



ENVIRONMENTAL
HEALTH SERVICES

Your Guide to

**THE REPAIR
AND IMPROVEMENT
OF HOUSING**

Surrey Heath's Policy and Procedures

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You should also receive:-

- **"A guide to house renovation grants"**
(This explains the operation of the grant scheme)
- **"Paying for repairs and improvements to your home."**
(This sets out methods of funding your share of the cost)
- **"Home Improvements"**
(Warns on rogue builders and entering into binding contracts).
- **Form NGE**
(The yellow form you use to make your enquiry)

**GRANT APPLICANTS CAN BE THE
CURRENT OR PROSPECTIVE
OWNER/OCCUPIERS, TENANTS
AND LANDLORDS**

**- It is suggested that you
keep this booklet
for future reference -**

OBJECTIVES OF SCHEME

TO ASSIST OWNERS AND OCCUPIERS OF PROPERTY:

- (1) **Built more than ten years ago** in need of improvement, repair or conversion with advice and where appropriate grant towards the cost of agreed works to make the dwelling fit for habitation.

Works include installing damp proof courses, recladding roofs, replacing windows, renewing floors, eliminating instability, providing sanitary facilities, rewiring, providing hot water and renewing services (**Discretionary Renovation Grants**).
- (2) Which is **home to a disabled person, with the provision of facilities** or structural alterations that are necessary to make it suitable for their needs. This includes stairlifts, vertical lifts, widened doorways, ramps, extra facilities for bathing or cooking, overhauling windows, new locks or providing waist level power points, special fixtures, purpose made showers etc. Where the need is for accommodation to undertake work from home or to provide a couples bedroom or quiet room, the Council will consider using its discretionary power to help. Applications are considered after obtaining the advice of an Occupational Therapist (Employed by the County Council) who may contact any Doctors or Specialist involved. (**Mandatory and Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants**)
- (3) To improve or repair a house **sub-divided into smaller accommodation sharing facilities** (House in Multiple Occupation) or for the provision of such homes by the conversion of a dwelling or other building. Fire alarms protecting staircase and extra facilities. (**Discretionary H.M.O. Grants**)
- (4) Divided into separate dwellings which is in need of improvement or repair with advice and where appropriate financial assistance towards the cost of agreed improvement and repairs with a view to **returning the communal parts to a satisfactory standard**. (**Discretionary Common Parts Grants**)
- (5) Special help of up to £2,000 is also available to the elderly and infirm who wish to remain in their homes to assist with less onerous works to make the property more suitable. Improving heat insulation, repairs to gutters, fixing loose tiles and slates, overhauling windows, new locks, security lighting and similar works are eligible. These grants are dealt with by a separate pack. Please apply if you need a copy. (**Discretionary Home Repair Assistance Grants**)

THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

Funds for grants are limited. The maximum help is directed to the more needy residents, and homes in the poorest condition. Regard is taken of your ability to fund the work through obtaining loans, estimated costs, and the fitness of the dwelling for habitation. The Council considers that where major defects exist, complete overhaul is more cost-effective than short term patching.

In assessing disabled facility grants, particular regard is given to applicants seeking specialist equipment in the existing structures. This normally produces maximum benefit with the least disturbance and cost to both parties. High priority disabled applicants will normally be speeded through the process.

All applicants will be asked to supply certain information regarding their income and commitments in the **strictest confidence** so that the amount of grant can be determined.

**APPLICATIONS CAN BE PROCESSED FASTER
IF YOU PRODUCE THE
INFORMATION REQUIRED QUICKLY**

OPERATION OF THE SCHEME

One of the Environmental Health Officers will act as your grant processing officer. You will be advised of the officer's name and telephone extension shortly after submitting the completed enquiry form. All enquiries should be directed to him or in his absence the Environmental Health Service.

You will be given a reference number(s) to quote.

THE ONUS IS ON YOU, AS THE PERSON WANTING THE GRANT, TO CONTACT THE COUNCIL IF THERE APPEARS TO BE NO PROGRESS OR THE NEXT STAGE IN THE PROCEDURE DOES NOT APPEAR TO BE TAKING PLACE. It is not good enough to say

" I have not heard anything for three months. What are the Council doing?"

PROCEDURE TO APPLY FOR GRANT

(Tick each stage as completed)

THE ENQUIRY STAGE

1. Fill in the yellow form (FORM NGE) and white priority form.
2. Return in the special confidential envelope.
3. Within a week you should receive an acknowledgement detailing your grant officer's name and priority given to your application.
4. You will now be given, and asked to complete a provisional financial assessment form or an appointment will be made to visit you.
5. Once the provisional financial assessment has been completed, the council will write to you giving you an indication of your likely contribution to the costs of the works (about 3 weeks). In the letter, you will be asked if you wish to continue with your enquiry.
6. If you wish to pursue your grant enquiry the council will write to you giving you the date and time that an officer will survey your property.
7. Disabled facility grant applicants will receive a visit from their local Occupational Therapist who will be advising on the merits of the proposed works. It is necessary to establish which works meet the need and are reasonable and practical to carry out having regard to the building.
8. A full survey will be undertaken by the grant officer within 4 weeks who will determine and list separately:-
 - (A) Mandatory Works. If you cannot fund the work yourself then you are entitled to help with those costs, and they must be included in your renovation scheme;
 - (B) Discretionary works subject to help if sufficient funds are available.

