

Birmingham

Staying Independent at

Home

Policy



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Birmingham City Council

Staying Independent at Home Policy

1. Introduction

- 1.1 This document is the Council's policy on the provision of support and assistance that can be provided to enable citizens to staying independent within their own homes, this includes support under the:
- The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
 - Care Act 2014
 - Regulatory Reform Order 2002
- 1.2 It is widely acknowledged that home is best for most citizens, their families and carers, it is where they are happiest and thrive with the right support. We know that poor quality housing is thought to cost the NHS an estimated 1.4 billion pounds per year, over half of which is attributed to poor housing among older adults.
- 1.3 As housing is a key determinant of health this policy will set out how Birmingham City Council will reduce the health inequality brought about by poor living standards, by providing support in form of grants, loans or services to improve housing conditions. Ensuring that homes are decent, accessible, safe and secure is not only important for the health and wellbeing of the citizen, but it is also vital for the sustainability of communities. This policy sets out the Council's response to this and the range of assistance available to assist citizens in better maintaining their home.
- 1.5 The policy sets out both the assistance that the Council has a duty to provide (mandatory) and assistance that will be provided through the use of discretionary powers. The amount of discretionary assistance to be given each year will be determined by the Council and will be dependent upon the level of resources available.

2. Legal Context

- 2.1 The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 provides for Disabled Facilities Grants, of up to £30,000. These are grants to help with the cost of adapting a property to meet the needs of a disabled occupant.
- 2.2 The Care Act 2014 provides that, in certain circumstances, the Council must meet the costs of minor works or providing equipment, costing up to £1,000.
- 2.3 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 ('the Order') provides the Council with a power to give assistance to enable individuals to acquire living accommodation, or to adapt, improve or repair their living accommodation. This is the basis for the "discretionary assistance" detailed in Section 5 of this policy.

- 2.4 The Better Care Policy Framework 2021-22¹ issued by the Department of Health & Social Care, Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government and Department for Levelling Up, Housing & Communities sets out plans to continue to help prevent the need for long-term services and to keep people out of hospital and independent in their own homes for as long as possible.
- 2.5 The Housing Act 2004; Local Authorities have a duty to keep housing conditions under review, including having regard to particular hazards that might be dangerous or prejudicial to health for certain vulnerable groups.

