



SURREY HEATH BOROUGH COUNCIL

# Home Assistance Policy 2025 to 2028



## 1. Introduction

- 1.1. This Home Assistance Policy sits within the wider policy framework and sets out how the Council can use its powers under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 to improve the quality of homes for those most in need.

## 2. Why we are doing this

- 2.1. It is well documented that housing that does not meet our needs has a detrimental effect on our physical and mental health and it is recognised that the health of older people, children, disabled people and those with long-term illnesses is at greater risk from poor housing conditions.

- 2.2. Key features of the right home environment are:

- It is free from avoidable hazards such as damp, the occupant is safe from harm and it offers them a sense of security;
- It enables movement around the home and is accessible to all, including to visitors and carers;
- It is warm and affordable to heat; and,
- There is support from others if needed.

- 2.3. The right home environment can:

- Protect and improve health and wellbeing, and help prevent physical and mental ill-health;
- Enable people to manage their health and care needs, including long-term conditions, and ensure positive care experiences by integrating services in the home; and,
- Allow people to remain in a home of their own for as long as they choose.

- 2.4. The wider benefits of the right home environment is to:



- Delay and reduce the need for primary care and social care interventions, including admission to long-term care settings;
- Prevent hospital admissions;
- Enable timely discharge from hospital and prevent re-admissions to hospital;
- Enable quicker recovery from periods of ill-health or planned admissions; and,
- Reduce health inequalities.

### 3. The Policy Commitment

3.1. The activity described in this Policy plays an important part in meeting the Council's ambition in the Council Strategy 2024-28.

3.2. The Council Strategy, "Delivering for you and a fairer society", sets a clear direction and overall priorities for the organisation over the next four years. It draws on the wider aspirations and priorities of local residents and stakeholders. It has been developed for the new Council, following elections in May and June 2023.

3.3. The five priorities identified in the new Council Strategy are:

- Protect our Environment
- Promote Healthier and More Inclusive Communities
- Support a Strong Economy and Create More Homes
- Campaign for Residents
- Deliver Effective Services with Sustainable Finances.

3.4. Under the Priority to Promote Healthier and More Inclusive Communities the Council seeks to :

- Promote Health and Well-Being
- Support those in Greatest Need

3.5. This Home Assistance Policy supports these objectives.



- 3.6. By looking at how the Council can act flexibly to support older and disabled residents, using external funding and working with a range of partner, the Home Assistance Policy also supports the aspiration to Deliver Effective Services with Sustainable Finances
- 3.7. These priorities are reflected in Creating Healthier Communities Strategy produced by the Frimley Health and Care Integrated Care System and Surrey County Council's Community Vision 2030. Ahead of local government reorganisation the Council's Home Improvement Agency works in a virtual Team with these partner agencies with shared ambitions and responsibilities.

## 4. What we will offer

- 4.1. This Home Assistance Policy identifies the assistance that the Council can offer older and disabled homeowners and tenants of privately and socially rented accommodation to make their homes more suitable for their needs and to keep them safe through adaptation, repair and improvement .It outlines the eligibility criteria and the terms on which assistance may be provided.
- 4.2. Our approach is one of enabling rather than simply providing funding, and is holistic in offering practical solutions as well as wider support and advice linked to other community services. We will work alongside residents to encourage self-help wherever possible and expect that a range of funding sources are sought to deliver identified works.
- 4.3. The Council delivers its Disabled Facility Grant responsibilities through the Home Improvement Agency and this allows a more comprehensive approach providing both Case Officer and Trusted Assessor services.
- 4.4. Priority funding will be offered to applicants of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants where it is being used for home adaptations to meet their specific needs and ensure that they and their carers have an environment that is as safe as possible. All other forms of assistance are discretionary and are therefore subject to the availability of funding.
- 4.5. In assessing the priority for discretionary assistance the Council will have regard to:



- Priorities identified through consultation with local partners and residents;
- Priorities identified by Surrey County Council (SCC) and Frimley ICS to promote health and well-being, such as:
  - reducing hospital admissions;
  - allowing rapid discharge;
  - keeping people independent in a home that meets their needs, in which care can be effectively delivered;
  - reducing delay in admittance to long term care; and
  - reducing health inequalities.

