

Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy (2017)

- 1. Introduction**
- 2. Aims of the Policy**
- 3. Basic Principals of the Policy**
- 4. General Conditions for Assistance**
- 5. Home Improvement Assistance**
- 6. Disabled Facilities Grant**
- 7. Additional Assistance for Older and Vulnerable People**
- 8. Energy Efficiency Schemes**
- 9. Private Landlord Support and Advice**
- 10. Environmental Schemes & Facelift Schemes**
- 11. Relocation Assistance**
- 12. Complaints**

1. Introduction

1.1 The Bolton Council Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy 2017 is made under item 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 Statutory Instrument No. 1860. Its publication equipped local authorities with wide ranging powers to set out locally how monies for private sector housing should be spent.

1.2 This policy makes use of those powers set out in Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 to provide a range of assistance that supports the provision of good quality private sector housing and to broaden the scope of Disabled Facilities Grants.

1.3 This policy sets out the range of financial assistance that Bolton Council will make available, together with the eligibility criteria and conditions that will be applied to each form of assistance. This document sets out the policy for providing assistance under the Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) and applies in addition to the provision of assistance which can be made under alternative statutory powers, such as the provision of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants under the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended).

1.4 This policy makes provisions for a number of types of assistance;

- Home Improvement Assistance (Safe Warm and Dry)
- Disabled Facilities Grant
- Additional Assistance for Older and Vulnerable People
- Energy Efficiency Schemes
- Empty Properties
- Environmental Schemes & Facelift Schemes

- Relocation Assistance

1.5 With exception of Disabled Facilities Grants, the amount of assistance given each year will be dependent upon the level of capital resources available for housing interventions through the Council Capital Programme.

1.6 The amount of funding available for DFG will be dependent on Bolton's Better Care Fund allocation from Department of Health.

2. Aims of the Policy

2.1 The policy will contribute towards achieving the aims and objectives of a range of Council and partner strategies.

2.2 Aims

- To achieve a reduction in the level of private sector properties which have hazards as defined by the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS).
- To decrease the number of poor quality homes that are occupied by vulnerable residents.
- To improve the energy efficiency rating of private sector properties and achieve a reduction in the numbers of private residents suffering from fuel poverty.
- To support the priorities of Health and Social Care Integration through the provision of preventative housing services that assist people to live independently.
- To achieve value for money and the most effective use of public resources through delivering appropriate forms of assistance in partnership with a range of agencies.

3. Basic Principles of the Policy

3.1 This policy will be reviewed every two years, but will only be amended when it is necessary to do so.

3.2 If the policy is subject to change, applications will be dealt with in line with the policy that existed on the date of application.

3.3 Bolton Council will continue to investigate a range of measures that provide assistance to customers in addition to those covered in this policy. This may require the policy to be varied at any time in relation to specific properties and impose different conditions or requirements in respect of those properties.

3.4 In accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002, section 22 of the Housing Act 1996 and section 2 of the Local Government Act 2000, Bolton Council may administer certain forms of assistance in partnership with partner agencies and organisations where it determines it is appropriate to do so.

3.5 Where this applies the applicant may be required to provide information specified in this policy to any partner agency in addition to the Council.

4. General Conditions for Assistance

4.1 You can apply for assistance unless you are;

- Aged under 18
- Unable to understand the implications of making an application
- A public authority
- A Registered Housing Provider
- From abroad and excluded from receiving any state benefit

4.2 Owner occupiers making an application for assistance must be a freeholder or leaseholder with at least five years of the lease remaining and the dwelling must be their only or main residence. Owner occupiers must also have owned and lived in the property for a minimum of three years and the property must be their only or main residence.

4.3 Where the property concerned has been purchased through Right to Buy or Right to Acquire, no assistance will be available until five years after the purchase date and the property must be the only or main residence of the applicant.

4.4 Landlords making an application for any assistance outlined in this policy must be a freeholder or leaseholder with at least five years of the lease remaining and the dwelling must be let on a residential basis. The applicant will be required to join Bolton's Landlord Accreditation Scheme as a condition of making the application and no application will be approved until this has happened.

4.5 Private sector tenants making an application for any type of assistance must be able to demonstrate a legal obligation to carry out the works applied for as part of their lease or tenancy agreement. The type and length of tenancy will also be considered before any assistance is awarded.

