

Walsall Council Scrutiny and Performance Panel Work Group
DRAFT Initiation Document

Work Group Name:	Disabled Facility Grants
Panel:	SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH SCRUTINY AND PERFORMANCE PANEL
Municipal Year:	2015
Lead Member:	
Lead Officer:	David Lockwood, Housing Standards and Improvement Manager
Support Officer:	
Membership:	Councillor E. Hazell, Councillor H. Sarohi, Councillor I. Shires, Councillor J. Fitzpatrick, Councillor M. Longhi, Councillor R. Worrall.
Expert Witnesses:	David Sinclair , Lynda Rowan

1.	<p>Context</p> <p>As we have an aging population, demand for adaptations (including statutory Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs)) to people's homes in Walsall is very high. In recent years partnership work has taken place with local registered social landlords to help find ways to make the money go further and enable more people to be supported to live independently.</p> <p>The consent to undertake DFGs is always needed from the property owner before a grant can be formally considered. Whg (as a major social landlord in the borough) has a policy that includes a number of circumstances where they will not normally permit adaptations to be undertaken:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Where it is not reasonable and practicable to do so (for example adapting a property that is too big for the remaining residents when alternative more suitable accommodation is) • Where a request for a 'right to buy' has been made. <p>Whg advise that they consider each enquiry on its individual merits against their adaptation policy and try to balance the needs of particular individuals against the overall needs of other tenants and future tenants. As part of the partnership arrangements Whg currently provide funding to help their own tenants with minor adaptations. In addition should they turn down a request for an adaptation, they also provide staff to help their tenants to find alternative a suitably adapted home or a property that is easier to adapt but is the right size. Whg also now provide grants to cover the cost of furniture removals or new carpets for tenants that have to move because (after taking all considerations into account) it is not reasonable or practicable to adapt the property.</p> <p>A recent case has highlighted that some residents do not wish to move to alternative properties but wish to remain where they are living and want their existing home to be adapted. Whg has pointed out that if they change their policy the Council may be required to fund more very expensive adaptations to large accommodation which would reduce the budget available to help others in need.</p>
2.	<p>Objectives</p> <p>Understand the number of people who have been refused landlord consent for an adaptation as a result of their existing property being under-occupied and the consequence of this if any.</p>

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	<p>Review what alternative option(s) have been offered to residents in each case and whether these are appropriate / reasonable and have been fully explored.</p> <p>Explore whether there are any other ‘incentives’ that could be offered to tenants to support a move to an alternative / adapted property.</p> <p>Review the impact of whg changing its policy to always agree adaptation of existing homes (where practicable). For example what are the financial and other impacts of this to other members of the public / tenants.</p> <p>Explore any other options that might help the adaptations budget go further so that more people can be helped.</p> <p>Understand whether the use of temporary ‘pods’ or other technology could be used and later removed in a way that would keep adaptation costs down.</p> <p>Explore the extent of recycling adaptations no longer required</p>
3.	Scope
	<p>The working group can nominate representatives to talk to people who have been turned down / benefited from adaptations. It can also talk to people that have been supported to move to alternative homes when landlord consent has been refused. The scope can include talking to officers from the council involved in the work, officers from Whg (or other social landlords if appropriate) and other key partners including health or social care.</p> <p>The scrutiny panel can only make recommendations about how policies or procedures could be improved. Any findings or recommendations can be forwarded to Whg or the Cabinet with a request that they consider them.</p>
4.	Equalities Implications
	<p>There is a legal and moral obligation to ensure that, when undertaking a scrutiny review, the impact of policies; procedures; strategies and activities is considered within the 6 strands of equality (Age, Disability, Gender, Race, Religion or Belief, and Sexual Orientation)</p> <p>Eligibility and consideration by the council of DFGs is in line with the council’s adopted policies including the Home Repair Assistance Policy and the Occupational Therpay Eligibility criteria each of which has an EQIA.</p> <p>The Adaptation Policy of whg is understood to also have an EQIA.</p>
4.	Who else will you want to take part?
	<p>Walsall Housing Group Other Social Landlords</p> <p>Feedback / research on the options that other social housing providers give to tenants in</p>

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	similar situations.		
5.	Timescales & Reporting Schedule		
	As the area is sensitive and complex it is recommended that that the working group initially has eight weeks to complete its investigations and discussions with relevant stakeholders and produce a report for scrutiny.		
6.	Risk factors		
	Risk	Likelihood	Measure to Resolve
	Customers may not be prepared to talk to the group	Low	Lead officer to speak to WHG and try to coordinate / facilitate any discussions with service users.
	Whg could choose not to engage with the working group	Low	Lead officer has already spoken to Whg and they have agreed to participate in positive dialogue at this stage.
	Group members could be at risk of allegation if meeting vulnerable people to undertake interviews.	Medium	Officer to accompany group member so that they are not alone with them.
	New schemes could cost more, with limited funding this could result in helping fewer people	Medium	Measures would need to be agreed following initial scoping.
	Risk of reputational damage if a member of the group, a customer, or partner such as Whg went to the press.	Medium	Lead officer to brief all parties about how to manage sensitive information obtained during the process.

Date Agreed:		Date Updated:	
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Timetable: