glazing, if high crime rate area.

4. Electrical hazards – live bare wires at accessible level, water/moisture ingress to electrical fixtures and fittings, damaged lighting/power fixtures or fittings, missing blanking plates or circuit breakers to consumer units.
5. Lack of electric supply.
6. Lack of hot and cold water to washing and bathing facilities or other disrepair.
7. Smell of natural gas, signs of incomplete combustion to gas appliances, gas appliances marked as do not use by gas safety engineers, open flue gas fires within sleeping rooms.
8. Lack of food storage, preparation areas and water supply available for preparing/cooking food.
9. Fire risk within properties where occupier exhibits behavioural problem leading to high fire loading – such as hoarding.
10. Structural collapse – falling brickwork, defective chimney stacks/pots, other building elements either at risk of falling from height or being heavy (window frames etc.).
11. Falls on stairs - no handrail, handrail not extending to full length of flight, steep stairs, narrow stairs, twisting stairs, gaps in balustrades / spindles, poor lighting.

Housing Assessment Officers may also consider the following cases likely category 2 hazards that need to be rectified, as they will deteriorate over time:

1. Damp and mould - Extreme condensation and mould growth, resulting from lack of natural or mechanical extract ventilation, inadequate heating or insulation, penetrating dampness from holes in the roof etc.
2. Toilets blocked due to defects or other defective foul or surface water drainage such as gullies, pipework, guttering etc.
3. Operation of windows/doors - difficult to open/close, external doors swollen, missing door/window handles
4. Collapse of internal elements such as falling plasterwork, fixtures and fittings etc.

4.6 Energy efficiency support

4.6.1 Fuel poverty, or ‘affordable warmth’, is a key health issue as it impacts severely and directly on the most vulnerable sections of our communities – from the very young to the oldest. Around 30,000 excess winter deaths are attributed to cold related illness annually. These can include flu, pneumonia and chest infections as well as strokes and heart attacks. It can also contribute to increased risk of falls. Those impacts which are not fatal may nonetheless be debilitating with severe and permanent effects, and all may bear upon stretched medical and social care services. Increases in allergies and asthma from exposure to mould spores from condensation and damp are also harmful, and in the very young can develop into whole lifetime conditions which can affect educational achievement and employment prospects. NICE guidelines advocate action to address fuel poverty and excess cold.

4.6.2 Funding for domestic energy efficiency improvements via national schemes like ECO (Energy Companies Obligation) and the Green Deal have lacked stability and are under review or early stage implementation. Phase 2 of ECO was due to expire on 31.3.2017 but is being extended in a modified form until September 2018. Exact details of modifications and guidance are awaited from the Department of Business Energy and Industrial Strategy. Energy companies are still delivering schemes, in some cases nationwide and in others bespoke with local partners such as Councils.

4.6.3 Councils can play an important role in delivering schemes, particularly in partnership with energy companies, as they have a track record of delivery along with local data, knowledge and networks of connections and communications, and can act as a trusted brand and bridge between communities and the private sector. Councils can generate publicity and capture potential leads for onward referral, and also act as intermediaries and ambassadors of their constituents in dealings with other funders or providers. Councils can also ‘top up’ energy company offers and fill gaps where certain customers, properties or works may not be covered by ECO-type schemes.

4.6.4 As schemes and relationships with funders and their delivery infrastructure may change on a rapid cycle – and it would not be possible or prudent to re-write this policy every time such a change occurred – only a generic description of the types of assistance which may be offered can be given at this point. This policy may be supplemented by codicils from time to time which capture more specific offers, but in general the service will offer appropriate grants and/or loans, materials and the provision of works directly or otherwise with partners to the criteria, limits and terms & conditions as are negotiated and agreed to provide maximum impact and benefit. This is likely to include a Statement of Intent under new ECO2 rules to target flexible eligibility provision and declare households as qualifying under Fuel Poor (FP) or LIVC (living on a low income and vulnerable to the effects of cold housing), and any solid wall in-fill insulation scheme, pending DBEIS guidance.

4.7 Other forms of assistance

4.7.1 Councils may from time to time wish to consider grants or other financial and non-financial assistance for purposes not aligned to the Better Care Fund, or to address local issues, either directly or via HEART. These matters may include; empty homes, conversions / HMOs, assistance to down-size and release larger family housing.

4.7.2 As those issues are not directly associated with the HEART harmonisation agenda, they are not explored here further and await development at the discretion of the Councils or HEART Management Board.

NOTE: If a Council is going to offer or deliver any RRO qualifying assistance directly or through HEART, it should be included either in their own stand-alone policy or in this policy as an appendix/codicil.

5 Assistance process, and access

5.1 Customers may refer themselves or be referred to the HEART service either directly or indirectly by all appropriate channels – telephone, email, regular mail (post) or at appropriate offices (main office at Town Hall, Nuneaton – satellite offices at Bedworth and partner Councils offices and satellites). Satellites, partners and switchboards will have been briefed to channel all relevant enquiries to the HEART duty desk at Nuneaton Town Hall (for the North – NBBC, NWBC and RBC) and Warwick District Council HEART duty desk at Riverside House, Leamington Spa for the South (WDC/SoADC), which serve to screen incoming contacts to either immediately signpost or redirect or to conduct initial enquiries for processing onwards. Other District/Borough Council offices and sites may be used by staff as drop-in offices and for occasional meetings.

