

**Report Reference Number: E/21/49**

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**To:** Executive  
**Date:** 3 March 2022  
**Status:** Key Decision  
**Ward(s) Affected:** ALL  
**Author:** Sarah Thompson, Housing Service Manager & Hannah McCoubrey, Housing Strategy Officer  
**Lead Executive Member:** Cllr Mark Crane, Leader of the Council and Lead Executive Member for Housing, Leisure, Strategic Matters, External Relations and Partnerships  
**Lead Officer:** Suzan Harrington, Director of Corporate Services and Commissioning

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**Title:** Final approval of the Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2022-24

**Summary:**

The Council's Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2022-24 is made under Article 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. This gives the Council greater freedoms to provide financial assistance for adaptations, essential home repairs or to improve housing conditions to benefit an individual's health, wellbeing, or quality of life. These discretionary powers allow the Council to develop different forms of assistance to meet local need, based on local housing conditions and available resources. Consultation on this draft policy has now come to an end, and whilst responsibility for maintaining privately owned homes rests first and foremost with their owners, this policy recognises that some owners, particularly the elderly and vulnerable, do not always have the necessary resources to repair or improve their homes. Local authorities therefore have an important role to play in providing assistance in these cases.

**Recommendations:**

That Executive Members approve the final draft Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2022-24 in order to begin implementation.

**Reasons for recommendation:**

Prosperous and sustainable communities need good quality homes that are safe and decent, and that meet the needs of the people who live in them. In 2017, almost 6000 dwellings in Selby's private sector were categorised as having a Category 1 safety hazard, that being those which cause a serious and immediate risk to a person's health and safety. By implementing this policy we will be providing appropriate advice and assistance to those in the private sector, particularly the vulnerable and elderly. This increased assistance will encourage improvement in

private housing choice and quality across the district and enable independent living wherever possible.

## 1 Introduction and background

1.1 The Council's current assistance policy is for the period 2018-2023. However, we are bringing forward review of this policy as we are now in the position to better align and enhance services between SDC and NYCC.

1.2 Reports commissioned by the Council in 2017 (the Health Impact Assessment and Stock Condition Report) found that, of the 39,423 dwellings in Selby: 74% were owner occupied, 14% private rented and 12% social rented. Selby's population structure also has a higher than average proportion of people in every age cohort from 40 and over, likely to place increasing pressures on health, social care and acute services. At the same time, almost 6000 dwellings in the private sector were categorised as having a Category 1 safety hazard (equating to 17% of total private stock). More detail relating to hazards can be found in Appendix A. The total cost of mitigating all such hazards was estimated to be £20.9 million, whilst the total cost to society in terms of managing these hazards (including the NHS treating related accidents and ill-health) was estimated to be £14.4 million per year.

1.3 Research also noted that hazard improvement scenarios involving a spectrum of low cost measures were seen to provide high levels of savings. For example, it is often the case that removing Category 1 hazards requires relatively inexpensive housing solutions, such as an adequate stair or grab rail, which can save organisations thousands if it prevents an accident or further health issues. The table below shows the total cost of mitigating Category 1 hazards by tenure in the Selby district and the average cost per private dwelling:

Housing Hazard Type	Cost of Mitigating Hazards				Avg. cost per dwelling
	Total Private Stock	Owner Occupied	Private Rented	IMD Lowest 20%	
Damp and mould growth	£380,823	£276,754	£104,069	£6,862	£7,016
Excess cold	£17,019,878	£14,400,326	£2,619,552	£38,452	£4,807
Crowding and space	£24,687	£17,940	£6,746	£445	£16,646
Entry by intruders	£43,723	£31,774	£11,948	£788	£1,137
Domestic hygiene, pests, refuge	£16,010	£11,635	£4,375	£288	£895
Food safety	£31,451	£22,857	£8,595	£567	£2,948
Personal hygiene, sanitation, drainage	£19,332	£14,049	£5,283	£348	£1,185
Falls associated with baths etc.	£0	£0	£0	£0	£531
Falling on level surfaces etc.	£571,221	£448,961	£122,261	£9,853	£972
Falling on stairs etc.	£2,114,161	£1,661,660	£452,502	£36,465	£1,029
Falling between levels	£80,390	£58,421	£21,968	£1,448	£924
Electrical hazards	£11,332	£8,228	£3,094	£204	£1,646
Fire	£400,433	£291,005	£109,428	£7,215	£4,748
Flames, hot surfaces etc.	£189,222	£137,513	£51,709	£3,409	£2,049
Collision and entrapment	£21,037	£15,288	£5,749	£379	£597
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>£20,923,690</b>	<b>£17,396,411</b>	<b>£3,527,279</b>	<b>£106,724</b>	

1.4 Consequently, the aim of this policy is to encourage improvement in private housing choice and quality across the district through support and assistance. Ultimately, the Council will seek to:

- Help owner-occupiers maintain and repair their homes.
- Remove or reduce housing related defects that are detrimental to health.
- Assist people whose independence may be at risk, to remain in or return to their homes.

- Boost domestic energy efficiency to reduce the number of households in fuel poverty, improve heating and reduce carbon dioxide levels.
- Encourage and enable private landlords to provide good quality and well managed properties for their tenants.
- Maximise the use of existing housing stock to increase housing choice across the district.
- Increase the number of empty properties brought back into use, particularly where this can be used to relieve homelessness.