4.6 Registered Provider tenants or private sector tenants where the landlord is responsible for carrying out repairs are not eligible to apply for assistance. However, they will receive support in securing appropriate action by their landlord.

- 4.7 Bolton Council may at any time, within ten years of the assistance being provided, require the applicant to provide documentation to prove compliance with any owner occupier or landlord certificate relating to the property.
- 4.8 No assistance shall be available for a property that has been constructed or converted within ten years of the date of application, except in relation to an application for assistance in respect of an adaptation to benefit a disabled person.
- 4.9 Assistance will not be provided to properties that are system built or types of property classed as defective by the Government.
- 4.10 Decisions as to the awarding of assistance will be taken by officers of the council or its partners who are familiar with this policy and who have been appointed as suitable to administer schemes run in accordance with this policy.
- 4.11 A means test may be carried out on owner occupiers and private sector tenants that make an application for Home Improvement Assistance, Disabled Facilities Grant or Home Repairs Assistance.
- 4.12 The maximum amount of assistance available will be no more than £30,000 to any property. This limit does not include Disabled Facilities Grants.
- 4.13 If a property has already benefitted from previous Council investment within the last five years through Group Repair schemes or a Renovation Grant, the amount of previous investment will be taken into consideration when awarding any assistance through this policy.
- 4.14 All property improvements detailed in this Policy should be carried out by a contractor included on, or pending inclusion on, the Advisory List of Contractors. Ordinarily three quotes must be obtained for all works to ensure value for money.
- 4.15 In some circumstances, a contractor of the applicant's choice can be considered. However they must quote for the work alongside two other contractors. The contractor will be still be chosen and grant awarded based on value for money.
- 4.16 In all circumstances, work which has already been started or completed at the time of application will not be eligible for any financial assistance.
- 4.17 All relevant payments for works completed will normally be made direct to the contractor unless the applicant has specifically requested otherwise. Payments will be made in full once Bolton Council or its partner agency is happy that the work has been completed.

- 4.18 Where proposed works to improve a property cannot be completed without similar works being undertaken to an adjoining property, this similar work will be carried out up to a maximum of £3,000. No contribution will be required for this work and it will only be carried out with the owner's consent. Examples of the work this could include are replacement guttering and repairs to chimneys. This cost will not be included in the £30,000 available to the original property.
- 4.19 All work paid for or contributed to through the assistance set out in this policy should be completed within 6 months of the work being approved. This does not include Disabled Facilities Grants, which must be completed within 12 months of the works being approved. If the Council is satisfied that the work could not be completed in this time frame, in some circumstances more time may be allowed.
- 4.20 Repayment of a proportion of assistance will be required if, within ten years of any part of the assistance being provided the property is sold or transferred or there is non-compliance with the owner occupation or landlord certificate.
- 4.21 If assistance must be repaid, the amount that you must pay will be;
- 0 to 24 months after assistance – 100%
 - 25 to 48 months after assistance – 80%
 - 49 to 72 months after assistance – 60%
 - 73 to 96 months after assistance – 40%
 - 97 to 120 months after assistance – 20%
 - More than 120 months – nil repayment
- 4.22 This amount must be repaid within 28 days.
- 4.23 This does not include Disabled Facilities Grants or schemes where a financial contribution is not required or made.
- 4.24 Repayment of Home Repairs Assistance is detailed in Chapter 7 of this policy.
- 4.25 At any time within ten years of the assistance being provided, the applicant or any mortgagee of the property can make payment of the full amount of assistance so that restrictions on occupation or transfer no longer apply.
- 4.26 Nothing is repayable if the Council is satisfied that the reason for disposal is that;
- An Act of Parliament requires it
 - You have to move out of the property as you need care due to old age or poor health
 - You have to move out of the property to take care of a family member due to old age or poor health
 - A court order (other than one to enforce a debt or mortgage) requires it