5.2 The HEART duty desk operates from 0900-1700, Monday to Friday excluding Bank and Public holidays. There is no emergency out of hours service or contact (messages can be left), but staff will sometimes have to arrange home or other visits or make contact with customers outside of those hours by agreement to deliver better and more effective service. Enquiries will usually be addressed in chronological order as received, excepting cases as detailed further under prioritisation (section 9).

5.3 All information received and processed will be treated in accordance with confidentiality and data protection rules, as agreed in the HEART Data Sharing Protocol.

5.4 Staff have all had additional training in equalities and diversity, and on the safeguarding of both adults and children. In appropriate circumstances, staff may be legally obliged or directed by a supervisor to refer cases of ‘concern for welfare’ to other appropriate agencies for investigation in line with agreed policies.

5.5 Once initial screening has occurred, unless referred to other services, each case will be allocated to an Occupational Therapist, Housing Assessment Officer, or Home Improvement Officer as appropriate to the needs and circumstances. Those staff will normally make contact by telephone or otherwise as directed, and will then usually arrange for a home visit to view the property and discuss the customer’s wishes and needs. The outcome of that visit will inform any schedule or specification of works, and the staff will provide and assist the customer to complete any necessary application documentation. Customers may be asked to sign a customer agreement for some types of work, but HEART fees for financially assisted works are all grant aided and are not paid by the customer.

5.6 Once customers have been supported to apply for assistance, they should receive written notification of a decision in due course. Prior to that, the HEART service can arrange for contractors to visit and view the property and quote for the identified works, and can also engage a design professional who may draw plans and assist with the process for more major, complex and expensive adaptations which may require planning permission and

which may need refinement from an initial brief. An asbestos testing contractor may also be engaged to check if works require special protection. Other professionals such as structural engineers etc. may also be necessary from time to time. The value of some works may dictate that two or even three different quotes are obtained to compare value. (Note- see section 8 – contractors are a customer choice, customers may choose contractors other than those working with the HEART service, and are not obliged to use the least cost contractor but may be liable for additional costs outside of any award).

5.7 The customer's key worker will contact the customer regularly with updates, and will visit during works and on completion as appropriate. Some cases require one or more pre-start meetings, as some customers may have to make temporary arrangements to facilitate the works.

5.8 During and on completion of works, contractors may make requests for interim or final payments, which will be checked by the service before approval with the customer's permission only. In the case of dispute over value, work quality or otherwise, the HEART service will mediate towards mutual satisfaction and a fair outcome for all. After completion and final payment, customers should receive any appropriate warranty, guarantee, certificate or similar. If customers have any contribution to pay towards works, for extra works or other purposes, the customer should pay the contractor directly and up front i.e. before Council funds, and in any event for works outside of grant scope. The Council is not responsible for chasing applicants for money and receiving it and then paying it out to a contractor. Contractors should be responsible for obtaining the money owed to them by clients

5.9 Stairlifts and similar are usually provided with a standard 5 year warranty. Whilst the lift becomes the property of the customer, if the customer no longer requires it or can no longer use it, the HEART service has 'first call' to survey and remove any reusable lift for other customers. 'Make good' works will be offered (or compensation to the value of any decor), together with the proportional residual value of any original customer contribution. See 4.1

5.10 Customers are able to make repeat or successive applications if their needs change and within the specific assistance type conditions. If customers are concerned or unhappy with any issue and wish to speak with a supervisor, they may ask for the Senior Housing Assessment Officer or Senior Occupational Therapist, and may then escalate to the HEART Team Manager as appropriate in advance of options to appeal or complain.

5.11 ALL applicants for and beneficiaries of financial assistance must have a valid UK National Insurance number, a UK address and the right to reside in the UK and to receive the benefit of public funding. Grants and assistance will be provided for works to Warwickshire properties only, but relocation support (costs) may be provided for moves outside Warwickshire County.

6 Assistance conditions, and advice

6.1 Assistance conditions will be particular to each assistance type and will be provided in writing with any application form, paperwork, and approval or otherwise. Customers may ask their key worker for clarification or further detail as necessary.

6.2 Approvals of grant or loan will usually relate to a sum of money and not be specific to a particular contractor or set of contractors the customer must use. However, the Council must have received and be satisfied with quotes from alternative contractors in advance of works.

6.3 An approval may be for less than 100% of the cost of the works, and the customer should be informed of their contribution or shortfall and should not instruct the commencement of works until that sum can be covered. Customers should also be aware of the possibility of unforeseen works which may fall outside of the scope of further financial aid, and may require a reasonable contingency.

6.4 Customers may be assisted by their key worker to seek charitable finance for any shortfall or assessed contribution, but should seek professional independent financial advice for any commercial loan or equity release type product.

6.5 Certain assistance types may require a minimum period of occupation or ownership to avoid the partial or complete repayment of funds. Some assistance types may have a non-expiring obligation to repay funds, and unless otherwise stated will usually be in the form of a zero-interest loan or charge not requiring periodic repayment, but terminal settlement. Mandatory DFGs may require up to £10,000 to be repaid if circumstances are triggered within 10 years of the certified (completion) date.