## 2 Policy Detail

- 2.1 Selby District Council will provide information and advice to assist any person to improve, repair, adapt or rebuild residential premises. However, we recognises that there may be occasions where advice is not enough and it is both necessary and appropriate to provide financial assistance to support this work. The policy details the various types of assistance available to applicants, along with information relating to eligibility criteria, typical works, maximum grant amount, the application process, and any conditions relating to the assistance.
- 2.2 The policy details both the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) as well as other forms of discretionary assistance afforded under the Regulatory Reform Order. For example, 'Discretionary Adaptations Assistance' includes works under a DFG that may otherwise not be eligible for assistance. It can be applied where adaptations are expected to cost less than £6,000, can 'top-up' a DFG award if work exceeds the £30,000 limit and offers relocation assistance to an applicant where adaptation is not suitable in their current property for whatever reason. Other new initiatives include Healthy Homes Assistance; with a maximum grant or loan of £6,000, where work will generally relate to the removal of, or help to remedy, defects or deficiencies within the home that impact on health. The hope is this will prevent applicants from requiring additional health and social care provisions which would no doubt cost both the Council and its partners considerably more. Other schemes include Empty Homes Assistance, Energy Repayment Loans and Dementia Friendly Homes.
- 2.3 The Government made changes to the funding mechanism for DFGs in 2016, which became allocated as part of the Better Care Fund. This pooled budget enables health, social care, and housing services to work more closely, and enabled the introduction of preventative services, designed to delay or prevent the need for more intense services. The table below shows the amount of funding made available to the Council each year via the Better Care Fund, which will fund the various assistance schemes detailed in the policy:

Year	Grant Allocation	Total Budget Available	Total budget spent
2016/17	£196,000	£ 358,870	£ 276,600
2017/18	£346,958	£ 448,206	£ 179,173
2018/19	£411,094	£ 668,203	£ 440,093
2019/20	£443,595	£ 630,445	£ 347,397
2020/21	£443,595	£ 726,643	£ 302,624
2021/22	£503,327	£ 816,977	

- 2.4 It is important to note that discretionary assistance will only be awarded to households where a disabled or vulnerable person is resident, ensuring the

Council targets residents (and properties) most in need. Availability is also subject to the Council’s annual budget setting procedure and the availability of sufficient levels of external funding. All payments are at the Council’s discretion and will be removed once available funds are exhausted. There are also times when assistance will only be provided on the condition of a land charge being applied to the property. Any and all monies received from the disposal of such properties will be returned to the Private Sector Housing Assistance budget and will be ringfenced for future assistance schemes delivered under this policy.

### 3 Consultation

3.1 A timetable for consultation and approval is detailed below:

Dates	Events
02/12/2021	Draft Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2021-23 at Executive for consultation approval.
06/12/2021 – 31/12/2021	Consultation with residents and stakeholders.
04/01/2022 – 14/01/2022	Time taken to consider feedback and make changes.
17/01/2022 – 28/01/2022	Final discussions with key stakeholders.
10/03/2022	Policy taken back to Executive for final approval.

3.2 Consultation included numerous sources:

- An online survey was available on both the district and county council websites, available for any residents throughout the district to comment on. This was publicised on social media and via our Tenant Participation Officer.
- Copies of the policy were also made available to key partners at North Yorkshire County Council, both at a policy and strategic level, and with those on the frontline who will help us to deliver this service.
- Finally, copies of the policy and survey were passed on to the Equality and Advice Network (previously known as the Disability Forum), who disseminated the consultation pack to all members.

3.3 Consultation responses were minimal, but what was received was very valuable (2 online responses from presumed members of the public, and 2 from NYCC staff with remits in both child and adult occupational therapy). Feedback allowed us to clarify certain procedural requirements where wording was potentially misleading or confusing, and has helped to ensure that the policy is cohesive as well as transparent.

### 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, having regard to the needs of chronically sick and disabled persons; including the adaptation of existing accommodation.

This policy is made under Article 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 Statutory Instrument No.1860. This gives local authorities a general power to provide 'assistance' 'in any form' to 'any person' through the introduction of policies relating to renewals, repairs and adaptations in private homes, through grants or loans.

## **5.2 Financial Implications**

The financial assistance included within the policy is largely discretionary (other than the mandatory DFG award). The policy makes it clear that, at times of high demand, assistance schemes may be amended, suspended, or removed entirely, to ensure that the Council can meet its statutory responsibilities.

## **5.3 Policy and Risk Implications**

N/A

## **5.4 Corporate Plan Implications**

N/A

## **5.5 Resource Implications**

Under our previous policy, much of the work was undertaken by the Council's Private Sector Officer (1 FTE). However, it is expected that assistance will also be provided via the Council's Empty Homes Officer, Technical Officer and DFG Co-Ordinator. No further additional resource is expected to be required.

## **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 22/06/2021. It notes that local authorities have an important role to play in providing assistance in relevant cases where residents are particularly vulnerable; this could be due to age, ill health or low income, for example. The policy is an updated document which provides additional forms of assistance for such people. This could be through an advice service or through financial assistance, in the hope of positively impacting upon an applicant's health and wellbeing and/or the condition of the property they live in.

## **6 Conclusion**

It has long been accepted that poor quality housing has both negative impacts on the health of occupants as well as on the quality of life in that area. And whilst responsibility for maintaining privately owned homes rests primarily with their owners, this policy recognises that particularly elderly and vulnerable residents do not always have the necessary resources to repair or improve their

homes. This can lead to poor health, dangerous properties and a limited private stock. However, through the use of this policy and the various advice and assistance schemes it offers, we aim to:

- Improve housing conditions across the Selby district.
- Increase the number of residents who are able to live independently and safely at home.
- Improve the health and wellbeing of people living within the Selby district

Executive approval allows us to begin implementation of a new clear and concise Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy - helping applicants understand the types of support available and potential conditions relating to any financial assistance, managing expectations and ultimately maximising our ability to support residents in maintaining their independence and at the same time improving housing conditions in the private sector.

## **7 Background Documents**

Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2018-2023

## **8 Appendices**

Appendix A: The 29 Hazards

Appendix B: Draft Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2022-24

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