4.6. The targeting of assistance will be based both on presenting need and targeted interventions that are evidenced based (for example on an area, tenure or client group basis or to tackle identified issues such as fuel poverty).

## 5. The Home Assistance Scheme

5.1. Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 gives the Council the power to adopt a Home Assistance Policy to improve living conditions in the Borough and to provide financial and other assistance in a way that best suits local circumstances and within the financial resources available.

5.2. This Policy sets out how the Council will use these powers to deliver a number of housing related health and well-being packages.

5.3. These packages fall under 4 headings: Priority, Protect, Prevent and Promote.

### 5.3.1. *Priority Package*

The Priority Package will be targeted at vulnerable residents in hospital or a residential setting who need a speedy response to move them back to the home environment to be provided with the appropriate care. This should help to promote their recovery and maintain independence.

It could also be used to assist with repairs to deficiencies in a person's home that have the potential to place them at risk of severe harm.

### 5.3.2. *Protect Package*



The Protect Package can deliver fast track adaptations and repairs designed to remedy a hazard or remove obstacles to independence to enable residents to live safely at home.

#### 5.3.3. *Prevent Package*

The Prevent Package can provide works aimed at promoting health and well-being in the home with a focus on works that prevent ill health and injury and allow residents to be and to feel safe in the home environment.

There will also be the scope to pay for relocation for someone whose home becomes unsafe when it is not practical to adapt their current property and their needs could better be met in a more appropriate home. This can be further extended to fund bespoke adaptations at build stage in properties being developed by a housing association for rent, shared ownership or outright sale.

#### 5.3.4. *Promote Package*

Promote funding can be used for take up and education campaigns that target certain client groups to self-serve and access services that promote housing related health and wellbeing. It can also be used for research and development to improve services provided.

#### 5.3.5. Examples of work covered by this Policy and funding streams can be found at Annex A.

#### 5.3.6. In order to ensure that the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) programme meets the needs of individual residents as well as the aims of this Policy in line with good practice the Housing Services Manager may agree additional top up to a mandatory DFG of up to £15,000. This discretion will only be used after other housing options and funding streams have been exhausted and, in order to ensure value for money, the works are required to be managed through the Council's Home Improvement Agency.

## What is not covered?

### 5.4. It is important that the Council maximise the value of the available funding and therefore the following works are unlikely to attract grant funding:

- Any works where it is within the means of the resident to fund adaptations or repairs (e.g. through equity release, loans, etc);
- Works where a responsibility for the upkeep or repair of a property lies with a third party (e.g. landlords, insurance claims, etc.);



- Properties that are under occupied by two bedrooms or more; and,
- Property subject to Council enforcement

5.5. In all cases we will work with residents to find options that will allow them to meet their needs in their current or a more suitable home. Where works are being funded by a resident or another source the Council can still act as agent for the duration of the project to support the resident and ensure the works are properly managed.\_

## Who qualifies for help

- 5.6. The Council welcomes direct approaches from residents as well as encouraging referrals from all partner agencies, including Adult Social Care, GPs and voluntary sector agencies working with vulnerable and disabled residents.
- 5.7. Each case will be assessed on its merits and, while provision of a Disabled Facility Grant has clearly defined financial criteria, help through the Home Assistance Scheme will include some flexibility to provide the best outcomes for individual residents and have a positive impact on health and social care delivery. This could include not making charges for small or fast track adaptations that prevent more expensive health or social care interventions.
- 5.8. As part of the enabling strategy where there is clear evidence that the applicant has either sufficient equity in their home or savings to pay for the adaptation they require the Council will endeavour to minimise bureaucracy and carry out the works on the understanding that the recipient will repay the costs involved as an ordinary debt.
- 5.9. The Council will work with the resident, their family and carers, and any relevant agencies to make a holistic assessment of their needs, and identify how best these needs can be met.
- 5.10. This could be by giving appropriate advice to allow the resident to access services or arrange work themselves, referral to other agencies or assisting with works through the Council's Home Improvement Agency. As well as the residents physical environment the Council's Case Officer can offer advice on other issues such as assistive technology, income maximisation, equipment and voluntary services that can have a positive impact on health and well-being.



