

# **DARTFORD**

## BOROUGH COUNCIL

### BETTER CARE FUND DISCRETIONARY ASSISTANCE POLICY

January 2018

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

- 1.1. In 2015, Government announced that up to £500 million of capital funding was being made available for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and related works as part of the Better Care Fund (BCF).
- 1.2. The BCF 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. The BCF also shifts resources into social care and community services for the benefit of the people, communities and health and care systems and maximises the partnership role that the Council has with the NHS. The aim is ensure that people can manage their own health and wellbeing, and live independently in their communities for as long as possible.
- 1.3. Since then it has also become apparent that the current discretionary assistance is not working for some people leaving hospital, as they require assistance outside the scope of the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to meet their needs at home.
- 1.4. The Policy has three main aims:
  - a) Reducing or eliminating hospital admissions and readmissions;
  - b) Allowing a speedier discharge from hospital;
  - c) To consider the long term needs of individuals and reduce associated treatment and social care costs.
- 1.5. To enable this, the following may be provided.
  - Assisting with essential works such as repairs
  - Provision of necessary equipment
  - Deep cleaning/de-cluttering
  - Enabling homes to be efficiently heated for persons whose long term health conditions or age makes them vulnerable to the cold
- 1.6. The Council will provide funding for these services to applicants that meet one or more of the aims of this Policy where it is a housing related issue that is preventing them from being discharged, or to improve the home environment to prevent hospital admission in the first place.
- 1.7. This Policy is therefore intended to cover a range of non means tested services/funding not currently provided through any other means to prevent admissions or readmissions to hospital, improve health and wellbeing and to provide funding to eligible households for, for example, essential repairs

or heating installation which, if not carried out, may have a detrimental impact on their health and wellbeing.

## **2. BETTER CARE FUND DISCRETIONARY ASSISTANCE**

- 2.1. Historically, the way in which Disabled Facilities Grant funding could be used was rather prescriptive. However, since the introduction of the BCF a wider more integrated view is being promoted which includes supporting people in their own homes, and taking a joined-up approach to improving outcomes across health, social care and housing.
- 2.2. The following grants are available to persons who meet one or more of the aims of this Policy:

## **3. Hospital Discharge Grant (HDG)**

- 3.1. The maximum grant will be £5,000.
- 3.2. This grant is solely to provide support to local residents being discharged from hospital. Due to the many housing related issues that prevent a timely hospital discharge, a finite list of works cannot be given. However all works associated with the grant must be essential to enable the individual to once again reside in their own home.
- 3.3. Examples of works that would be expected to be supported by a HDG include:
  - Moving necessary furniture from upstairs to downstairs
  - Clearing a room to make it safe, including tackling hoarding
  - Deep cleaning a room to make it safe
  - Necessary equipment (not provided by any other means) to enable the person to be discharged from hospital, e.g. tilting chairs/boiler repairs or replacements
  - Purchasing of essential furniture such as a bed, if this is preventing hospital discharge
  - Any other works that are deemed necessary to enable the person to return home to a safe, warm and secure environment; within the scope of this Policy ( to be agreed by the Head of Housing)
- 3.4. Applicants for an HDG must be in hospital at the time of referral and awaiting discharge.
- 3.5. External organisations can refer applicants to the Council for assessment including local hospitals etc., care navigators, GPs, occupational therapists, health staff and the Health and Housing Coordinator based at Darent Valley Hospital.
- 3.6. Confirmation of ownership/tenancy in the Borough will be confirmed prior to discharge. In the case of tenants, only works or the provision of equipment that is not the responsibility of the landlord will be provided.

#### **4. Safe and Secure Grant (SSG)**

- 4.1. The maximum grant will be £5000
- 4.2. The Safe and Secure Grant is designed to reduce admissions and readmissions to hospital, improve health and wellbeing, to promote independence and to ensure that the person can remain in their own home as long as possible.
  - 4.2.1. Applicants must be 65 or over and/or have a specific ill health diagnosis/disability
- 4.3. Repairs to the house and its environs could include:
  - repairs or modifications to stairs, floors and steps
  - boiler installation or repairs
  - safety and security repairs, including the provision of key safes etc.
  - providing additional property modifications to promote independence for customers with a specific disability or diagnosed condition e.g. alzheimers, or dementia
  - any other works that are deemed necessary to enable the person to remain in their own home and prevent hospital admission or readmission within the scope of this Policy ( to be agreed by the Head of Housing)
- 4.4. Applicants can make a self-referral or external organisations can refer residents to the Council for assessment including local hospitals etc., care navigators, GPs, Occupational Therapists, health staff, Home Improvement Agency and the Health and Housing Coordinator based at Darent Valley Hospital.

