

HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY POLICY

28 February 2023

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| Prepared by: | Nichola Halford |
| Date effective from: | 28/02/2023 |
| Policy approved by: | John Bowker |
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| EIA Required? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| EIA Completed? | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| Revision number: | 003 |
| Lead officer: | Joe Keating |

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Home Improvement Agency (HIA) is a service managed by Stockport Homes (SHG) and works in partnership with the Council, partners of the Wellbeing in Independence Network, appointed contractors, and other stakeholders, in order to deliver excellent services to all customers.

1.2 The core purpose of the HIA is to provide a fully accessible project management service for the residents of Stockport.

1.3 The customer base of the HIA is:

- Disabled people of any age and their carers
- Older homeowners over the age of 60 years
- Homeowners under the age of 60 years who are on a low income and in receipt of a means-tested benefit.

1.4 Tenants of Stockport Homes (SHG) will not generally need to employ the HIA as suitable alternative provision is in place. However, a tenant may use the HIA if there is no support available from SHG, provided the tenant obtains prior written permission for any work to be carried out.

1.5 The service will arrange and supervise adaptations, essential repairs, and improvements to the homes of customers to help them remain living independently comfortably and safely.

- The HIA achieves this by providing bespoke advice and support for each customer. Solutions sought are person-centred and tailored to the requirements of the individual. The service advises and supports its customers find the funding for the work required if they do not have the resources themselves, will assist customers to maximise their income and will signpost/refer customers on to other relevant services.

2 STRATEGIC LINKS

2.1 This policy links to the following:

- The Care Act 2014
- GM Population Health Plan
- GM Strategy Our People Our Place
- G Housing Strategy
- SHG Ageing Well Strategy 2021-2014
- Stockport Housing Strategy 2016-2021
- The Housing Act 2004 – Housing Health and Safety Rating System
- Stockport Council's Major Adaptations Policy 2011
- SHG mission of One Team, Transforming Lives.

- SHG aims of delivering excellent customer service, providing safe and sustainable homes, and supporting customers in all aspects of their lives. The service will also maximise the impact of resources, work collaboratively and be an inclusive place to work.

3 KEY FEATURES OF THE POLICY

Strategic Goals and Objectives

3.1 The strategic goals and objectives of the HIA are:

- To provide quality and accessible services that are able to demonstrate value for money.
- To develop new sources of income which may include forming new partnerships and working across borough boundaries.
- To ensure a wider awareness of the HIA and the services offered.

3.2 SHG recognises that having a safe and comfortable home is crucial to customers health and wellbeing. The HIA's work supports this by:

- Being committed to supporting all customers to live with dignity and in comfort and safely in their homes, with as much independence as their personal circumstances will permit whatever the tenure of their property
- Responding promptly to requests for assistance and keeping customers informed at all stages of our processes.
- Supporting customer choice and being responsive and innovative when seeking solutions to meet customer' aspirations.
- Treating all personal and sensitive data discreetly and in confidence and keeping it stored securely.

EQUIPMENT

3.3 Equipment can be provided by Stockport Council or Adult Social Care that:

- Can be portable or temporary
- Provide assistance to those who have difficulties with daily living activities, such as getting in/out of a bath, up from a low toilet, carrying things between rooms.

MINOR ADAPTATION

3.4 A minor adaptation is one:

- Costing less than £500
- Installed to maintain the independence of the tenant, for example stair rail, lever taps.

MAJOR ADAPTATION

3.5 A major adaptation is one:

- Where the cost exceeds £500.
- That provides assistance to a tenant to live as independently as possible, for example bathroom adaptations, stair lifts, property access such as ramps, door widening.

3.6 The HIA will assist those in need of major adaptations to make informed choices about their housing options, facilitating transfers to more appropriate accommodation where required.

DFG GRANTS

3.7 Residents are eligible to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to fund both minor and major adaptations.

Discretionary Adaptation Grants (DAG)

3.8 Residents are also eligible to apply for a DAGs which can fund one single adaptation where the projected cost of the adaptation is under £6000.

3.9 A Property Test must be applied in line with the 1996 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act.

ABLE TO PAY

3.10 The HIA also undertake work for customers who are ineligible for a DFG and can therefore fund their own work.

3.11 Following assessment, we will act as a project management company for the customer and manage the adaptations that the customer would like to achieve. In this, we charge a set fee which brings additional income into SHG.

PROPERTY TEST

3.12 The property test in the 1996 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act states that:

- It must be reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant work, having regard to the age and condition of the building
- If the property is unfit, the (local housing) authority must decide if it reasonable and practical to carry out the work.

3.13 If there are any concerns about current and future mobility, tenants who reside above ground floor level with no lift access will not be eligible for any major adaptations that are designed to meet physical disability limitations. An example of this is a level access shower where, in such cases, tenants should be supported to explore alternative housing options.

3.14 All rooms are to be considered as being suitable for adaptation, for example using a dining room as a bedroom. The only exception to this will be the principal living room (although large 'through' living rooms may be split), the main family bathroom and the kitchen. In these three rooms, adaptations may be carried out, but the essential purpose of the room will remain unchanged.

ABLE TO PAY

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4 EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

4.1 It has been determined that a full EIA is not required as this policy complies with the public sector Equality Duty and positively supports people who share a protected characteristic.

5 OWNERSHIP MONITORING AND REVIEW

5.1 This Policy is owned by the Operations Directorate and will be monitored by the Operations Management Team.

5.2 The Policy will be reviewed in line with the Operations Management Policy and Procedure Review Schedule.