- 4.27 The level of assistance offered may be recalculated if;
- Information submitted is found to be inaccurate
 - Work is started before the application is approved
 - Work is not completed to the standard expected by the council
 - Work is not completed within the agreed timescales
 - The cost of the work is lower than estimated
 - Specific contractors were not employed when the applicant had been asked to do so
- 4.28 If the level of assistance is recalculated, the Council may;
- Refuse to make any further payments
 - Reduce the amount of the payment
 - Require the applicant to repay with reasonable interest
- 4.29 To ensure compliance with all conditions set out by the Council, it will be required that a legal charge by way of a restriction via Land Registry is placed on the property to which the application refers. The cost of this may be paid by the Council or added to the total amount of assistance.
- 4.30 Where fraud or deception is suspected the matter will be reported to the police or relevant enforcement agency and Bolton Council will demand full repayment of any amount of assistance paid with interest and no further amount will be paid.
- 4.31 All financial assistance set out within this policy will be available as and when resources are available within associated budgets. In the event of insufficient funds being available, applicants will be advised accordingly, given advice on alternatives and if they choose, be queued in date order until resources become available. In some circumstances an application may be given priority based on the needs and circumstances of the applicant and the priority of the works to be carried out .
- 4.32 ***Making an application***
- 4.32.1 An application cannot be made until such time as Bolton Council or a partner agency has issued a schedule of works, where appropriate, and issued the application form and relevant certificates to enable an applicant to make the application.
- 4.32.2 An application for assistance shall be made in writing using the specified application form.

- 4.32.3 An application for assistance must be accompanied by the relevant documentation from those listed below;
- An owner occupation certificate
 - A landlord certificate
 - A form of consent signed by all named owners of the property
 - Any additional documentation required by the Council or its delivery partners in order to progress the application
- 4.32.4 The applicant will be given appropriate advice and time to consider any offer of assistance, and must be willing to accept the assistance offered subject to any conditions set by the Council.
- 4.32.5 Ordinarily the Council will make a decision on each application within 6 months of a full application being received.

5. Home Improvement Assistance (Safe Warm and Dry)

- 5.1 The provisions for financial assistance contained within this chapter must be read in conjunction with the General Provisions for Assistance set out in section 4.
- 5.2 Home Improvement Assistance will be available to owner occupiers living in poor condition private sector homes.
- 5.3 Provision of this assistance will be targeted using Bolton Council and partner data to identify properties which are at high risk of being in a poor condition and occupied by a vulnerable resident.
- 5.4 Definitions of vulnerable residents may include, but is not limited to, those in receipt of 'passported' benefits, those in receipt of other means tested benefits, older people on a low income, people with disabilities on a low income, families with young children on a low income and people with a long term illness on a low income. This criterion is subject to change in line with Council priorities.
- 5.5 The approaches taken to targeting of this assistance will be based on decision of Bolton Council and its partners.
- 5.6 The assistance is only for the purpose of financing home improvement works identified to remove HHSRS hazards and make the property 'Safe Warm and Dry'.
- 5.7 Each property will be subject to a £30,000 cap of expenditure on improvements, in line with current housing grant limits. If households wish to make further improvements, they will be responsible for finding the resources to do so and may be signposted to financial agencies approved or supported by Bolton Council.
- 5.8 In all cases the Council will carry out a housing options appraisal with customers that will consider the sustainability of their current residence, taking into account their current and future housing needs.
- 5.9 In some cases the Council may decide that financial assistance is not appropriate to the circumstances and the customer will be asked to consider alternative housing arrangements. This will occur in all cases where the cost of repair exceeds the maximum value of the type of assistance offered.
- 5.10 In all cases where Home Improvement Assistance is provided, the officer working on behalf of Bolton Council will undertake a Healthy Home Check to establish any further housing related issues.
- 5.11 In deciding what financial assistance may be available, the Council will carry out a means test in the same form as set out in the Housing Renewal Grants Regulations

1996 (as amended). This will assess the income, outgoings and capital assets of each applicant and their spouse or partner and non-resident owners. The means test will identify whether a customer is vulnerable and whether they will be required to make any financial contribution towards the home improvement works.

- 5.12 If a contribution is identified, where necessary, customers may be signposted to financial agencies approved or supported by Bolton Council.
- 5.13 Home Improvement Assistance will be administered by way of a charge placed on the identified property for a period of ten years, in line with the General Provisions for Assistance in section 4.
- 5.14 The value of the assistance is applied as a legal charge secured against the property. This charge is registered at the Land Registry.
- 5.15 Repayment of the charge will be sought if the applicant does not comply with the conditions relating to ownership or occupation set out in the General Conditions of Assistance in section 4.
- 5.16 To qualify for Home Improvement Assistance the homeowner will need to prove receipt of the qualifying benefits or undertake an assessment, dependent on individual circumstances.