7 Fees and Ancillary Charges

7.1 The Council will consider reasonable fees for financial assistance. The following fees will be eligible for financial assistance if they have been properly incurred in making an application or seeking approval for the proposed works, or to ensure the satisfactory completion of works assisted under this policy;

- Confirmation, if sought by the Council, that the applicant has a relevant owners interest
- Relevant legal fees
- Technical and structural surveys
- Design and preparation of plans and drawings
- Preparation of schedules of relevant works
- Assistance in completing forms
- Advice on financing the costs of the relevant works which are not met by grant
- Applications for building regulations approval (including application fee and preparation of related documents), planning permission, listed building consent and conservation area consent (and similar)
- Obtaining of estimates
- Advice on contracts
- Consideration of tenders
- Supervision of the relevant works
- Disconnection and reconnection of utilities where necessitated by relevant works
- Payment of contractors
- In a case where the application is for DFG or DDFA, the reasonable services and charges of a (private) occupational therapist in relation to the relevant works

7.2 HEART fees – The HEART service charge fees for the services they provide which are in excess of the statutory minimum necessary to approve the grant application. Currently the fees are set at 15% of cost of grant / loan funded works. This can be amended by the agreement of the HEART Management Board. (Fees were increased from 12.5% to 15% on 1st April 2021 in accordance with HEART Board decision)

7.4 In order to streamline the process, these fees will be deducted at source by HEART. Any HEART fees will be excluded from any repayable element of financial awards, and in any case these fees will be in addition to the maximum amounts specified for any particular award. The fees will be based on the maximum grants amount.

Examples

DFG Grant	(£30,000 Max)	Home Safety Grant	(£500 max)
Cost of works	£10000	Cost of Works	500
Fee	£1500	Fee	75

Total Award	£11500	Total Award	£575
10 year charge for works between £5000 and £15000	£5000		
Amount excluded from charge	£1500		

7.5 Where the Council / HEART service is not assisting the works with grant or financial award, but the customer still requires technical or professional services to support their project, the customer will be responsible for paying HEART fees accordingly. Customers will need to sign an appropriate customer agreement form. Dispute resolution will be between customers and their chosen contractors, but with appropriate support from HEART staff.

7.6 The HEART Management Board will set the level for technical and professional services for privately funded customers.

8 HEART Contractors

8.1 The HEART service currently operates an open list of contractors which can be joined on successfully meeting the requirements of the contractor's standards and code of conduct. In addition some contractors may be accessed through framework agreements provided by external organisations.

8.2 All Councils are keen to promote the economy within their local areas and as such capital spending can contribute towards this objective. Where feasible and not to the detriment of the service provided then local contractors will be given the opportunity to tender for works.

8.3 HEART has a number of types of contractors and specialist services within its supply chain. These include

- Architects
- Structural engineers
- Asbestos surveying companies
- Stair lift manufacturers and installers
- Bathroom installers
- General builders
- Specialist builders
- Gas and electricity contractors

As HEART effectively links contractors and suppliers with grant applications it is recognised that a responsibility and relationship exists between the contractor and HEART. It is therefore the commissioning intention of HEART to procure and manage the supply chain through a series of appropriate tenders and frameworks. Some of these frameworks may be national public sector frameworks that the Council can access. Further commissioning may be necessary to create more local frameworks where effectively contractors are working for HEART and HEART is making its own contractors available to customers. Procurement will seek to ensure a suitable legal relationship between HEART and contractors where each body is responsible for their work and actions and suitable arrangements are in place to ensure poor performance is rectified.

8.4 Each job that is intrusive will be subject to an asbestos survey to determine if specialist removal or precautions are necessary to complete the job. This survey will be paid via the capital grant irrespective of whether work progresses as will other specialist survey or design works where the grant works do not progress.

9 Prioritisation

9.1 Where possible the Council will commence consideration of an enquiry for assessment for financial support or other services within this policy in chronological order of receipt of enquiry, subject to the following provisions;

- With the agreement of HEART senior supervisor, an enquiry must be considered as urgent if the customer would be unable to remain in their home safely unless the works are expedited, notwithstanding that care in the home is provided, OR that required works are necessary to facilitate discharge from hospital or nursing or residential care,
- Any priority scheme agreed for DFGs
- The property subject of the enquiry is in such a condition as to present an immediate and significant danger to the occupants or visitors.
- For the purposes of budgetary control a category of financial assistance may be given priority over another, or sums may be switched between categories but NOT to the detriment of mandatory DFGs
- For the purposes of policy or project implementation a category of financial assistance may be given priority over another
- Where staff resources are employed to work in a specialist area e.g. Home Improvement Officers dealing with complicated WaSH grants, then the enquiries generated for those specific work areas will be considered within their own chronological priority order, irrespective of the wider enquiries dealt by the wider team.
- NOTE: devolved budgets are NOT pooled – if a budget for an area is fully committed, budgets from other areas will not be transferred but sub-budgets for different assistance types in that local area may be reallocated at the discretion of the home partner Council. This means that some enquiries or applications may be suspended pending identification of local funds, whilst later cases from other areas go ahead.

9.2 Where resources (financial, staffing or other) are limited, those services which are provided for vulnerable groups or most vulnerable individuals will take priority over other types of assistance or cases.

