



Housing Grants Policy 2019-2024

March 2019

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The Council's overall approach to housing issues and the fulfilment of statutory duties relating to housing is set out in the Housing Strategy. The Strategy sets out the Council's priorities for housing in the district and the strategic measures that will be taken to achieve them.
- 1.2 The Housing Grants Policy sets out the financial support that the Council will make available in addressing issues in the private sector.
- 1.3 The requirement for a published policy relating to financial assistance came about as a result of The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance)(England and Wales) Order 2002. This largely swept away a range of previous mandatory grants that were available for housing renewal work, the only exception being grants for disabled facilities, which remain to this day. In place of the mandatory grants, local authorities were given a general power to offer financial assistance for repairs, improvements and adaptations.
- 1.4 The Council's first policy relating to financial assistance, the Private Sector Housing Renewals Policy was published in 2003 and there have been a series of amendments since.
- 1.5 The Council is a partner in the Hertfordshire Home Improvement Agency, which now delivers the Council's responsibilities in relation to disabled facilities grants.
- 1.6 This policy sets out the terms and conditions relating to Home Repair Assistance Grant (HRAG).

2.0 Home Repair Assistance Grant

- 2.1 The Home Repair Assistance Grant is a discretionary form of assistance specifically designed to provide practical help, through a grant for small-scale essential works. It aims to help owner-occupiers and tenants who have responsibility for undertaking repairs to their homes but who have limited financial resources to undertake essential works that might otherwise lead to adverse health or safety conditions in their home.
- 2.2 This grant provides cash limited assistance up to £5000 within any three-year period, for minor works for owner-occupiers and private tenants who meet certain criteria. Applicants can submit more than one application but the total grant may not exceed £5000 in any three year period.
- 2.3 Private tenants may only make an application for a HRAG where their tenancy agreement places responsibility on them for carrying out the required works. In practice, this is only likely to apply to regulated tenancies, which began before 15 January 1989.
- 2.4 Private landlords and Registered Providers are not eligible to apply for a HRAG.
- 2.5 All grants are subject to conditions, which are set out in Appendix 1.
- 2.6 Where alternative sources of funding are available to an applicant, the Council will expect an applicant to pursue such options before making an application for a HRAG.
- 2.7 The HRAG scheme is a discretionary scheme and is subject to the resources that the Council is able to make available to support the scheme in any financial year.

3.0 Scope of grant assistance

3.1 Works that may be covered by a HRAG are as follows:

- a) To remedy essential repairs or conditions that interfere materially with the personal comfort or security of an elderly, vulnerable or disabled occupant.
- b) Remedial action to remove Category 1 hazard(s)¹ and property is occupied by person(s) falling within the defined vulnerable group for that hazard.
- c) Essential and significant repairs to the basic fabric or services of residential mobile homes.
- d) Energy efficiency works, where applicants are not eligible for assistance under another third party scheme e.g. Energy Company Obligation (ECO)

For the purposes of this policy, elderly is defined as anyone who is at or above the state pension age at the time of the application

For the purpose of this policy, in assessing vulnerability, regard will be had to the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence's quality standard 'Preventing excess winter deaths and illness associated with cold homes'
<https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/qs117>

3.2 Applicants must be in receipt of an income related benefit including:

- Child Tax Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Income Support
- Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Income-related Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Pension Guarantee Credit
- Universal Credit
- Working Tax Credit

Or the total household income is £20000 per annum or less.

¹ A category 1 hazard is a serious hazard affecting the occupants of a property under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/hhsrs-operating-guidance-housing-act-2004-guidance-about-inspections-and-assessment-of-hazards-given-under-section-9>

4.0 Other matters

- 4.1 The Council's Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy, last amended on 20 March 2018, ceases to have effect in relation to any new applications granted after this policy comes into force. However, the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy remains in effect with regard to any conditions applied to grants awarded under that policy.

Appendix 1

HRAG conditions

1. Applicants must be 18 years of age or older at the date of application and in the case of joint applications at least one applicant must be 18 years of age or older at the date of application.
2. It is the applicant who employs the contractors to undertake agreed works and the Council have no contractual liabilities in that relationship as their role is only to administer the grant process. The applicant is ultimately responsible for ensuring the quality of the completed works.
3. The agreed works must be carried out by one of the contractors whose estimates/quotes were submitted as part of the application. The grant will usually be calculated using the lowest priced estimates/quote except in exceptional circumstances.
4. The responsibility to gain all necessary approvals e.g. Planning Permission, Building Regulation Approval etc, rests with the applicant.
5. If an applicant submits an estimate/quote from a member of their family, who then carries out the agreed works, the grant will only be paid on the basis of the cost of materials and not labour.
6. An application for assistance toward works that have already been completed will not be processed. Any part of works not commenced, which would otherwise have been considered for assistance will be processed for possible grant assistance, as long as this work is not commenced prior to formal approval.
7. All payments shall be conditional upon confirmation that all works to which the grant relates have been completed and receipt of an acceptable invoice. Payment will normally be made to the applicant but can be made to the contractor if the grant recipient authorises this.
8. The applicant must grant the Council reasonable access to inspect the works whilst in progress and on completion, if requested to do so.
9. The Council may include the reasonable cost of preliminary or ancillary services, fees and charges within the calculation of assistance. The payment of any such fees is conditional on a grant being approved and the completion of all specified works.
10. The Council will only make a single payment when all works are satisfactorily completed; no interim payments will be made.
11. Grant assistance will only be approved for the benefit of applicants who are able to provide evidence of a valid National Insurance Number.
12. The Council reserves the right to re-consider any individual application against any of these terms and conditions.