6. Disabled Facilities Grants

- 6.1 Disabled Facilities Grant is a mandatory grant set out in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, as amended by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.
- 6.2 The majority of provisions for this assistance are not set out in the policy as they are laid down in statute. However, schemes that make use of the flexibilities afforded under the Regulatory Reform Order are set out within this section of policy.

Major Adaptations

- 6.3 Assistance to provide major adaptations will be delivered in line with the way the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended) requires.
- 6.4 In deciding whether an applicant qualifies for assistance under a Disabled Facilities Grant, the Council will carry out a means test in the same form as set out in the Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996 (as amended). This will assess the income, outgoings and capital assets of each applicant and their spouse or partner and non-resident owners. The means test will identify whether a customer will be required to make any financial contribution towards the necessary works.
- 6.5 The means test will not apply to cases which are assessed as being 'Priority 1'.
- 6.6 The means test may also not be applied in cases involving 'non-complex' adaptations. This will include, but not be limited to; door widening, stair lifts, level access showers and ramps.
- 6.7 A maximum figure of £5,000 will be used to determine whether the means test should be applied.
- 6.8 As of 22nd May 2008 Local Authorities are, in certain circumstances, able to demand repayment of part of the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) which has been awarded to the customer. This power permits the Local Authority to seek repayment where the DFG exceeds £5,000. The amount that is repayable is limited to £10,000. The grant will be repayable to the Local Authority if the customer disposes of the adapted property (by sale, transfer, assignment or otherwise) within 10 years of the certified grant completion date.
- 6.9 Bolton Council will seek to use this provision in cases only where the Disabled Facilities Grant includes an extension to the applicant's property and will be secured at Land Registry by way of a restriction.

- 6.10 In all cases Bolton Council will carry out a housing options appraisal with customers that will consider the sustainability of their current residence, taking into account their current and future housing needs.
- 6.11 In some cases the Council may decide that Disabled Facilities Grant assistance is not the most sustainable solution and the customer will be asked to consider alternative housing arrangements. This will occur in all cases where the cost of repair exceeds the maximum value of the type of assistance offered.
- 6.12 Where the customer is unable to purchase an alternative property or is not an owner occupier, the council may seek to secure alternative suitable accommodation for the customer through its strategic delivery partners, including its Registered Provider partners.
- 6.13 Where a customer requires an adaptation that costs in excess of the mandatory DFG limit, a Discretionary DFG Top Up Grant may be awarded. The value of the additional works may be applied as a legal charge secured against the property. Such a charge would be registered at Land Registry in the form of a restriction.
- 6.14 The maximum of any Discretionary Top Up grant will be £10,000.
- 6.15 In some cases where the customer has a means tested DFG contribution that would cause undue hardship, a Discretionary Top Up grant can be applied. In these exceptional cases, the decision will be made by the Council and its partners.
- 6.16 Provision of a major adaptation which has a direct impact on a Delayed Transfer of Care will be, on notification, treated as 'Priority 1' and delivered within 30 days. This does not apply to cases which involve an extension to an existing property.
- 6.17 Provision of a major adaptation which will directly prevent an admission to hospital will be, on notification, treated as 'Priority 1' and delivered within 30 days. This does not apply to cases which involve an extension to an existing property.

Care Home Excellence

- 6.18 DFG assistance will be made available to Care Homes to make improvements and adaptations to the living environment to reduce risk of falls and other incidents.
- 6.19 The Social Care Capital Grant, allocated to make capital improvements in care settings, has been incorporated into DFG funding since 2016. DFG funding will be utilised to allow support for this area of work to continue. However, a new approach will be taken in line with DFG principles and to assist in delivery of the Care Home Excellence (CHE) programme.

