

Isle of Wight Council, Housing and Planning Services Directorate
Housing Renewal Section
Policy for assistance under the Repairs and Wellbeing Grant

Power of Local Authorities to provide assistance under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England and Wales) Order 2002

Eligibility criteria for applicants:

A. Owner Occupiers-

- Applicants must have owned and lived in the property for two years on application, AND
 1. Applicants will be vulnerable people as defined in the Decent Homes Standard- i.e. anyone in receipt of an income or disability related benefit, or
 2. Be aged 60 or over and not on an income related benefit, subject to a test of resources. (A contribution may be payable towards the work, or the applicants contribution may be more than the cost of the work in which case no grant will be payable), or
 3. Be disabled, of any age, and be subject to a test of resources. (A contribution may be payable towards the work, or the applicants contribution may be more than the cost of the work in which case no grant will be payable), or
 4. Have occupying children in the property under the age of fifteen (15), or occupying older persons aged 60 or over, and be subject to a test of resources. (A contribution may be payable towards the work, or the applicants contribution may be more than the cost of the work in which case no grant will be payable).

B.

Occupiers of any tenure in need of disabled adaptation work-

The Commissioner of Housing Renewal will at his/her discretion consider the use of this grant to facilitate work that is normally carried out under the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) (subject to the means test under the DFG). This will include work eligible for mandatory or “discretionary” DFG and will be considered where cases arise that are urgent and have difficulty in being funded by the DFG, or where use of the Repairs and Wellbeing Grant for this purpose is a good use of resources; perhaps saving the Local Authority money in the long term, or in other situations that may arise. Use of the grant in this manner will be discussed and agreed with the Head of Service. In all cases, satisfactory supporting evidence of need and appropriateness will be required from a suitably qualified medical professional person.

Work or assistance under this category shall be subject to a test of resources under DFG rules at the time of application. (A contribution may be payable towards the work, or the applicants contribution may be more than the cost of the work in which case no grant will be payable).

C. Long-Term Empty Property Owner-

- Applicants must be an owner of a property that has been long term empty, AND
- Be subject to a contribution of 50% of the eligible work (*subject to maximum grant limits).

OR

- Applicants must be an owner of a property that has been long term empty, AND
- Be subject to a condition that the property will be let as Temporary Housing in agreement with the Local Authority’s Housing Needs and Family Support team, AND
- Be subject to a contribution of 10% of the eligible work (*subject to maximum grant limits).

Eligible works and assistance:

NB: An element must need repairing, or be an essential amenity and be missing or inaccessible.

- Work to resolve Category 1 Hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System.*
- Work to resolve Category 2 Hazards where an occupant is vulnerable as defined by Decent Homes Standard, there is imminent risk of harm to the vulnerable person, and the work would make the home decent on completion.*
- Disabled adaptations that fall into category B above. The grant may be direct or indirect, and in the form of assistance to enable a) the acquisition of living accommodation or b) the adaptation or improvement of living accommodation; whether by alteration, conversion or enlargement, by the installation of anything or injection of any substance, or otherwise.
- Empty property work that falls into Category C above. Work to resolve Category 1 or 2 hazards. Work to resolve defects under the Decent Homes Standard. Work that does not resolve hazards or decency but is considered essential by the Local Authority to satisfactorily let the property as Temporary Accommodation (e.g. decorative repair, floor covering, disabled adaptation, insulation or thermal improvements)
- *Ideally the property will be rendered free from category one hazards and/or be decent on completion, but this will not be essential if the work required is deemed unreasonable, impractical, or beyond the scope of the grant. Where any of the latter three issues are the case the applicant will need to fund the part of the work that the grant will not cover

Non-Eligible works for Repairs and Wellbeing Grant:

- Work or assistance that the Local Authority considers is not reasonable or practicable
- Work which can reasonably be paid via another grant or source e.g. ECO Funding, Insurance, etc.

Other Matters:

1. The grant is discretionary and dependent upon resources being available. There is no mandatory entitlement to this grant
2. Works to listed buildings, buildings in conservation areas or locally listed buildings (Heritage Assets) are likely to require consent. Owners of these buildings should contact the Conservation & Design Team on 823552 for further advice prior to proceeding with the application.
3. The maximum individual grant is £5,000, and successive grants are allowed but with a maximum of £10,000 in three year period (This includes previous Repair or HMO Grants). In the case of an Empty Property grant application the maximum individual grant for a 50% contribution situation shall be £5,000, and in the case of a 10% contribution situation shall be £9,000.
4. The definition of Long Term Empty Property for the purpose of this grant is a residential dwelling that has not been occupied for a minimum of 1 year, is not a second-home and is classified as class PCLC by the Local Authority Tax team.
5. The process of the grant will begin with the Housing Renewal Officer inspecting the property and establishing if there is grant eligible work. A brief outline of any eligible works will be produced for the applicant who must obtain two quotations.
6. The applicant is responsible for, and will have control of, obtaining builders estimates, ordering work from contractors and entering into any contract, monitoring quality of work, and payment of invoices.
7. The Local Authority will be responsible for agreeing eligible work or assistance prior to a grant being awarded, deciding whether to award a grant to the applicant, paying the grant on satisfactory completion of the eligible work.
8. To verify whether the Local Authority is satisfied with the completed work, site inspections are likely to be undertaken at any stage of the work, and the requirement of certification for items such as electrical work will be necessary.

