



**Report Reference Number: PR/21/9**

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**To:** Policy Review Committee  
**Date:** 11 January 2022  
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**Lead Executive Member:** Councillor Mark Crane, Leader of the Council and  
Lead Executive Member for Housing, Leisure,  
Strategic Matters, External Relations and  
Partnerships  
**Lead Officer:** June Rothwell, Head of Operational Services

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**Title: Draft DFG (Adaptations) Policy 2021**

**Summary:**

This report has come to Committee to allow Members to review the draft Adaptations (DFG) Policy 2021 and provide feedback as part of the consultation process.

The report sets out the Council's legal responsibility for the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). The attached draft DFG (Adaptations) Policy 2021 will provide our residents and relevant stakeholders with a clear policy and process for delivering property adaptations, as well as providing suitable alternatives when adaptations are not appropriate or practicable.

**Recommendation:**

**That the Policy Review Committee note the draft policy and provide any and all relevant feedback as part of the consultation process, before the draft is returned to Executive, expected in March 2022.**

**Reasons for recommendation:**

To allow the Committee to consider current service provision and the ways in which the new policy could improve both services for residents, as well as make best use of current housing stock and maximise spend of our Better Care Fund allocation.

## **1 Introduction and background**

- 1.1 A suitable and well adapted home can be the defining factor in enabling a disabled person to live well and independently. Selby District Council is committed to our vulnerable and disabled residents having the ability to remain in their homes for as long as it is safe and reasonable for them to do so, a provision provided for via the DFG process.
- 1.2 As a two-tier administrative area, Selby District Council staff facilitate and administer the adaptation process, as well as carry out any required work. However, this is done in partnership with North Yorkshire County Council and the Occupational Therapy team. They are responsible for the majority of visiting residents, assessing their needs and submitting the adaptation request for our consideration.

## **2 Policy Headlines**

- 2.1 The aim of the draft DFG (Adaptations) Policy 2021 is to clearly set out the parameters of the DFG process for both our residents and relevant stakeholders. The policy aims to clarify:
  - the difference between ‘minor’ and ‘major’ adaptations;
  - funding and the means-test process;
  - the referral process and timescales;
  - who is eligible for the service;
  - when an adaptation will not be undertaken and alternative options;
  - types of discretionary assistance;
  - rules surrounding tenants who undertake their own adaptation work;
  - changes in need and future maintenance obligations; and
  - complaints and reviews.

### The Funding Process

- 2.2 In terms of funding Council house adaptations, the District Council is paying for all minor and major adaptations and without considering the financial circumstances of the tenant requiring the work. However, in order to better align with the DFG process, it is expected that all minor adaptation work will now be funded via the County Council, whilst the policy will also include a means-test for all applicable residents, including Council tenants, who require a major adaptation. This will help to mirror the DFG application, so all customers

undergo the same process when making applications. Whilst means-testing is likely to be a rare occurrence for Council tenants, where it is required, it has the potential to help alleviate HRA budgetary pressures and ensure that Council funding can be utilised where most needed.

### Supported Moves

- 2.3 Whilst the primary aim of the policy is always to help people remain in their own homes, sadly this is not always possible. When an adaptation is not viable, it will be necessary to consider moving the applicant to a more suitable property which; either does not require adaptation, or where the adaptation is more suitable to take place. The Council may provide financial assistance to a resident to cover any associated moving costs, available to applicants from any tenure. This is a discretionary payment, as detailed below.

### Discretionary Assistance

- 2.4 Subject to the availability of funding, the Council is able to use its discretion under the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 to offer further assistance to applicants who meet certain criteria. This includes works under a DFG that may otherwise not be eligible for assistance via the traditional route or are expected to cost less than £6,000. It also has the potential to 'top-up' a DFG award if adaptation work exceeds the £30,000 limit.
- 2.5 This assistance, along with further schemes, are made available under our new Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy (in draft) which also provides additional detail as to eligibility and the application process. Notably, this discretionary assistance will only be awarded to households where a disabled or vulnerable person is resident.

## **3 Consultation**

- 3.1 Approval to consult on the draft policy was provided via Executive Members on 2 December 2021. The policy has subsequently been provided to key operational and strategic NYCC staff, important equalities groups based in the district and front-line staff who will be expected to support customers through the new process. An online questionnaire is also available on the Council's website and hard copies have been provided to staff who are tasked with visiting new and existing customers in order to garner as much relevant feedback as possible.
- 3.2 As part of the consultation process, we have been asked to submit both the Adaptations (DFG) Policy 2021 and Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy to Policy Review Committee for additional feedback.
- 3.3 A timetable for consultation and reapproval is detailed below:

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Events</b>
02/12/2021	Draft DFG (Adaptations) Policy 2021 at Executive for consultation approval.
06/12/2021 – 31/12/2021	Consultation with residents and stakeholders – including Policy Review.
13/01/2022 – 17/01/2022	Time taken to consider feedback and make changes.
28/01/2022	Final policy to be discussed at Leadership Team
17/02/2022	Final policy at Executive Briefing.
03/03/2022	Policy taken back to Executive for final approval.

#### **4 Alternative Options Considered**

None.

#### **5 Implications**

##### **5.1 Legal Implications**

Section 8 of the Housing Act 1985 requires local housing authorities to consider housing conditions in their area. This includes having regard to the needs of chronically sick and disabled persons; including the adaptation of existing accommodation.

##### **5.2 Financial Implications**

There is both a capital and revenue budget in place to assist with Council adaptation requests, which would not be required to change with the introduction of this policy.

##### **5.3 Policy and Risk Implications**

N/A

##### **5.4 Corporate Plan Implications**

N/A

##### **5.5 Resource Implications**

Much of our adaptation work is fulfilled by current Council staff. However, introduction of this policy and means-testing would require new resource for the 'Test of Resources' process. However, this could be fulfilled by the DFG Co-Ordinator (1FTE), a role assimilated into the Council with the closure of Selby's Home Improvement Agency in 2018.

##### **5.6 Other Implications**

N/A

## 5.7 Equalities Impact Assessment

Under the Equality Act 2010, local authorities must demonstrate 'due regard' to the Public Sector Equality Duty, working to eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the act; advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not; and foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.

An Equality, Diversity, and Community Impact Screening was completed on 21/06/2021. It was noted that this policy will specifically impact on households where a person is classed as disabled under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. Most likely, the impact will be positive as it will provide residents with a clear and straightforward policy for adaptation requests, managing expectations and timeframes.

## 6 Conclusion

The provision of DFGs, including applications by local authority tenants, is expected to be tenure neutral; and whilst this is difficult to achieve given the difference in budgetary restraint, introducing parallel guidelines and processes to that of the DFG process furthers this tenure neutral agenda.

The main aim of any DFG is for the applicant to lead a more independent and healthy life; and whilst an adaptation may be the best solution, this should always be considered in relation to other appropriate options. This policy will therefore provide the Council with greater flexibility to consider each individual case and achieve the best possible outcomes for both the resident and Council.

## 7 Background Documents

N/A

## 8 Appendices

Appendix A - Draft DFG (Adaptations) Policy 2021

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