- 6.20 Care Home Excellence seeks to improve the quality of life for people living in care homes by improving safety, improving access to primary care, developing and supporting the workforce and providing more joined up commissioning between Bolton Council and NHS Bolton CCG. This is an ambitious continuous improvement programme, which forms part of Bolton's Locality Plan.
- 6.21 Funding will be made available to those Care Homes which are identified as having a high risk or incident of resident falls and require adaptations or improvements to create an environment which is accessible, of good quality and that promotes independence and wellbeing.
- 6.22 Provision of this assistance will be targeted using Bolton Council and partner data to identify those Care Homes at most risk. The approaches taken to target assistance will be based on decision of Bolton Council and its partners.
- 6.23 Assistance will only be available to Care Homes which are signed up to the Care Home Excellence programme and which have adopted and implemented the initiatives and policies that form part of this.
- 6.24 This assistance will form part of a wider offer which includes advice, information and guidance on improvements that can be undertaken without the provision of financial assistance.
- 6.25 The care home will be expected to agree to deliver these additional areas for improvement that are identified during the assessment as their responsibility. This could include, but is not limited to; changes to processes and procedures, small building improvements, changes to room layouts and general maintenance.
- 6.26 Assistance is only available for the purpose of financing adaptations, improvements and equipment identified as required during an environmental assessment undertaken by a qualified surveyor employed by the Council or its partners.
- 6.27 The offer of adaptations and improvements will be bespoke to each Care Home dependent on the needs of the individuals living there and the risks identified.
- 6.28 Each Care Home property will be subject to a £30,000 cap of expenditure on improvements, in line with current housing grant limits. If Care Homes wish to make further improvements, they will be responsible for finding the resources to do so.
- 6.29 Assistance will be paid directly to the appointed contractor on satisfactory completion of the works.

6.30 Assistance will be administered through a range of financial mechanisms dependent on the level of works required and the needs of the individual Care Home. At this point a decision will also be made with regard to match funding of the improvements by the Care Home.

6.31 This may take the form of a grant administered as a charge placed on the identified property for a period of ten years.

6.31.1 Repayment of the charge will be sought if the applicant does not comply with the conditions of the grant agreement and further agreements made as part of the Care Home Excellence programme.

6.32 Assistance could also take the form of an interest free loan, on which repayment will be made in line with the repayment schedule set out in the loan agreement between the Care Home and the Council.

Technology Enabled Care

6.33 Assistance will be made available to Registered Housing Provider partners, who form part of the Bolton Community Homes partnership, to provide Technology Enabled Care in new build supported housing settings.

6.34 The Registered Provider must submit a request in writing to the Council, outlining the scope and costs of the Technology Enabled Care proposed to be included in each scheme.

6.35 In each instance, DFG assistance will be provided to the Registered Provider by way of a non-repayable grant.

6.36 A maximum of £50,000 will be made available per new build scheme.

6.37 Decision on the scope and specification of the Technology Enabled Care will be made on a scheme by scheme basis and at the discretion of the Council and its partners.

7. Additional Assistance for Older and Vulnerable People

7.1 The provisions for financial assistance contained within this chapter must be read in conjunction with the General Provisions for Assistance set out in Chapter 4.

7.2 The Home Improvement Agency, Bolton Care and Repair, provides services for vulnerable older and disabled owner occupiers and private rented tenants. It provides support and advice to customers who wish to make repairs and improvements to their home.

7.3 Support and assistance provided to customers includes;

7.3.1 Home Repairs Assistance

7.3.1.1 Home Repairs Assistance is available to owner occupiers and private sector tenants over the age of 60 and receiving a means tested state benefit.

7.3.1.2 The assistance will contribute towards minor home repair works to enable the resident to remain living independently and safely at home, for example; roof repairs, dampness, replacing external windows and doors, upgrading or rewiring of electrics.

7.3.1.3 The maximum level of assistance available through a Home Repairs Assistance Grant is £5,000 in any three year period.

7.3.1.4 Repayment of a proportion of assistance will be required if, within five years of any part of the assistance being provided, the property is sold or transferred or there is non-compliance with the owner occupation or landlord certificate.