#### **5. Discretionary Assistance Grant (revised) (also part of the Council's DFG Policy)**

- 5.1. Discretionary Assistance Grant is a non-means tested grant for urgently needed disabled aids/adaptations e.g. straight track stair lift, level access shower, access ramp and the repair/replacement of obsolete or defective equipment e.g. repair to stair lift or wash dry toilet. The purpose of the grant is to assist hospital discharge, prevent hospital admission and provide palliative assistance via a more streamlined process. Applications should be submitted using the Council's Discretionary Assistance application form.

Applicants must be:

- An owner- occupier
  - A private sector tenant
  - A Registered Social Landlord tenant
  - Registered or registerable as a disabled person
- 5.2. Works must be recommended by an Occupational Therapist.

- 5.3. The maximum grant is £7500.
- 5.4. Applicants may employ the Home Improvement Agency or an Independent Agent to assist them in the process and fees can be included within the cost of the discretionary facilities grant.
- 5.5. A local land charge is applicable for assistance over £5000 and repayment may apply if the property is disposed of within 10 years of the application (as outlined in 3.21 and 3.22 of the Council's Disabled Facility Grant Policy).

## **6. Grant Conditions**

- 6.1. With the exception of DAGs over £5,000, all assistance is non-means tested and non-repayable and is available to all eligible residents. Tenants are eligible for assistance not required to be met by the landlord (e.g. de-cluttering, deep cleaning, purchase of mattresses etc.).
- 6.2. A land charge is applicable for assistance of over £5000 and repayment may apply if the property is disposed of within 10 years of the application as outlined in 3.21 and 3.22 of the Council's Disabled Facilities Grants Policy.
- 6.3. To be eligible for a safe and secure grant, for under 65 year olds, written evidence must be provided to the Council confirming the applicant's medical condition, e.g. GP referral letters/hospital letters.
- 6.4. In each case, an application form must be completed and approved by the Council.
- 6.5. Applicants, or their advocate, need to provide one quote for all works or the provision of equipment.
- 6.6. Consent for works to be completed on a property must be provided by an owner of the property.
- 6.7. An application for any assistance shall be in a form approved by the Council.
- 6.8. Any application for assistance for work, which has been carried out or already commenced, will be refused.
- 6.9. In all cases, funding will only be provided where there is no other assistance/funding available to the applicant.
- 6.10. In all cases, discretionary assistance is subject to budget availability and may be frozen by the Council when necessary.

## **7. Decision and Notification**

- 7.1. The Council will notify an applicant in writing whether his or her application is refused or approved

7.2. If the Council approves the application, the notification will specify the works eligible for assistance, the value of the assistance and the contractor's quotation on which the assistance is based.

7.3. If the application is refused, the notification will include the reasons for refusal.

## **8. Supervision of Works**

8.1. The responsibility for supervision of the works and obtaining any necessary Building Regulations approval or other consent rests with the applicant or his or her agent. The Council does not accept any responsibility for supervision of the works.

8.2. The Council is not responsible for the quality of the work or any defects that arise.

## **9. Payments**

9.1. The Council will pay assistance direct to the contractor either in instalments or in one lump sum on completion of the works. It should be noted that the Contract is between the applicant and the contractor, not the Council.

9.2. Payments will be made by the Council direct to the contractor on satisfactory completion of works. Where assistance is payable, but the eligible works have not been executed to the satisfaction of the Council, the Council may withhold some or all of the payment from the contractor until the issue is resolved to the satisfaction of the Council. Where works are completed to the satisfaction of the Council, but not the applicant, the Council may still make full payment to the contractor.

## **10. Death of the applicant**

10.1. Where the applicant dies before the eligible works have been completed, the Council has discretion whether to pay any assistance in respect of some or all of the works already carried out or any other works covered by the application.

## **11. Successive Assistance**

11.1. An application for two grants or more within a three-year period will be considered on a case-by-case basis and will be determined at the Council's discretion.

## **12. Complaints**

12.1. If a complaint relates to the standard of service or to an action or lack of action in implementing this Policy, the complainant should follow the Council's Corporate Complaints Procedure [www.dartford.gov.uk](http://www.dartford.gov.uk)  
Complaints leaflets are available from the Council offices.