## 6. Review

- 6.1. This Policy will run for three years but is reviewed annually to ensure that it is meeting the needs of residents, is delivering a responsive and cost effective service and is aligned to evidenced priorities in Health and Social Care locally.
- 6.2. An annual report will be presented to Surrey Heath Health and Wellbeing Board.

## 7. Home Improvement Agency

- 7.1. The Council makes a charge for works it carries out on behalf of residents through its Home Improvement Agency. Fees are reviewed and published annually. The fee income generated will be ring-fenced for reinvestment in delivering home improvement and adaptation work, either through meeting the revenue costs of delivering and expanding the service or on capital works.
- 7.2. Fee income could be supplemented by grant funding to provide services to better deliver improvements and adaptations, including but not limited to additional case officer time, fast track OT services and a Handyperson services
- 7.3. Residents receiving a Disabled Facilities Grant will have the option of managing the specified works themselves, called a 'client controlled' grant. Any discretionary Home Assistance Grant funded works must be managed through the Home Improvement Agency to ensure value for money is achieved and the policy objectives are met.

## 8. Customer Satisfaction and Policy Monitoring

- 8.1. The Council wants the work that it funds and commissions to both meet the needs of individual residents and contribute to delivering wider health and social care objectives.
- 8.2. To this end customer satisfaction monitoring will be carried out on an ongoing basis to inform day to day service delivery.
- 8.3. Follow up work may be commissioned to gather evidence to evaluate the longer term impact of the Council's work and inform future policy direction.





## 9. Disputes

- 9.1. Funding through the Home Assistance Policy is discretionary and limited by the availability of funding. When a resident is refused assistance through the scheme they will be advised of the reasons for refusal in writing along with advice on other options available to them. There is no right to appeal a decision however if a resident is unhappy with the way the Council has administered their application they can make a complaint using the Council's Complaint procedure.



## Annexe A

### Priority

Package	Examples	Funding options*	Outcomes
<p>Hospital to Home package (including palliative care)</p> <p>Maximum Home Assistance Grant £10,000</p>	<p>Fast tracked repairs, adaptations or equipment to allow return home and access for carers</p> <p>NB linked with Community Services work</p>	<p>Disabled Facilities Grant, Home Assistance Grant, self-funded, charitable funding</p>	<p>Reduces hospital stays for emergency and planned admissions;</p> <p>Reduces home care costs as home suitable for patient and carers</p>
<p>Emergency repair package</p> <p>Maximum Home Assistance Grant £10,000</p>	<p>Intervention where there is an imminent and significant risk to health</p>	<p>Home Assistance Grant, self-funded, charitable funding, Home Improvement loan, landlord funded, works in default</p>	<p>Eliminate or reduce to acceptable levels category I hazards to prevent loss of life or serious injuries for occupants</p>