7.3.1.5 If assistance must be repaid, the amount that you must pay will be;

- 0 to 12 months after assistance – 100%
- 13 to 24 months after assistance – 80%
- 25 to 36 months after assistance – 60%
- 37 to 48 months after assistance – 40%
- 49 to 60 months after assistance – 20%
- More than 60 months after assistance - nil

7.3.1.6 This amount must be repaid within 28 days.

7.3.2 Handyperson Scheme

7.3.2.1 The Handyperson scheme will be provided to owner occupiers and private sector tenants over the age of 60, who require small repairs and improvements to be carried out. There will be an hourly cost incurred for use of the Handyperson service

8. Energy Efficiency Schemes

- 8.1 Bolton Council will offer schemes to owner occupiers and private tenants to improve the energy efficiency of their home. Assistance will be made in line with the relevant eligibility criteria of the schemes available from both Bolton Council and partner organisations.
- 8.2 The Better Behaving Boiler scheme, is delivered by Bolton Care and Repair, provides heating repairs or replacement heating systems up to a value of £1,500.
- 8.3 Assistance is available to owner occupiers on qualifying benefits, as set out in Appendix 1. In these cases the existing heating system must be old, inefficient or broken or the customer must have no central heating system.
- 8.4 Assistance will also be made available to owner occupiers suffering with a qualifying long term health condition as set out in Appendix 2. In these cases the existing heating system must be old, inefficient or broken or the customer must have no central heating system. The customer must also live in a property which is Council Tax band A – C.
- 8.5 Additional energy efficiency schemes that may be available could include measures such as;
- Cavity wall insulation
 - External Wall Insulation
 - Loft insulation
 - Repairs to existing heating systems
 - Replacement windows and doors
- 8.6 Owner occupiers or tenants will not usually be expected to contribute to or repay the costs of any energy efficiency schemes, unless requested works are over and above the standard eligible expense. However, in cases where a contribution or repayment is required, this will be explained and total costs given at the first available opportunity.

9. Empty Properties

- 9.1 The provisions for financial assistance contained within this chapter must be read in conjunction with the General Provisions for Assistance set out in Chapter 4.
- 9.2 Owners of empty properties, as identified through the Private Sector Stock Condition Database and through work with Housing Standards, will be offered support and advice to assist with bringing their property back into use.
- 9.3 Support and advice will be administered by Housing Standards within their existing engagement and enforcement procedures.
- 9.4 For owners whose properties require improvement and investment to bring back to a habitable condition, financial assistance may be offered.
- 9.5 Decisions on which empty properties will benefit from any assistance outlined in this section will be taken by the Council and its partners.
- 9.6 In all cases, an assessment will be undertaken which will consider visual impact, complaints, length of time empty, ongoing case work and other risk factors to be applied at the discretion of the Council.

Owner-led scheme

- 9.7 Assistance will be made available to owners of long term empty properties to bring the property back to a habitable condition.
- 9.8 Works required to bring the property back into a habitable condition will be determined by a qualified surveyor employed on behalf of the Council.
- 9.9 The maximum value of works available for assistance is £20,000.
- 9.10 Assistance will be made available by means of a loan repayable to the Council. Detail and terms of this loan are available in Schedule 1 of the Loan Agreement.
- 9.11 On completion of the identified works, the property must become occupied either by the owner or their tenant.
- 9.12 If the property owner fails to comply with any element of the Loan Agreement, including terms relating to ongoing occupation, the Council will seek reimbursement of the full loan amount.

Improvements to external appearance

9.13 Assistance will be made available to owners of empty properties which are in an external state of disrepair to improve the visual appearance.

9.14 If assistance is not utilised by agreement with the owner, works may be carried out in default to make improvements to the property using Section 215 of the Town and Country Planning Act 1990.

9.15 An amount of £20,000 annually is available to facilitate this form of assistance. The value of works available to each individual property will be determined on a case by case basis.

9.16 In these cases a charge will be placed on the identified property for a period of ten years, in line with the General Provisions for Assistance outlined in Section 4. This charge is registered at the Land Registry.

Purchase and repair

9.17 Assistance will be made available to Registered Housing Provider partners, who form part of the Bolton Community Homes partnership, to bring long term empty properties back into use.

9.18 This assistance will only be available in cases where there is a viable funding model and the property in question has been assessed by Council officers as suitable for such investment.

9.19 The Registered Provider will purchase the property at a price agreed with the owner. Assistance will then be made available to make necessary improvements to the property to bring it into a habitable condition.

