

EQUALITY SCREENING

Equality Impact Assessment guidance should be considered when completing this form.

POLICY/FUNCTION/ACTIVITY	LEAD OFFICER
Home Improvement Agency Assistance Policy	Alice Foster & Maggie Ward

A. What is the aim of this policy, function or activity? Why is it needed? What is it hoped to achieve and how will it be ensured it works as intended? Does it affect service users, employees or the wider community?

This policy sets out how disabled adaptations and grants for council owned properties and privately owned properties will be dealt with. The Council is committed to supporting tenants to live independently within their own homes where possible. The increase in demand for social housing requires a greater focus on supporting tenants to consider how their housing needs may be met in the longer term and this policy clarifies that.

This policy is aligned with the Disabled Facilities Grant process, the Council’s approved Housing Allocation Scheme and the objectives of making best use of stock, ensuring Best Value and responding to the housing needs in the area.

A review of the policy includes increasing the amount available through some discretionary grant available to vulnerable residents. It also proposes updating and providing a more transparent way to means testing for grant.

RBC’s stated objective it to operate a service that offers suitable, practical and cost-effective solutions that meet tenants’ assessed needs, ensuring their safety, well-being and quality of life.

Assessments are completed by Occupational Therapists (OTs) or a Trusted Assessor in line with their good practice guide and a referral is submitted to the Home Improvement Agency (HIA), outlining the work required. The Home Improvement Agency Team then follow their process to put these adaptations in place for the residents. The HIA Team work closely with the Housing Team to ensure all adaptations are suitable.

The Policy affects service users and the staff administering the policy.

B. Is this policy, function or activity relevant to equality? Does the policy, function or activity relate to an area in which there are known inequalities, or where different groups have different needs or experience? Remember, it may be relevant because there are opportunities to promote equality and greater access, not just potential for adverse impacts or unlawful discrimination.

The Protected Characteristics are; Sex, Age, Disability, Race, Religion and Beliefs, Sexual Orientation, Marriage and Civil Partnership, Gender Reassignment, Pregnancy and Maternity.

The policy seeks to promote fairness, transparency and equality in responding to requests for adaptations for all residents in Runnymede. With one policy for all residents, we have a tenure neutral service, meaning all residents will receive the same answers and options to support them to live independently and safely in their homes.

The DFG and discretionary grants outlined in this policy are for disabled, elderly and vulnerable residents. The policy is therefore primarily relevant to the protected characteristics of age and disability. This policy helps to support these residents and promotes independence in their homes. Creating a tenure neutral service will support RBC to not discriminate against residents based on their tenure as all residents will have access to the same level of support, where appropriate.

The increase in demand for social housing requires a greater focus on supporting tenants to consider how their housing needs may be met in the longer term. RBC is committed to enabling tenants to remain living independently within their own home.

In 2023/24 there were 24 Disabled Facility Grants cases. Take up will continue to be recorded and monitored throughout the life of the policy.

If the policy, function or activity is considered to be relevant to equality then a full Equality Impact Assessment may need to be carried out. If the policy function or activity does not engage any protected characteristics then you should complete Part C below. Where Protected Characteristics are engaged, but Full Impact Assessment is not required because measures are in place or are proposed to be implemented that would mitigate the impact on those affected or would provide an opportunity to promote equalities please complete Part C.

C. If the policy, function or activity is not considered to be relevant to equality, what are the reasons for this conclusion? Alternatively, if there it is considered that there is an impact on any Protected of Characteristics but that measures are in place or are proposed to be implemented please state those measures and how it/they are expected to have the desired result. What evidence has been used to make this decision? A simple statement of 'no relevance' or 'no data' is not sufficient.

A full impact assessment was carried out in 2023. It is not considered that a full impact assessment is required this time because this policy remains unchanged in that it provides assistance to elderly and disabled people including specific financial provisions for disabled persons aged 19 and under. The purpose of the policy is to ensure that the Council's policy complies with all legislation and its approach continues to be tenure neutral.

The policy ensures that all residents can make funding applications (subject to some means testing) irrespective of their tenure in the private or public sector thereby benefitting people with Protected Characteristics.

The policy review includes a checklist for means testing to improve consistency and the use of assistive technology for greater accessibility for people with disabilities. Increases in grant levels will further benefit people with the protected characteristics of age and disability.

This screening assessment will need to be referred to the Equality Group for challenge before sign-off.

Date completed: 28 May 2024

Sign-off by senior manager: Maggie Ward