9. Grants to cover retrospective work will not be eligible (for works already completed). Incomplete projects may be eligible, but the partially completed, or completed elements of it are not.
10. A full application is deemed to be satisfactorily completed when the following documents have been submitted: an application form, a minimum of two satisfactory estimates, proof of ownership or landlords consent (as appropriate), proof of relevant benefits or confirmation of willingness to proceed following a means test, confirmation of willingness to accept the conditional charge on the property (if required), and in the case of an empty property application evidence of willingness to enter into a contract with the Housing and Family Support team in respect to Local Authority nomination rights of tenants.
11. Once a full application is received a decision on approval will be made within 6 months, and if approved the work or assistance must be completed within 6 months of the date of approval.
12. The grant will be revoked in writing if satisfactory completion has not been fulfilled within the time limits, and the applicant has not been given additional time to complete the work. Applicants may apply for an extension of time to complete the work or assistance, giving their reasons for such, and the Local Authority will provide a decision in writing.
13. Further to a full application being received the Local Authority reserve the right not to approve a grant, or approve a grant for a lesser amount than it would normally, where resources are limited or unavailable, or where it is considered that the costs submitted are unreasonable.
14. Where Owner-Occupier or Tenant applications are subject to a means test, applicants must complete a Means Test Form (supplied by the Local Authority), and will be informed of any grant reduction amount that is contributable towards the work by the applicant. To obtain an approval of grant the applicant must agree to pay the grant reduction amount to their builder. Disabled adaptations will be subject to the means testing procedure applicable to the Disabled Facilities Grant procedures.
15. Empty Property Owner applicants are deemed to agree to pay 50% of the cost of the eligible work subject to maximum amounts.
16. Empty Property Owner applicants may apply for a lower minimum contribution of 10% of the cost of the eligible work (subject to maximum amounts) where the Local Authority's Housing Needs and Family Support team agree that they will utilise the property as Temporary Accommodation. This shall be for a minimum of 3 years, and agreements as to the tenancy arrangements, and nomination rights are subject to separate agreement with the Housing Needs and Family Support manager. If no agreement can be reached then this type of application condition cannot be pursued and the only available option will be a 50% minimum contribution.
17. A contribution by an applicant could be greater than the automatic 50% for empty property situations, or the grant reduction amount for owner-occupiers and tenants, in a situation where in the opinion of the Local Authority additional deductions are made to the grant due to previous grant awards or a disallowance in grant due to unreasonable costs requested in the application,.
18. Applicants will also be liable to pay to their builder any difference between the final costs minus the grant award, which may occur if work has been undertaken that has not been agreed with the Local Authority.
19. Work must be undertaken by a contractor, whose estimates were submitted as part of the application and recorded in the written approval by the Local Authority. If, following grant approval, an applicant decides to use another contractor whose estimates were not provided as part of the application the applicant must apply to the Local Authority for a variation. The Local Authority will not pay grant for work completed by a contractor who has not been approved in writing as part of the approval process unless reasonable justification can be given by the applicant and agreed in writing by the Local Authority.
20. The work must be undertaken to the Local Authority's satisfaction before payment is made, and will require satisfactory supporting documentation (invoices, completion certificates, guarantees, approvals, etc.) To verify whether the Local Authority is satisfied with the completed work, site inspections are likely to be undertaken at any stage of the work.

