

NORTH LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL

**ASSETS, CULTURE AND HOUSING
CABINET MEMBER**

REVIEW OF THE HOME ASSISTANCE POLICY

1. OBJECT AND KEY POINTS IN THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To outline the proposed options for review of the Home Assistance Policy.

2. BACKGROUND INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Housing Assistance Policy outlines the assistance available from the Council to help homeowners maintain their homes or provide disabled adaptations. The policy has two elements. Firstly, the mandatory disabled facilities assistance (DFGs) and secondly, the discretionary assistance. The policy was last reviewed in 2014 and needs to be reviewed again in light of funding changes.
- 2.2 From 2015, the mandatory funding for DFGs (around £900,000) has been added to the Better Care Fund. The fund specifically looks at ensuring better services for the frail and frail elderly to safely maintain them at home.
- 2.3 It is accepted that people remain healthier and live longer if they stay in their home environment. The DFG is an important tool in trying to achieve this and ensuring better health and social care outcomes for those that are disabled, vulnerable and frail. It also provides better value for money compared to providing residential care.
- 2.4 There is a mandatory duty on housing authorities to provide DFGs to those that qualify up to a maximum of £30,000. Currently the discretionary home assistance pot can top up a DFG where it exceeds the £30,000 maximum.

- 2.5 The discretionary home assistance is currently also used to help homeowners improve the energy efficiency of their homes and complete urgent repairs to keep the home healthy and safe.
- 2.6 Going forward, we need a fit for purpose policy and one that provides assistance to those most in need of help, reflects the Council's vision and ambitions, is more responsive and puts the customer at the heart of the service whilst supporting communities to thrive and ensure value for money.
- 2.7 The key principles in the draft policy are the Council's commitment to deliver real improvements in health by improving the housing stock, to support residents with disabilities to remain safe at home and to target our assistance towards those most in need. The draft policy gives priority for funding to DFGs to help adapt a property to meet need. Other elements of assistance within the draft policy are discretionary and subject to the availability of funds. However, the emphasis of the draft policy is moving away from grants to more sustainable loans (where the funding can be recycled).
- 2.8 The prime responsibility for maintaining and improving homes rests with the homeowner. However, we recognise that sometimes the owner may not have the funds available to them. In these circumstances the Council has a role to play in supporting the owner by providing good quality advice, and information and signposting to appropriate sources of funding. Sometimes, we may need to provide direct assistance. The draft Home Assistance Policy aims to outline how we might do that.
- 2.9 Through the draft policy, we are seeking to deliver improved health outcomes. Providing DFGs makes sense. A fractured hip costs the state on average £28,665, which is three times the cost of an average DFG and a hundred times more expensive than fitting handrails. Postponing residential care by just one year saves £28,080 per person and the cost of an average DFG (£8,000), funds a standard stair lift and level access shower.
- 2.10 The draft policy aims to support the over arching agenda of self-help/personalisation and promote independence. The draft policy also recognises and addresses that capital resources are not endless and as such, we intend to prioritise our investments to ensure that we assist the most vulnerable residents in raising their housing standards and improve their health outcomes. Older residents and residents with disabilities continue to be the focus for our services whilst we continue to encourage self-dependence for other residents.
- 2.11 The draft policy includes a new emergency form of assistance targeted at trying to reduce hospital admissions and speed up small scale minor adaptations and repairs to provide a more timely response for those in need.

2.12 We are looking to consult widely on the new draft policy via small consultation groups/key service users using structured questions to obtain their views around the current service and the proposed policy direction. We are looking to do that within a 14 to 21 day time period.

3. OPTIONS FOR CONSIDERATION

3.1 Option one – review the draft policy, including the successes of the current policy, the areas for improvement and the development of priorities for the future. The review to include consultation with relevant partners, clients and carers.

3.2 Option two – do nothing and continue with the current policy.

4. ANALYSIS OF OPTIONS

4.1 Option one is the preferred option and will be progressed through consultation with a range of stakeholders, including elected members, Registered Social Landlords, Primary Care Trust, Clinical Commissioning Group, the Frail and Frail Elderly Group, NLaG, Adult Social Care, Children and Young People's service, Legal services, Carers Advisory Partnership and relevant client groups. We will undertake a Health Impact Assessment to identify potential impacts this policy could have on health, both negative and positive.

4.2 Option two – this would leave the Council open to challenge but more importantly, the current policy fails to address the issues facing us in the years to come.

5. RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS (FINANCIAL, STAFFING, PROPERTY, IT)

5.1 Financial and staffing – the preferred course of action will be undertaken within the current staffing and financial resources.

6. OUTCOMES OF INTEGRATED IMPACT ASSESSMENT (IF APPLICABLE)

6.1 A new policy will require an integrated impact assessment once agreement is reached over the modifications required.

7. OUTCOMES OF CONSULTATION AND CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS DECLARED

7.1 At this stage, no formal consultation has taken place.

8. RECOMMENDATIONS

- 8.1 That the Cabinet Member approves Option one.
- 8.2 That the results of the consultation and the recommended changes to the policy as a consequence are brought back as a further Cabinet Member report.

DIRECTOR OF PLACES

Civic Centre
Ashby Road
SCUNTHORPE
North Lincolnshire
DN16 1AB
Author: Liz Webster
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Appendix one – draft Home Assistance Policy