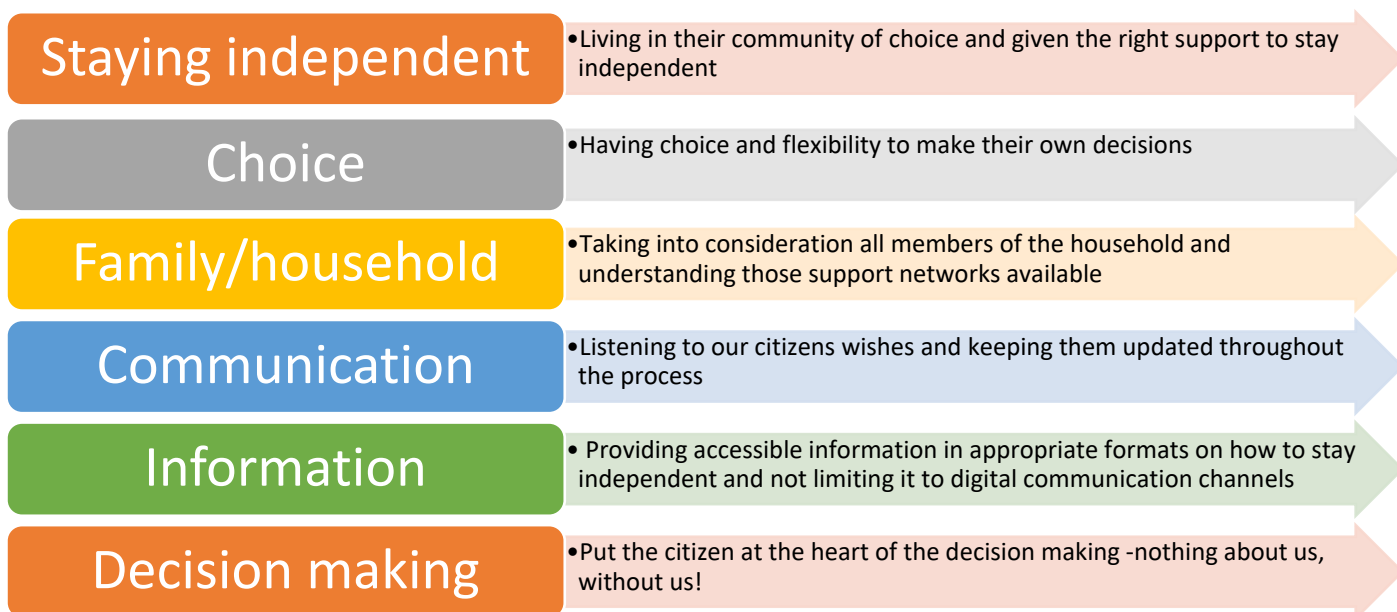
3. Rationale for Assistance

- 3.1 Improving housing conditions across the city will lead to improvements in the health and wellbeing of our citizens and additionally will have a positive impact on local neighbourhoods, particularly for those citizens who are vulnerable and may not be able to carry out necessary repairs, or for those who cannot access their homes due to disability.
- 3.2 As described in the legal context above, the Council has statutory duties in respect of the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants and minor works and/or providing equipment to discharge Care Act obligations.
- 3.3 The funding available to be provided for discretionary assistance, under the Order, is not unlimited. The Council must focus the provision of assistance where it can have the most positive benefit for citizens, and the City. The Council has identified three priority areas for the deployment of assistance and use of powers, under the Order:
- Supporting disabled citizens to secure necessary adaptations which cost more than the maximum allowed under the Disabled Facilities Grant;
 - Securing prompt discharge from hospital of citizens who might, due to accommodation difficulties, otherwise remain in hospital longer than necessary; and
 - Addressing accommodation difficulties which, if not resolved, might lead to an avoidable admission to hospital, or residential care or which impact upon the ability of a citizen to live safely and independently at home

4. What our citizens told us

- 4.1 Through engagement with our citizens on how we can help them to live independently at home, the following six themes emerged

¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/part-rel/transformation-fund/better-care-fund/>



5. Forms of Discretionary Assistance

5.1 Supporting disabled citizens to secure necessary adaptations which cost more than the maximum allowed under the Disabled Facilities Grant.

5.1.1 Disabled Facilities Grants play an important role in supporting disabled citizens to secure necessary adaptations for their homes. However, there is a statutory maximum on the sum payable. Currently, the maximum is £30,000. It is sometimes the case that necessary adaptations cost more than the statutory limit.

5.1.2 The power to provide discretionary assistance over the statutory maximum value is, therefore, an important mechanism to avoid disabled citizens going without necessary adaptations when this has been assessed and agreed as being the best course of action.

5.1.3 For those citizens assessed as eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant, the Council will consider applications to top-up the Disabled Facilities Grant above the statutory maximum value, to secure the adaptations identified as necessary during the Disabled Facilities Grant application process.

5.2 Securing prompt discharge from hospital of citizens who might, due to accommodation difficulties, otherwise remain in hospital longer than necessary – Discharge Assistance

5.2.1 Delayed discharge of citizens from hospitals and short-term care beds has significant adverse consequences. These citizens often experience reduced positive outcomes. Delays also impact on the wider health and social care system. Hospital and short-term care beds, needed for other citizens, are occupied unnecessarily, which is wasteful, and impacts care pathways for many other citizens.

5.2.2 Where citizens will require care after discharge from hospital, problems with accommodation can frequently be a reason for delayed discharge from hospital. The citizen's accommodation might not be a suitable environment for the provision of the care which the person now requires. Therefore, providing assistance to support prompt discharge of citizens, who are in need of care, is an area where the Council will provide assistance under this Policy.

5.2.3 The Council will consider providing assistance under the Order to citizens who:

- Are in hospital or a short-term care bed (Pathway 2 Bed);
- Have (or appear, to the Council, to have) needs for care at home; and
- Are likely to be unable to receive the care they require at home, due to the condition of their home, such that their discharge from hospital may be delayed.