21. The grant will normally be paid directly to the contractor and/or the agent acting on the applicant's behalf (for example the Agent or architect) upon receipt of a satisfactory invoice and any other necessary documentation. To be satisfactory, invoices will be addressed to the applicant, have the contractors details, be numbered, dated and be of the correct amount with relevant taxation inclusions.
22. Where an applicant is dissatisfied with the completed work the Local Authority may decide to withhold payment to the builder. The Local Authority may try and assist resolution depending upon the circumstances, and may take whatever course of action is considered reasonable in the circumstances. In cases that are practically complete, and where considered reasonable, the Local Authority may decide to pay the grant in a form that allows private resolution between the builder and the applicant (i.e. direct to the applicant or the contractor in question). This may be all or part of the grant, as considered appropriate in the circumstances, and may include the payment of a proportion of the grant to the builder for certain work that is considered satisfactory. Assessment of the cost to rectify defects may be taken into account.
23. No labour element will be paid for work carried out by the owner or a family member or relative.
24. Interim payments will only be paid if the person awarded the grant signs an interim payment certificate, and is supported by a relevant invoice and supporting documents (such as an electrical completion certificate – as appropriate)
25. The person awarded the grant must inform the Local Authority if the estimated cost of the work changes as the works progress. Extra or unforeseen work **MUST** be agreed with the Housing Renewal section of the Local Authority before being started. No additional grant will be paid for materials or labour that has not been previously approved in writing.
26. The person awarded the grant, not the Local Authority, is in control of the work and is the employer of any contractors undertaking work. The Local Authority has no contractual liabilities in respect to the work, and the grant applicant is responsible for monitoring the quality of the workmanship and any ongoing maintenance of the completed work.
27. A legal charge may be placed upon the property that has benefited from the grant work where this is considered necessary, and with the agreement of all persons with an interest in the property subject to the grant. Any costs in doing so will apply to the grant, and will be subject to the grant conditions.
28. Whether a legal charge is placed or not, the grant must be repaid in full if the property (in full or in part) is sold or disposed or change of ownership on the title deeds within 10 years (*Except Empty Property Applications- see below). To assist the Local Authority in administering the process a local land charge will be entered in Part 4 of the Local Land Charges Register in all cases.
29. In cases where exceptions have been agreed with the applicant, the Local Authority may require an extension to the length of time of the repayment condition (point 28 above), and / or allowance for depreciation and minimal repayment amounts as part of that condition.
30. Any repayment condition, along with any exceptions, will be clearly stated in writing to the applicant before the applicant has the opportunity to agree and continue with the grant application. This will usually be at a grant approval stage.
31. In the case of Empty Property applications the land charge and repayment condition will be applicable until the amount of grant has been repaid (there is no expiry date), or is revoked by the Local Authority. Actions that will trigger a repayment include disposal of the property, the property is not occupied by a tenant within 6 months from practical completion, becoming long term empty again following an occupation by a tenant, a change of tenure to owner-occupier status (owner-occupier for this purpose includes occupiers related to the owner or the owner's partner), becoming a second-home, or use of the property for non-domestic purposes (e.g. holiday home).
32. In the case of an empty property owner applying for grants on multiple dwellings it shall be at the discretion of the Commissioner of Housing Renewal to accept cases where the amounts for multiple grants will exceed £10,000 in a three year period. In coming to a decision regard shall be

had to the resources available, the demand upon the service, and the benefits in agreeing a further grant.

33. Any repayment conditions do not apply to tenants applications for disabled adaptations.
34. Exemption from full or partial repayment will only be agreed in exceptional circumstances, which may include circumstances of financial hardship or disability needs. At the time of a grant needing to be repaid the applicant can write to the manager of the Housing Renewal section to request an exemption of all or part of the relevant amount, explaining the circumstances and providing all the appropriate supporting information (it will be expected that the minimum of the following information is provided; original purchase price, sale price, current income and savings, reasons for moving/sale). Additional information may be requested by the manager of the Housing Renewal section, before a decision is made.
35. The Local Authority will keep records for the grant condition period (10 years for owner-occupier, disabled adaptation applications, and unlimited for empty property applications) to ensure compliance with the conditions. Please note that in cases of agreed exceptions to grant conditions, this may require an extended length of time that records are kept in accordance with any extension of time of the conditions; such as extending the time for repayment of the grant.
36. The Local Authority may enquire to the person awarded the grant at any time within the grant condition period to ask for confirmation that the property has not been sold or undertaken a change of use, as appropriate. If this information is not provided within 21 days the grant may have to be repaid in full.
37. To ensure that the grant conditions are being complied with the Local Authority may undertake any other investigations as appropriate, where there may be reasons to believe that the conditions are, or could be, breached.
38. Exceptions can be proposed where the result of not undertaking the work would be significant hardship and risk to the applicant (or other relevant person), or significant cost or risk in any form to the local authority or NHS Trust (such as delayed discharge from hospital); and there are no other reasonable options. Any exceptions to this policy will be considered and agreed between the Commissioner of Housing Renewal and the Head of Service. Comments and views from other interested parties and agencies shall be taken into account, as appropriate. Exceptions could take any form which is permissible under the legislation applicable.
39. Notwithstanding the above grant terms and conditions, the Local Authority may decide to provide the required assistance in any form deemed necessary and appropriate.
40. *Any reference to Test of Resources or Means Test refers to the Means Test that is subject to Disabled Facilities Grant applications as at the date of any grant approval.*