9.20 The scope of improvements will be agreed by the Registered Provider and the Council.

9.21 Assistance will be offered as a grant up to a limit of £10k per property.

10. Environmental Schemes and Facelift Schemes

- 10.1 Environmental Schemes and Facelift Schemes deal with visual impact or safety improvements to properties within a designated area.
- 10.2 An example of an environmental scheme would be the rebuilding of boundary walls of properties.
- 10.3 An example of a facelift scheme would be the replacement of gutters, windows, external doors and the rebuilding of boundary walls.
- 10.4 Environmental and Facelift Schemes are available to owner occupiers and private landlords in blocks which have been agreed to benefit from such investment.
- 10.5 Private landlords will be required to join Bolton's Accreditation Scheme as a condition of making an application for Environmental or Facelift works, and no application will be approved until this has happened.
- 10.6 Decisions on which blocks may benefit will be taken by Bolton Council on completion of an assessment with regard to the condition of properties, visual impact of properties and potential need for housing market stabilisation.
- 10.7 Schedules of works for such schemes will be determined by Bolton Council on a block by block basis taking account of resident consultation, property condition and local environmental issues.
- 10.8 No means test will be applied to an owner of a property within an Environmental or Facelift Scheme.
- 10.9 Owners or occupiers will not usually be expected to make a contribution to the costs of Environmental or Facelift Schemes. However, where this is the case, this will be explained at the scheme design stage and the total cost of contribution will be divided appropriately between all the properties on the scheme.

11. Relocation Assistance

- 11.1 Bolton Council will consider giving assistance for relocation to a disabled person whose existing property is unsuitable for improvement or adaptation.
- 11.2 The new property must be inspected by Bolton Council prior to the grant being awarded and also by an occupational therapist to assess suitability of the property against the customer's needs.
- 11.3 Costs that will be covered through Relocation Assistance include;
- Estate agent fees
 - Solicitors fees
 - Stamp duty
 - Difference in purchase price (up to a maximum of £10,000)
- 11.4 The maximum grant amount allowed for combined Relocation Assistance and Disabled Facilities Grant is £30,000.

12. Complaints

- 12.1 Bolton Council operates a Corporate Complaints Procedure that exists for receiving and processing complaints from members of the public in respect of all council services.
- 12.2 Complaints to the Council should be made within a reasonable time frame of the event which caused the complaint to occur. In most cases 12 months is regarded as the appropriate limitation period.
- 12.3 All written complaints will be acknowledged within five working days (24 hours for an email), a full response will be provided within 14 calendar days but if the Council is unable to reply within this time, the customer will be contacted with the reason why and timescales in which to expect a full response.
- 12.4 If customers are not satisfied with the response, there is opportunity to appeal in writing within 28 calendar days to the Chief Executive. The complaint will be reviewed by the Departmental Monitoring Officer in consultation with the Departmental Director.
- 12.5 Any complaints about the administration of this policy will be dealt with through this Corporate Procedure, in line with the provisions set out therein.

APPENDIX 1.

Eligible benefits for Better Behaving Boiler Scheme

Customers over 60

- Guaranteed and saving pension credit
- Council Tax benefit
- Income based JSA
- Income support

Customers responsible for a child under 16: or MAT B1

- Income support
- Council Tax benefit
- Income based JSA
- Contribution based JSA
- Pension credit

All other customers

- Income related ESA
- Contribution related ESA
- Income based JSA
- Contribution based JSA
- Working Tax Credit income less than £16,190
- Child Tax Credit income less than £16,190
- Council Tax benefit
- War disablement pension (must include mobility support or constant attendance)
- Attendance allowance
- Disability living allowance

APPENDIX 2.

Qualifying long term health conditions for Better Behaving Boiler Scheme

Respiratory diseases – e.g;

- Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease
- Emphysema
- Asthma
- Bronchitis
- Cystic Fibrosis

Cardiovascular diseases – e.g;

- Angina
- Hypertension
- Myocardial Infarction (heart attack)
- Cerebral Vascular Accident (stroke)

Musculoskeletal diseases – e.g;

- Arthritis
- Back pain (long term, severe)
- Damaged joints

Mental Health issues

This is not an exhaustive list of conditions affected by living in a cold home. However, whether a patient's condition may be exacerbated by the cold, making them eligible for the scheme, is ultimately at the GP or Pharmacist's discretion.