5.2.4 Forms of assistance, can include but not limited to:

- Heating system repairs/replacement
- Access to facilities including gas, electric and water
- Addressing hoarding and deep cleans
- Stair lifts
- Level access showers
- Ramps
- Ceiling track hoists
- Minor hazard repairs
- Technology Enabled Care

5.3 Addressing accommodation difficulties which, if not resolved, might lead to an avoidable admission to hospital, or residential care or which impact upon the ability of a citizen to live safely and independently at home – Safe and Independent Assistance

5.3.1 Problems with accommodation can inhibit the provision of effective care at home, meaning that individuals are more likely to face a crisis situation, requiring admission to hospital or admission to residential care. Both scenarios are likely to involve reduced positive outcomes for the individuals, and place undue pressures on the health and social care system across the City. Therefore, providing assistance to address barriers to care provision in the home is an area where the Council will provide assistance under the Order.

5.3.2 The Council will consider providing assistance under the Order to citizens who:

- Have (or appear, to the Council, to have) needs for care at home; and
- Are likely to be unable to receive the care they require at home, due to the condition of their home. And/or
- Would benefit from assistance related to their living environment that enables them to meet one of the Care Act outcomes – most likely. And/or
- Being able to make use of the home safely. And/or
- Maintaining a habitable home environment.

5.3.3 Forms of assistance, can include but not limited to:

- Heating system repairs/replacement
- Access to facilities including gas, electric and water
- Addressing hoarding and deep cleans

- Minor hazard repairs
- Stair lifts
- Level access showers
- Ramps
- Ceiling track hoists
- Technology Enabled Care

6. Extent of Assistance

- 6.1 The Council will consider the extent of funding required in each case. Decisions as to the funding to be offered, under the Order, will be taken having regard to factors including: the extent to which the proposed works further the aims identified in this Policy; the likely effectiveness of the proposed works; and the availability of other options to address the presenting problem (e.g. other sources of funding, or other steps the individual could take). The Council will also have to have regard to the need to support other citizens, and the extent of the Council's resources to provide assistance under the Order.
- 6.2 Support under the Order for the Disabled Facilities Grant top-up in each case will be uncapped subject to the relevant Occupational Therapy assessment for the required necessary adaptations.
- 6.3 Support under the Order for Discharge Assistance and Safe and Independent Assistance; the Council expects that in each case, it will provide not more than £10,000 in funding. In very many cases, the necessary assistance under this Policy, will probably cost much less. In each case, the value of the assistance provided will be that which the Council considers is reasonably required to meet the objectives of this Policy, having regard to the circumstances of the particular citizen.

7. Cases which fall outside of the policy

- 7.1 When dealing with requests we will endeavour to apply conditions of assistance flexibly and sensitively in order to support those in need of help.
- 7.2 Those cases which fall outside this policy but have been assessed as exceptional circumstances may be submitted to Birmingham City Council for consideration with formal approval required from the Corporate Director – Adult Social Care, or their nominated representatives.

8. Appeals or Review

- 8.1 The Council will set out in writing for eligible households the terms and conditions under which the assistance will be given. Where citizens are dissatisfied with a decision made by the Council relating to assistance provided under this policy, they should in the first instance submit their concerns via email to CSAdultsSocialCare@birmingham.gov.uk or in writing to the following address:

OT – DFG
 PO Box 16606
 Birmingham
 B2 2FD

- 8.2 Where a citizen continues to be dissatisfied, they may submit a formal complaint to the Council. Details of the Council's Complaints Policy and how to make a complaint are provided on the Council's website².

9. Resources

- 9.1 Birmingham City Council reserves the right to use its discretion under this policy to pay for staff and alternative requirements to support the delivery of this policy.

10. Monitoring and Review of the Policy

- 10.1 Feedback from the citizen will be sought following completion of work and subject to the type of assistance provided if appropriate follow-up assessment will take place to ensure the works meet the needs of the citizen.
- 10.2 The contents of the policy will also be reviewed from time to time to ensure the assistance provided remains relevant and keeps abreast of any national legislative changes or best practice.
- 10.3 A full review of the policy should be undertaken no longer than one year following adoption.