9.3 Where a property, case, customer or category of service is to be considered outside of chronological order the Head of Service or HEART Team Manager / Private Sector Housing Manager or Team Leaders will sanction the action and a written record will be retained on file in justification of that decision.

10 Enforcement Policies

10.1 Although this Financial Assistance Policy is designed to support and encourage the co-operation of owners and landlords to maintain and improve their homes, it must be borne in mind that the Council may have to resort to statutory action. This may be necessary:

- To comply with legislation compelling the Council to act, as a mandatory duty or statutory function
- To protect the living conditions of private tenants, particularly those living in shared accommodation or houses in multiple occupation (see separate local HMO licensing policies)
- To protect the conditions of owner occupiers where necessary and appropriate, or those of their neighbours affected by poorly maintained property

10.2 Each Council has adopted its own enforcement policy to ensure that their actions are carried out with clearly understood principles, practices and standards, in a consistent way, proportional to the issues being addressed, and with a courteous and helpful approach by the Council staff involved. Councils will seek to act with an open, transparent and honest approach. Each Councils policies and actions should reflect the principles of the Regulators Code; <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/regulators-code>.

10.3 A copy of each Council's housing enforcement policy will be available online and at each principal office of the Councils at reasonable time and without charge. Printed copies can be provided for a nominal charge, but free copies will be available on request to voluntary organisations and partners, particularly those representing customer groups who may receive assistance under this policy, Warwickshire County Council Social Services (Adult and Children's Social Care), the Library Service and the National Health Service.

10.4 Each Council's policy may be updated from time to time.

11 Complaints

11.1 Whilst each partner Council has its own separate formal complaint process, HEART has a process which should be used regardless of the location of the service provided or requested, or the particular employing organisations involved.

Note – if Councils have opted to provide any assistance within this policy directly and outside of HEART then their own process should be followed – details via their individual websites, main offices or contact centres which can be referred onwards by HEART or for which HEART can give details.

11.2 Any member of the public who is dissatisfied with the performance of the HEART service in administering this policy may make a formal complaint through the HEART procedure. However, we would encourage both the public and the staff (and their supervisors) to try to address any misunderstandings or disagreements by mutual agreement – within the jurisdiction of the staff to do so – to avoid the need for a matter to escalate to formality. Staff should still make supervisors and managers aware of such issues even if resolved, in order to facilitate learning and service improvement.

11.3 Complaints that amount to a disagreement with the Council about its decisions, or the Policy, rather than the way in which the decisions or policies have been implemented, cannot be considered under this (HEART) Complaint Procedure:

https://www.nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk/info/19999/feedback/201/customer_feedback

Where appropriate an appeal can be made to the Appeals Panel to consider the merits of a decision on whether a case outside of policy should receive assistance – see ‘Appeals and out of policy cases’ – section 12.

11.4 Examples of the type of complaint that will come within this complaints procedure are:

- Failure of HEART to provide the service to an appropriate level or standard as described in this policy
- Unhelpful attitude of a HEART service employee
- Neglect or delay in answering a query or responding to a request for service outside of that which is reasonable
- Failure to follow the services agreed policies, rules or procedures
- Failure to take account of relevant matters when coming to a decision
- Failure to inform people of their rights
- Malice, bias or the non-application of Equal Opportunities policies or principles

11.5 Complaints, compliments and feedback are made through the NBBC web site as above.

11.6 The complaints procedure is not a substitute or alternative to any person's right to complain to their elected representatives or to the appropriate Ombudsman, but the latter will usually insist on the customer using the service complaints process first.

12 Appeals and out-of-policy cases

12.1 The appeals process has been designed to incorporate the following key principles:

- Accessibility
- Simplicity and clarity
- Promptness of action and speed of resolution
- Objectivity and independence
- Confidentiality
- Comprehensiveness

12.2 There are two forms of appeal which may occur:

- a. Issues of a professional or technical nature, e.g. where an applicant disagrees with the assessment of conditions or needs,
- b. 'special case' issues where the works, social or financial circumstances of the applicant or type of assistance required are not accounted for within the policy or where the customer believes the policy to be wrong or unfair.

12.3 In order to properly consider appeals, there will be two levels of escalation: The Supervisors Panel (Private Sector Housing Manager and Heart Service Manager), and the Senior Management Panel (Head of Home Environment Service and the local Head of Housing or equivalent).

12.4 Technical / professional appeals may be in relation to:

- Hazards determined under the HHSRS
- The perceived condition of any building element
- The remedial works determined by the Council

12.5 Special Case Appeals – where the works, social or financial circumstances of the applicant or type of assistance requested for are not accounted for within the policy, the applicants will be able to appeal.

12.6 Where the Supervisors Panel declines an appeal then the appellant (client, disabled person or applicant – directly or via an advocate or agent) may escalate to the next level (Senior Management).

