

REPORT TO: Health Policy & Performance Board

DATE: 29th September 2020

REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People

PORTFOLIO: Children, Education & Social Care

SUBJECT: Home Assistance Policy 2020-2023 & Home Adaptations for Disabled People Policy & Procedure

WARDS: Borough wide

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

- 1.1 To present PPB with drafts of the following two inter-related policies for review and comment:
- Home Assistance Policy 2020-2023 (public-facing document); and
 - Home Adaptations for Disabled People Policy & Procedure (for staff).
- 1.2 To highlight to PPB some minor changes to practice to be brought in by these updated policies (see section 4.0), which will align all adaptations with the successful extended warranty approach already in place for stair lifts. Additional background information regarding the approach is provided at appendix 1.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION

RECOMMENDED: That

- (1) The report be noted; and**
- (2) PPB comment on the revised policies, in particular the changes to practice.**

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 3.1 The two policy documents presented are both concerned with the Council's provision of housing adaptations to assist disabled people to continue living independently at home when appropriate. One is a public facing document and the other is aimed at staff:
- The Home Assistance Policy 2020-2023 policy describes how the Council will use its powers under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order (RRO) 2002 to provide housing adaptations for disabled people. This is a public-facing document and local authorities must have such a policy in place if they wish to make use of their powers under the RRO.

- The Home Adaptations for Disabled People Policy & Procedure sets out the policy, procedure and practice associated with the provision of minor and major housing adaptations for disabled people living in Halton. This is a policy and procedure document for staff and is intended to assist those in the Initial Assessment Team and the Home Improvement Service to follow the local procedures in place.
- 3.2 The Home Assistance Policy replaces the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Policy Statement that was developed in 2017 in order to set out the Council's policy position in relation to how DFG funds were designated.
- 3.3 There has previously been a Housing Adaptations Manual but this has been out-of-date for some time. The revised Adaptations Policy presented today has been subject to delays connected to work around a new model and contract for the provision of stair lifts.
- 3.4 Extensive work has taken place with relevant colleagues (detailed below) to ensure the policies are accurate and up-to-date:
- Divisional Manager, Independent Living Services;
 - Practice Manager, Occupational Therapy, Initial Assessment Team;
 - Project Leader, Home Improvement Service;
 - Representatives from the Finance Department.
- 3.5 The Home Assistance Policy has been developed taking into account guidance published by Foundations ['Preparing a Policy under the Regulatory Reform Order \(2002\) Housing Renewal'](#). Foundations is the national body for Home Improvement Agencies and lead on the transformation of DFGs. The guidance sets out, based on the contents of the Order, what elements should be included in a policy prepared under the RRO. The draft policy presented includes the required elements.
- 3.6 In addition, as stated on page 6 of the Foundations guidance, in order to make use of the RRO, local authorities must comply with the following conditions:
- There must be a formally adopted policy in place, which sets out how the authority intends to use its powers;
 - There must be notice to the public that a policy is in force;
 - They must ensure that a copy of the full policy is available to the public for free at the council offices;
 - There must be a summary document available on request (though a small charge to cover costs may be allowed).

Adults SMT considered the above points when the policies were presented for approval in July. It was agreed that the policy will be made available on the Council's website and promoted via press release and social media. Printed copies will be available on request via the Contact Centre / HDL offices. A summary document was not thought to be necessary given that the policy itself is not a lengthy document.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

- 4.1 The attached policies detail how the Council's standard position is now that mechanical lifts, wash/dry toilets and adjustable height products will be provided with an extended warranty for a period of five years. After this period, the item becomes the responsibility of the individual in terms of ongoing maintenance and repair. This follows on from the successful change in model for stair lift provision to address the escalating costs of maintenance.
- 4.2 The only exception to this is ceiling track hoists, which need to be treated differently given the fact that they are subject to LOLER (Lifting Operations and Lifting Equipment Regulations) testing and are used by commissioned care staff. It is therefore proposed that ceiling track hoists are provided with a 10 year warranty, which represents the life cycle of the hoist.

5.0 OTHER/FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 The adaptations described in the attached policies are funded through the Council's DFG allocation

6.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR THE COUNCIL'S PRIORITIES

Children & Young People in Halton

N/A

Employment, Learning & Skills in Halton

N/A

A Healthy Halton

N/A

A Safer Halton

None identified

Halton's Urban Renewal

N/A

7.0 RISK ANALYSIS

- 7.1 In order to make use of powers under the RRO, local authorities must have a suitable policy in place. The existing DFG Policy Statement does not fully meet with the requirements of a policy prepared under the RRO (as described in the Foundations guidance referred to above). The Home Assistance Policy presented alongside this report will therefore ensure the Council is protected from any potential challenge.

8.0 EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES

8.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) has been complete completed and is attached for information.

9.0 LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972

9.1 None under the meaning of the Act.

Appendix 1: Background information regarding extended warranty approach

The Home Assistance Policy and the Home Adaptations for Disabled People Policy & Procedure detail a change in practice that brings other adaptations in line with the successful approach already taken with stair lifts.

In February 2018, Executive Board approved the new model for stair lift provision. Prior to this, stair lifts were installed with a standard two year-warranty after which ongoing servicing and maintenance would be via a maintenance contract funded through social care budgets. The new model saw stair lifts being installed with an extended five year warranty at the point of installation funded via the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) allocation and after this time responsibility for ongoing servicing and maintenance would transfer to the individual (which is in line with practice for stair lifts installed via a formal DFG and is also common practice in other local authority areas).

The main reason for the change in practice with stair lifts was that the escalating costs incurred through the maintenance contract were proving to be unsustainable and research with other local authorities revealed that the Council's provision was over and above what was required by legislation and at odds with practice in other areas.

The new stair lift model has been operational for over 12 months alongside a new contract for stair lift installation with a more cost-effective supplier (as per a further report to Executive Board in line with Procurement Standing Orders in June 2018).

Given that the extended warranty approach has been successful in relation to stair lifts, it would be appropriate to bring other adaptations covered by the maintenance contract in line with this approach so as to eventually reach a point at which the Council no longer has responsibility for ongoing maintenance of any items and therefore does not need to fund the maintenance contract.

The two policies named above detail the Council's practice in relation to stair lifts and other adaptations. As the policies became due for review it seemed an opportune time to bring all adaptations in line with the successful practice already in place for stair lifts. The two key policy implications are summarised at section 4.0 of the report.

Adult Social Care Senior Management Team has expressed agreement with this change in approach as this means that all items currently covered under the maintenance contract will eventually have extended warranties funded through the DFG allocation received from Government thus avoiding the need

for continued funding of the maintenance contract from the Council's adult social care budget.

It is anticipated that Health PPB Members will also be in agreement with this alignment of practice given that there was overwhelming support for the new stair lift model and the revisions to the two policies simply bring other relevant adaptations in line with that approach and the principle behind these changes has already been formally approved by Executive Board.