## Protect

Package	Examples	Funding options*	Outcomes
Fast track adaptations Maximum Home Assistance Grant £8,000	E.g. stair lifts	Disabled Facilities Grant, Home Assistance Grant, self-funded, charitable funding	Timely and less bureaucratic response to requests for adaptations providing more effective service for residents and producing savings by removing need for Adult Social Care input
Major repairs package Maximum Home Assistance Grant £8,000	Boiler replacement, unsafe or unhealthy kitchen/bathroom replacement, major electrical work	Home Assistance Grant, self-funded, charitable funding, Home Improvement loan, landlord funded, works in default	Eliminate or reduce to acceptable levels category 1 and 2 hazards. Remove serious health threat, reduce cold related health problems and the risk of excess winter deaths, reducing incidence of respiratory disease through tackling damp and mould.
Child well-being package Maximum Home Assistance Grant £3,000	E.g. remedial works to damp and mould, install extractor, refer to support, support, provide advice for self help	Home Assistance Grant, self-funded, charitable funding, Home Improvement loan, landlord funded	Tackle asthma and eczema, access support, improve school attendance



## Prevent

Package	Examples	Funding options*	Outcomes
Trusted Assessor/ Handyman package  Maximum Home Assistance Grant £1,500	E.g. Grab rails, bannisters, small access works, key safes etc.	Home Assistance Grant, self-funded, charitable funding, Home Improvement loan	Fast tracked small adaptations, reduce the risk of slips, trips and falls and other accidents in the home and improve security  Support to the HandyPerson service and Community Equipment Store (CES)
Dementia Living Package  Maximum Home Assistance Grant £5,000	Improve lighting and colour contrasts, improve internal and external access (likely to include items from the Well-being package)	Home Assistance Grant, self-funded, charitable funding, Home Improvement loan	Promotes independent living with improved safety and home familiarity
Minor repairs package  Maximum Home Assistance Grant £3,000	Repair or fix bannisters, carry out boiler repairs, kitchen and bathroom small works, leaks	Home Assistance Grant, self-funded, charitable funding, Home Improvement loan	Reduce risk on falls, reduce risk of infections with improved food preparation areas and bathrooms, reduce risk of damp by repairing leaks



Package	Examples	Funding options*	Outcomes
<p>Well-being package (home security, affordable warmth and energy efficiency, home security)</p> <p>Maximum Home Assistance Grant £3,000</p>	<p>Smoke and CO2 alarms, window and door locks, door entry systems, replace non-safety glass in internal doors, scooter stores</p>	<p>Home Assistance Grant, self-funded, charitable funding, Home Improvement loan</p>	<p>Reduce risk of fire related injuries and CO2 poisoning, improves mental well-being and reduces anxiety with improved security</p> <p>Scooter stores promote independence and access to the community</p>
<p>Relocation package</p> <p>Maximum Home Assistance Grant £10,000</p>	<p>Grant used to move someone from a home that does not meet their needs and it is not cost effective or practical to carry out work.</p>	<p>Home Assistance Grant</p>	<p>Provides more suitable accommodation for a disabled resident and saves money otherwise spent on major adaptation to less suitable property</p>
<p>New build package</p> <p>Maximum Home Assistance Grant £10,000</p>	<p>A social housing unit is adapted at build stage to make the adaptations more effective</p>	<p>Disabled Facilities Grant/ Home Assistance Grant</p>	<p>Provides bespoke accommodation for a disabled resident and saves money otherwise spent on major adaptation to less suitable property</p>



## Promote

Package	Examples	Funding options*	Outcomes
Take-up campaigns	Targeted resident based campaigns to take up available assistance e.g. energy efficiency subsidised work, solid wall insulation grants	Home Assistance Grant	To ensure residents have the necessary information to access national, regional and local funding to maintain and improve their homes
Education campaigns	Targeted issued based campaigns e.g. roadshows, town centre stalls, mail outs	Home Assistance Grant	Encourage people to carry out self-financing preventative work or access services at an early stage
Research and development	<p>E.g. Review of sustainable HIA funding across Surrey;</p> <p>E.g. Market testing to refresh contractor list</p> <p>E.g. gather evidence to evaluate the longer term impact of the Council's work</p>	Home Assistance Grant	Access to additional funding; efficiencies through service improvement; increased prevention activity through intelligence based targeting