12.7 Appellants will be eligible to appeal where it is argued that their special circumstances are not adequately reflected through the existing policy. The claim can only be successful if they establish to the satisfaction of the Panel that their case falls within the following criteria:

- Failure to carry out works will place the applicants or existing family's health and safety at immediate risk

- The applicant or member of their family has a specific and serious medical condition or disability – including mental health – which is being aggravated by the existing condition of the property and the provision of assistance would significantly improve the condition
- The condition of the house will imminently prevent the ability of the existing family to continue to live together
- The condition of the property will lead to the intervention of other statutory services, thereby causing additional expenditure from other public sources e.g. children being taken into care
- The work would be of wider benefit than to the applicant and their family e.g. where other properties are affected.

12.8 In all of the above cases:

- The applicant has no means by which they could reasonably be expected to fund the work, either privately or with 'welfare' assistance, and
- The assisted works must significantly reduce the problems under the above criteria, described by the applicant or identified by the Council

12.9 Where the applicant does not fulfil the above criteria, they will be notified and they may then appeal to the Senior Management Panel to decide their case. Where a Panel agrees that the case fulfils the above criteria, then the assistance may be agreed.

12.10 Initial assessments – a form will be provided to the applicant in order for them to document their case, along with the criteria listed above. It will be for the applicant to provide sufficient detail concerning their case. Where the applicant requires support to make an appeal submission, the HEART service may assist with the form.

12.11 Initial assessments will be carried out by the Supervisors Panel based on the evidence provided on the form. Clients will not be requested to attend an initial hearing, but submit written representations only. If the Supervisors Panel require further information from the client, they will make appropriate arrangements.

12.12 Written notification of the Supervisors Panel decision will be given to the applicant along with information concerning their legal rights or how the claim will progress.

12.13 The initial assessments will be recorded along with reasons for the decision.

12.14 Where the medical criterion is being used it may be appropriate for independent medical advice to be sought which may require revenue funding.

12.15 Upon escalation, the Supervisors Panel will provide reasons for refusing the appeal and will provide information regarding the implications of a positive decision and further information required, and will act to keep the applicant informed of progress.

12.16 The appellant will provide any additional information requested and may be invited to attend or address a **hearing** of the Senior Management Panel if appropriate, or to provide further information to clarify their case. The appellant may bring with them a representative to help or present their case if invited. The Panel will listen to the available evidence and will be able to question both Officers and the Appellant, if in attendance. The applicant may also request a written hearing of the Senior Management Panel and to make representations in person.

12.17 Written notification of the Panel decision will be given to the applicant and where the decision is negative or conditional information concerning their legal rights will also be given.

12.18 The Panels although acting independently are advised that the guidelines described at paragraphs above may also be used to determine any case, however they may also want to consider any individual circumstances that do not fall within the guidelines.

12.19 Decisions to grant appeals and continue and application will then be dealt with in date order from initial enquiry unless the Panel decides to deal with the case urgently, i.e. the appeal will not delay the process excepting for the unavoidable time taken to hear and determine the matter.

12.20 Due to the personal nature of the appeals process, none of the reports will be published unless all methods of identifying the applicant including their address have been removed from the report.

12.21 Outcomes – if the Panel finds in favour of the appellant then it may decide to:

- Offer one of the standard forms of assistance contained in this policy or as so modified, or
- Decide a special form of assistance which would address the issues raised, imposing any terms and conditions as thought appropriate, which nonetheless comply with the spirit of legislation and Council policies.

13 Service standards, Key Performance Indicators and Targets

13.1 There is no national standard for aspects of the above matters excepting a statutory requirement for Councils to determine valid and fully made applications for mandatory DFG within six months. This does not account for pre-application activities such as the screening process and the 'application support' and administration including occupational therapy assessment, means testing, producing specifications, finding contractors etc. In practice, when an application is received by the HEART service it is practically complete and ready for an almost instant decision. In a few cases there may be details to pursue, such as proof of property ownership, landlord or owner's permission etc., and if there are alternative schemes under consideration or issues to do with financing the customers contribution. However, the service records all key activities and dates and can report on a variety of measures, including date enquiry received, date application submitted, date determined, date works started, value of works and contributions, date works finished, and completed as in signed-off.

13.2 There is also a national standard for giving 12 months for works to be completed, but this can be extended by negotiation if there are valid reasons to do so, such as the customer receiving care or wanting works deferred, occasional changes in contractor or specification, complex snagging etc. Generally, for most cases not involving additional building or conversions e.g. level access showers and straight stairlifts, works are complete within one week of starting (time between approval and start is dependent upon outside factors). Curved stair lifts have a longer manufacturing lead time, but a short installation time once produced. Conversions and extension buildings take longer but usually within 4 months from start. All key dates and any delays, and the reasons for them, are recorded on a case by case basis. Cases with delays are individually considered to identify any causes which could be avoidable or to pass on any service improvement learning. General Service process times on an officer by officer and HEART wide basis are also considered for any variable factors affecting efficient delivery, as all front line service staff are supervised and monitored frequently.

13.3 Locally, the service aims to apply the funding it receives fully each year with minimal waiting lists and with maximum benefit to customers. All HEART KPIs and measures have been agreed through the partnership agreement which are reported on a quarterly basis to the Management Board. Other forms of assistance may require the development of further KPIs which will be agreed via the HEART Management Board. HEART Partnership Agreement Measures and Indicators are set out below in 3.15 but may be subject to change as the partnership develops.

13.4 Minor changes to this policy will be made by the Head of Housing or equivalent within each authority whereas more substantial changes will be made in consultation with relevant elected members of each partner authority.

3.15 HEART Partnership Measures and Indicators

	Outcomes – number of instances where the service has helped customers to:	
KPI 1	Managing and maintaining nutrition and hydration	
KPI 2	Maintaining personal hygiene	
KPI 3	Managing toilet needs	
KPI 4	Being appropriately clothed	
KPI 5	Being able to make use of the home safely	
KPI 6	Maintaining a habitable home environment	
KPI 7	Developing and maintaining family or other personal relationships	
KPI 8	Accessing and engaging in work, training, education or volunteering	
KPI 9	Making use of necessary facilities or services in the local community, including public transport, and recreational facilities or services	
KPI 10	Carrying out any caring responsibilities the adult has for a child.	
	Major Adaptations	
KPI 11	Number of Private Sector DFG's Approved within the quarter	
KPI 12	Number of Private Sector DFG's where works are completed within the quarter	
KPI 13	Number of Private Sector DFG's where the case was closed in the quarter	
	Demand	
KPM 1	Number of enquiries within the quarter	
KPM 2	Total number of Telephone Assessments in period	
KPM 3	Total enquiries on Intake list with no telephone assessment at period end	
KPM 4	Total number on list waiting for face to face visit at period end	
KPM 5	Total number that had face to face visit at period end	
KPM 6	Total number closed within period	
KPM 7	Number of cases closed within period that had received a visit	
	Interventions – the number of instances that the service delivers the activities.	
KPI 11 a	Finance Support	Charity support
KPI 11 b		Direct payment – social care
KPI 11 c		Maximising income - Benefits
KPI 12 a	Energy Efficiency	Energy efficiency survey
KPI 12 b		Energy efficiency referral
KPI 13 a	Falls and Safety	Falls prevention assessment
KPI 13 b		Falls prevention works carried out
KPI 13 c		Home safety survey
KPI 13 d		Home Safety works carried out
KPI 14 a	Housing Hazards (statutory)	Full Housing Hazards Assessment
KPI 14 b		Housing Hazards Identified
KPI 14 c		Housing hazards removed – grants / loans

KPI 15 a		Housing hazards removed – other means
KPI 15 b		Social housing repairs
KPI 15 c		Social Housing Fast Track
KPI 16 a	Advice	Information & Advice – Health promotion / prevention
KPI 16 b		Information & Advice – Housing related
KPI 16 c		Information & Advice – general
KPI 17 a	Activities of Daily Living	Major Adaptations – Disabled Facilities Grant
KPI 17 b		Major Adaptations – Social Housing
KPI 17 c		Minor Adaptations – ICESS
KPI 17 d		Minor Adaptations – other
KPI 18 a	Alternative Accommodation Support	Rehousing support
KPI 18 b		Suitability of property assessment
KPI 18 c		Specialist Professional support – self funding adaptations
KPI 19 a	Referrals	Referral to Social Care
KPI 19 b		Referral to Health
KPI 19 c		Referral to Housing – Private Sector
KPI 19 d		Referral to Housing - Allocations
	Council Housing Major Adaptations	
KPM 8	Total number of Major Adaptation Assessments for Council Housing referred within quarter per authority.	
	Average costs of Major Adaptations	
KPM 9	Average cost of a private sector major adaptation within the quarter per local authority area.	
	End to End Time and Key Stage Times (for major adaptations closed within the quarter)	
KPM 10	Time from enquiry to the service to completion of building works.	
KPM 11	Enquiry to Telephone Assessment (all cases)	
KPM 12	Telephone Assessment to Face to Face Assessment (all cases)	
KPM 13	Face to Face Assessment to Contractor visit	
KPM 14	Contractor visit to Quotation	
KPM 15	Quotation to DFG Approval	
KPM 16	DFG Approval to Start of Works	
KPM 17	Start of Works to Completion of works	
	Timeframe (enquiry to works complete) & Cost for Each type of Major Adaptation (north / south split)	

KPM 18	Type
KPM 19	Number
KPM 20	Average duration
KPM 21	Best time
KPM 22	Poorest time
KPM 23	Average cost
	Drop out rate
KPI 20	Customers who are identified as requiring a major adaptation but the case is closed without it being delivered.
	Compliments and Complaints (north / south split)
KPI 21	Number of compliments received by the service within the quarter.
KPI 22	Number of formal complaints received by the service in the quarter.
KPI 23	Number of times the service was found to be at fault following a formal complaint.
	Customer Satisfaction Survey (percent of customers reporting the service performance at good or better on the agreed satisfaction survey under the following themes)
KPM 24	Respect and Dignity
KPM 25	Communication
KPM 26	Responsiveness
KPM 27	Reliability
KPM 28	Contractors
KPM 29	Overall experience

14 Policy implementation plan

14.1 The policy will be implemented from a date to be agreed by Partner Councils and the Service once it has received the necessary political approvals. HEART is already delegated to approve and vary financial assistance offers on behalf of partner Councils, and – where budgets have been devolved – to make and claim payments for such. Systems will be in place to record at each Council each transaction which may require recording as a Local Land Charge, which could trigger notification of liability for repayment, recovery of specialised equipment, or similar including the appropriate legal authority to pursue such claims if any and to write-off, waive or reduce any unrecoverable claims or those accepted as inappropriate or hardship cases.

