

## Disabled Facilities Grants – Extended Policy

Suffolk Coastal (SCDC) and Waveney District Council (WDC) Cabinets have adopted a policy under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 to enable them to extend the range of works and types of assistance available to disabled residents of East Suffolk who meet the criteria for a disabled facilities grant . The adopted policy is set out below.

### **What is a Disabled Facilities Grant?**

A grant to facilitate access into the property (e.g. a ramp), to the main living areas and to amenities such as toilets, shower rooms and kitchen facilities. The necessary works are identified by an Occupational Therapist who determines what the client needs. In most cases a means test is applied so that the highest grants go to those who have the least ability to fund the works themselves. In the case of children’s adaptations the family’s income is not taken into account.

### **Why is this policy needed?**

Applying for a disabled facilities grant can be quite bureaucratic. This policy identifies circumstances when we can “fast track” certain applications to ensure a quicker and easier process. The policy also extends the type of works that can be done utilising this source of funding. Both these scenarios are detailed below:

### **Fast Track Applications**

Are available to applicants who are on a low income and either in receipt of one of the benefits stated below or are on a low income as defined below. Applicants will self certify as to their eligibility and authorise the Council to verify their income with other agencies as appropriate:

Capital and savings (excluding the property to be adapted) less than £10,000 per applicant/partner.

### **Income from benefits including:**

- Income Support
- Income related Employment Support Allowance
- Income based Job Seekers Allowance
- Universal Credit
- Pension Credit – Guarantee element
- Pension Credit – Savings element
- Housing Benefit
- Working Tax Credit (income less than £16105)
- Child tax Credit (income less than £16,105)
- Council Tax Reduction (not single person reduction)

- Not in receipt of a benefit but with income:
  - For applicant and any partner of joint income £20,000 per annum or less (gross)
  - For single applicants sole income £17,000 per annum or less (gross)
  - And additional £ 2500 per annum (gross) for each dependent child

**Works covered by fast tracking:**

Where the cost of works is £5,000 or less – the most common adaptations are changing bathrooms into wet rooms with a flush floor shower, installing stair-lifts or ramping entrances. Where these works cost less than £5,000 a fast track application with a simplified means test can be made. The figure of £5,000 is used as, above this, costs are registered as a local land charge and there is a requirement to repay monies if the property is sold within ten years. Keeping the figure at £5,000 simplifies matters and doesn't penalise applicants who have incurred a charge historically.

For providing adequate heating where the condition suffered by the applicant is likely to be exacerbated by living in a cold home – a full means tested application will still be required if the costs are above £5,000. This grant includes major repairs.

**For certain terminally ill patients**– where the person is suffering from a terminal illness and the works enable them to remain at home longer.

**To enable an applicant to be discharged from hospital** – if an applicant is bed blocking because their home is unsuitable for return from hospital, adaptations can be fast tracked.

**Extending the scope of Disabled Facilities grants:**

**To include adaptations to assist those with dementia** to remain at home – these would still be means tested applications.

**Increasing the maximum grant to £35,000** – where a bedroom and bathroom extension are needed the maximum grant of £30,000 is insufficient and works are frequently delayed whilst applicants try to raise the additional funds themselves. An additional £5,000 would help fund the shortfall. These would still be means tested.

There may be other exceptional cases where it is appropriate to look at a fast tracking approach and these could be agreed by the Head of Housing in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Housing.

**Adaptation Costs below £1000 would not be eligible for assistance as the responsibility for these minor works rests with Social Care.**

**Other conditions:**

Applicants would be required to demonstrate ownership through a land registry check (done by the Council) or, where the property is not registered, by endorsement by solicitor or mortgagee. Where they are tenants, landlord's written consent would be required.