THE FORMAL APPLICATION STAGE

9. Within 3 weeks of completing the survey you will be sent three copies of the schedule of works, a formal application form and a number of other documents.

10. If the works involve an extension or structural alterations you will normally need Building Regulations Approval and you may need Planning consent. The council's Development Control and Building Control Divisions will be able to advise you on any approvals required. It is advisable that any plans submitted for Building Regulation or Planning purposes are also sent to your grant officer for agreement. This is best done in advance of obtaining estimates or submitting the plans for approval in order to avoid the need for resubmission. **Works to repair an existing building do not require such plans.**
11. As soon as possible you should obtain at least two builders estimates for the cost of the work on the schedule. You may use builders from the list sent to your from the council or select your own builders.
12. As soon as you have obtained two estimates they should be submitted to the council together with the completed and signed application form and a certificate of future occupation. The estimates should be the originals (not photocopies) and will be retained by the council.
13. At this stage you will be asked to declare that your financial circumstances have not changed since you completed the provisional financial assessment form at the enquiry stage. If your financial circumstances have changed you will be asked to complete a revised financial assessment form.
14. The Chief Executive's Department will ask you to prove ownership and will want the written consent of interested parties such as Building Societies etc. Tenants will need to obtain the owner's written consent for the works and the Council will be contacting the owner directly.
15. Final confirmation on Building Regulations approval etc. will be required and your grant officer will calculate the amount of assistance. This is normally within 14 days of receipt of satisfactory estimates.
16. **THE COUNCIL MUST GIVE YOU A WRITTEN DETERMINATION OF YOUR APPLICATION WITHIN SIX MONTHS OF FORMAL SUBMISSION OF ALL NECESSARY INFORMATION.** If this is a refusal it must be given in writing.

THE APPROVAL STAGE

17. When all requirements have been met you will be issued with your formal grant approval normally giving you twelve months to carry out necessary

works. This advises the amount of money to be paid on completion of the works specified based on approved estimates. High priority applicants will normally be given approval within 5 weeks.

18. You now employ the nominated builder. You and the Council are both committed to the grant and you must complete the works in a satisfactory manner in order to receive the grant monies.
19. A maximum of two interim payments can be given to assist with the funding as it continues, subject to satisfactory progress and invoices. Written requests for these payments must be made to the Environmental Health Service who will visit within a week and issue the cheque within a further two weeks.
20. In the event of any difficulties that prevent completion in accordance with supplied specifications or require unforeseen work, the advice of your grant officer must be sought.
21. On completion of all works a complete set of the detailed accounts showing VAT will be required from all builders who have undertaken any of the works.
22. A full inspection is made by your grant officer before the release of the final payment which is subject to satisfactory completion of the works in accordance with the supplied specification. (see warning given at end) Final calculation of the amount of grant has regard to any accepted alterations and production of satisfactory invoices.

The Council is bound by legal requirements and has a duty to ensure that these are met before the formal approval is made. Whilst the Council endeavours to ensure that any offer will eventually result in approval its issue is subject to any financial or legal restraints in force at the time.

FUNDING AND ORGANISING THE WORK

The Council can assist the elderly and others who find difficulty in organising and funding their share of the cost. If you are unable to organise the work yourself then please **ask your grant officer for help**. In certain special cases we can organise the work for you.

The cheapest and easiest method of funding your share of the cost of the work is often to 'top-up' any existing mortgage on your home. This will often be at a competitive rate and can avoid excessive expenses. The booklet "*Paying for repairs and improvements to your home*" offers good advice.

WARNING

GRANT CANNOT BE PAID IF YOU START WORK BEFORE YOU RECEIVE WRITTEN APPROVAL OF YOUR APPLICATION. Make sure anyone acting on your behalf does not start work without your knowledge. Planning permission or building regulation approval is not the same as grant approval.

Upon receipt of formal written grant approval it is your responsibility to choose and employ one of the builders whose estimates you have supplied. **THE EMPLOYMENT OF THE BUILDERS IS SOLELY A CONTRACT BETWEEN YOURSELVES AND THEM AND YOU ARE THEREFORE RESPONSIBLE FOR ALL PAYMENTS TO BE MADE.** You should satisfy yourself of their competence before employing them. You are not recommended to make advance payments to builders (see booklet: Home Improvements). **Final Calculation and payment of grant is based on received invoices and receipts.**

**SETTLEMENT OF ACCOUNTS
IS ALWAYS A MATTER FOR THE GRANT APPLICANT**

The Council will withhold grant payment if the work, in the grant officers opinion, is not to an acceptable quality or the objectives of the grant have not been met. However the contract for the grant aided works is between applicants and their contractors therefore the quality of the work is ultimately a matter between the applicant and the contractor.

N.B. In certain circumstances you can be given written provisional approval. This is normally only given where there are urgent medical needs or legal problems prevent formal approval. Your grant officer may give written permission for certain chemical treatments such as timber treatment when they are urgently required before occupation.