14.2 This policy will be reviewed no less frequently than five years from commencement, with interim annual reports to partner Councils and KPI reports on a more frequently agreed basis as per the agreed HEART partnership agreement and as directed by the Management Board.

14.3 Notwithstanding the above, if circumstances require the policy to be reviewed then the HEART service will report to the Management Board or each partner authority may request the Management Board to review the policy.

15 Signatories and key dates

This document must be ratified by each partner Housing Authority by its own process, and duly minute as agreed and adopted. The effective date of the policy is that of each partner Council.

Minute reference number Date

Representing (organisation) **Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council**

Minute reference number Date

Representing (organisation) **North Warwickshire Borough Council**

Minute reference number Date

Representing (organisation) **Rugby Borough Council**

Minute reference number Date

Representing (organisation) **Stratford on Avon District Council**

Minute reference number Date

Representing (organisation) **Warwick District Council**

Appendix A

Contacts for HEART service and partner organisations

HEART

- Main office base – Town Hall, Coton Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV11 5AA
- Telephone – 02476 376294
- Email – customer.services@nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk
- Website - https://www.nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk/info/21036/heart/353/heart_%E2%80%93_helping_you_live_independently_at_home

Warwickshire County Council

- Main office base – Shire Hall, Warwick CV34 4RL
- Telephone – 01926 410410
- Email - customerservicecentre@warwickshire.gov.uk
- Website - <http://www.warwickshire.gov.uk/>

Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council

- Main office base - Town Hall, Coton Road, Nuneaton, Warwickshire CV11 5AA
- Telephone – 02476 376376
- Email – customer.services@nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk
- Website - <https://www.nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk/site/>

North Warwickshire Borough Council

- Main office base – Council House, South Street, Atherstone, Warwickshire CV9 1AD
- Telephone – 01827 715341
- Email - customerservices@northwarks.gov.uk
- Website - <https://www.northwarks.gov.uk/site/>

Rugby Borough Council

- Main office base – Town Hall, Evreux Way, Rugby, Warwickshire CV21 2RR
- Telephone – 01788 533533
- Email - contact.centre@rugby.gov.uk
- Website - <https://www.rugby.gov.uk/site/index.php>

Stratford on Avon District Council

- Main office base - Elizabeth House, Church Street, Stratford-upon-Avon, Warwickshire, CV37 6HX

- Telephone – 01789 267575
- Email – info@stratford-dc.gov.uk
- Website - <https://www.stratford.gov.uk/index.cfm>

Warwick District Council

- Main office base - Riverside House, Milverton Hill, Leamington Spa, CV32 5HZ
- Telephone – 01926 450000
- Email - contactus@warwickdc.gov.uk
- Website - <https://www.warwickdc.gov.uk/site/>

Service Contacts:

Contact Details – To help us deal with your enquiry please choose the correct team to contact for your property address.

Residents of **Rugby, Nuneaton and Bedworth and North Warwickshire Borough Councils** – contact:

HEARTNorth@nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk 02476376294

Residents of **Warwick District and Stratford on Avon District Councils** – contact:

southhat@warwickdc.gov.uk 01926 456422

For informal Service Complaints, Press and Partner Enquiries, Councillor and MP Enquiries contact:

HEART@nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk

Formal complaints, compliments and comments can be made through NBBC web site at:

https://www.nuneatonandbedworth.gov.uk/info/19999/feedback/201/customer_feedback

Appendix (b1) – Local Scheme of Policy Variation – North Warwickshire Borough Council

Appendix (b2) – Local Scheme of Policy Variation – Nuneaton & Bedworth Borough Council

Appendix (b3) – Local Scheme of Policy Variation – Rugby Borough Council

Appendix (b4) – Local Scheme of Policy Variation – Stratford on Avon District Council

Appendix (b5) – Local Scheme of Policy Variation – Warwick District Council

Appendix (C) - Articles 3 & 4 of The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002

Power of local housing authorities to provide assistance

3.—(1) For the purpose of improving living conditions in their area, a local housing authority may provide, directly or indirectly, assistance to any person for the purpose of enabling him—

- (a) to acquire living accommodation (whether within or outside their area);
- (b) to adapt or improve living accommodation (whether by alteration, conversion or enlargement, by the installation of any thing or injection of any substance, or otherwise);
- (c) to repair living accommodation;
- (d) to demolish buildings comprising or including living accommodation;
- (e) where buildings comprising or including living accommodation have been demolished, to construct buildings that comprise or include replacement living accommodation.

(2) The power conferred by paragraph (1)(a) may be exercised to assist a person to acquire living accommodation only where the authority—

- (a) have acquired or propose to acquire (whether compulsorily or otherwise) his existing living accommodation; or
- (b) are satisfied that the acquisition of other living accommodation would provide for that person a benefit similar to that which would be provided by the carrying out of work of any description in relation to his existing living accommodation.

(3) Assistance may be provided in any form.

(4) Assistance may be unconditional or subject to conditions, including conditions as to the repayment of the assistance or of its value (in whole or in part), or the making of a contribution towards the assisted work; but before imposing any such condition, or taking steps to enforce it, a local housing authority shall have regard to the ability of the person concerned to make that repayment or contribution.

(5) Before a local housing authority provide assistance to any person, they shall—

- (a) give to that person a statement in writing of the conditions (if any) to which the assistance is to be subject; and
- (b) satisfy themselves that that person has received appropriate advice or information about the extent and nature of any obligation (whether financial or otherwise) to which he will become subject in consequence of the provision of assistance.

(6) A local housing authority may take any form of security in respect of the whole or part of any assistance.

(7) Where any such security is taken in the form of a charge on any property, the local housing authority may at any time reduce the priority of the charge or secure its removal.

(8) This article is subject to articles 4 and 5.

(9) Nothing in this article affects any power of a local housing authority under Part 14 of the 1985 Act (loans for acquisition or improvement of housing).

Provision of assistance: supplementary

4. A local housing authority may not exercise the power conferred by article 3 in any case unless—

- (a) they have adopted a policy for the provision of assistance under that article;
- (b) they have given public notice of the adoption of the policy;
- (c) they have secured that—
 - (i) a document in which the policy is set out in full is available for inspection, free of charge, at their principal office at all reasonable times; and
 - (ii) copies of a document containing a summary of the policy may be obtained by post (on payment, where a reasonable charge is made, of the amount of the charge); and
- (d) the power is exercised in that case in accordance with that policy.

Appendix D1 –Assistance Measures – summary

Mandatory: Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) - Maximum £30,000 grant, partial repayable element (owner occupiers), means tested except children's cases and/or qualifying means tested benefits, stairlift recovery, no limit on repeats.

Discretionary:

Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance (DDFA) – Further grant of up to £10,000 and loan of up to £10,000 for works exceeding maximum mandatory DFG or for removal costs and/or purchase cost difference to move to more suitable property. Extra loan element repayable. Means tested INCLUDING child cases.

Hospital Discharge Grant (HDG) – Maximum up to £10,000 to overcome delayed hospital discharge, reduce (re)admission risk enabling safe and dignified home based care. NOT means tested where facilitating rapid hospital discharge, else may be referred for DFG.

Home Safety Grant / Handy-person (HSG) – Free home safety check for those 5+ or with disabled person in household. Minor aids, equipment and adaptations / works of up to £500 (cumulative in 3 years) for non Care Act cases, and £1000 for Care Act assessed needs (via Community Care <Delayed Discharges etc.> Act 2003 funding stream). Not repayable.

Warm & Safer Homes Grant (WaSH) – Maximum up to £10,000 for removal of HHSRS category 1 and key category 2 hazards for owner occupiers, not further/repeat means tested for those already on a qualifying means tested benefit (i.e. passported), OR vulnerable (agreed medical need) and then subject to DFG test of financial resources. Owner occupiers 3 year minimum ownership, no repeat award for 3 further years.

Energy Efficiency Support – not specified, in accordance with offers from utility companies and national schemes which change from time to time, such as the ECO Energy Companies Obligation initiative.

Other – The service may from time to time amend the above offers, including revocation and/or additional measures, along with LOCAL schemes which may be applied directly by relevant Councils in their own areas (see appendices b1 – b5 above).

Appendix D2 –Assistance Measures – tabulated

Assistance Name	Mandatory (M) / Discretionary (D)	Value (max. £)*	Purpose(s)	Criteria	Repayable / other notes
Disabled Facilities Grant – DFG	M	£30,000 Means tested except for child cases <19 years, otherwise means tested benefit passported qualification)	Specified purposes in 1996 Housing Grants Construction & Regeneration Act, section 23 (as amended)	Owner occupier, landlord or tenant, for disabled person. Necessary & appropriate, reasonable & practicable.	Up to £10,000 for works over £5,000 if disposal within 10 years – owner occupiers only. Repeat applications OK.
Discretionary Disabled Facilities Assistance (DDFA)	D	£10,000 grant £10,000 loan / charge (means tested including child cases)	Top-up to DFG, plus and relocation assistance (purchase and move costs)	DFG costs in excess of £30,000 plus agreed move value on case by case basis	Grant not repayable, loan repayable (0%, charge against property – not time expiring)
Hospital Discharge Grant (HDG)	D	£10,000 (not means tested)	Facilitate rapid hospital discharge, prevent or reduce risk of (re)admission	Agreed as urgent, cost saving, best option given alternatives	Not repayable
Home Safety Grant / Handy-Person (HDG)	M/D	£500 over 3 years Not means tested	Minor aids, equipment, repairs and adaptations	Over 55 or disabled person in household	Not repayable
Warm and Safer Home Grant (WaSH)	D	£10,000 <u>Either</u> qualifying means tested benefit OR vulnerable (agreed medical need) with DFG means test	Removal of HHSRS category 1 and key category 2 hazards	Owner-occupiers, 3 years minimum ownership	Not repayable, no re-award for 3 years
Energy Efficiency Support	-	n/a – tba (ECO etc.)	Reduction in fuel poverty, improve domestic energy efficiency	n/a	n/a
Other – revisions, revocations, additions and local schemes as indicated	D	n/a	Tba – including local		

- NOTE: all above for owner-occupiers and private tenants only except where detailed, notwithstanding £500 Home Safety Grant for equipment and minor aids also available to Council tenants.