²

https://www.birmingham.gov.uk/info/20018/adult_social_care/116/statutory_adults_social_care_complaints_comments_and_complaints

Appendix 1 – Summary of Assistance

Assistance	Eligibility
Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)	Based on an assessment (compliant with the Housing and Regeneration Act 1996) by the Adult Social Care Occupational Therapy Team
Disabled Facilities Top-Up Grant	Restricted to those eligible for a DFG as above, Based on an assessment by the Adult Social Care Occupational Therapy Team
Minor Works – works or equipment costing less than £1000	Based on an assessment of social care needs compliant with the Care Act 2014
Discharge Assistance	<p>The Council will consider providing assistance under to citizens who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are in hospital; • Have (or appear, to the Council, to have) needs for care at home; and • Are likely to be unable to receive the care they require at home, due to the condition of their home, such that their discharge from hospital may be delayed.
Independent and Safe Assistance	<p>The Council will consider providing assistance to citizens who:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have (or appear, to the Council, to have) needs for care at home; and • Are likely to be unable to receive the care they require at home, due to the condition of their home. And/or • Would benefit from assistance related to their living environment that enables them to meet one of the Care Act outcomes – most likely: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being able to make use of the home safely • Maintaining a habitable home environment

Appendix 2

Disabled Facilities Grant

1. What are Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)?

- 1.1 The Disabled Facilities Grant is a means-tested grant to install adaptations such as showers, stairlifts, ramps or other changes to the home that enable disabled children, disabled adults and older adults to live safely, independently and with dignity in their community.

A citizen is deemed disabled if:

- Their sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired
- They have a mental disorder or impairment of any kind
- They are physically substantially disabled by illness, injury, impairment present since birth, or otherwise.

It can be a crucial step to avoid the need to move into a care facility and can be key to enabling citizens to be discharged from hospital without delay.

All applications for DFG must meet the relevant requirements as set out within the legislation. This means that works being requested must be deemed as being 'necessary and appropriate' and 'reasonable and practicable'.

2. Who is eligible for the Disabled Facilities Grant?

- 2.1 Disabled or elderly citizens who live in Birmingham may be entitled to apply for this grant.
- 2.2 Homeowners who receive a grant would be expected to be likely to remain in their home for at least 10 years following the work being carried out. In this instance a limited land registry charge is made against the property to recoup some of the costs of work costing between £5,000-£10,000 if the property is sold before this time.

3. Works eligible for DFG assistance

3.1 General

- 3.1.1 The adaptation works eligible for assistance will be those listed under section 23 (1) of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, as follows.

3.2 Access to the dwelling

- 3.2.1 Works eligible for assistance may include:

- Ramped access to main entrance door for wheelchair use; widened or shallower steps to main entrance door or a step lift;
- Widened entrance door for wheelchair use;
- Resurfaced or re-graded path to entrance door;
- Alterations to secondary entrance door/patio window to provide access to rear garden/yard where access cannot easily be gained via the adapted main entrance and drive/side path;
- Structural alterations required to allow installation of stair lift through floor lift or step lift equipment.

3.3 Making the Dwelling Safe

3.3.1 Works eligible for assistance may include:

- Works to provide a means of escape from fire (usually to flats).
- Provision of guards to prevent persons with behavioural problems harming themselves.
- Specialised glazing or shades to windows to protect occupants with a medical condition which make them sensitive to sunlight.
- Repairing defective stairs or floors etc which are hazardous.

3.4 Access to Principal Family Room

3.4.1 Works eligible for assistance may include:

- Widened doorway for wheelchair access.
- Provision and installation of stair lift/through-floor lift equipment and structural alterations required to allow installation, if the principal living room is on an upper floor.
- Widened doorway in entrance hall to access principal family room for wheelchair use.

3.5 Access to Sleeping Room

3.5.1 Works eligible for assistance may include:

- Provision and installation of stair lift/through-floor lift equipment and structural alterations required to allow the installation, where access is required to a bedroom or room suitable for sleeping which is above ground floor level.
- Conversion of a ground floor room into a bedroom, widened doorway for wheelchair access to sleeping room.
- Construction of bedroom extension (see notes on extensions).
- Strengthened ceiling and/or preparation works for ceiling track hoist, where hoist is to be provided by Lift provider.

3.6 Access to Water Closet (WC)

3.6.1 Works eligible for assistance may include:

- Provision and installation of stair lift/through-floor lift equipment and structural alterations required to allow the installation, where access is required to a WC above ground floor level;
- Strengthened ceiling and/or preparation works for ceiling track hoist, where hoist is to be provided by Lift provider.
- Repositioning WC to facilitate access by wheelchair user.
- Raised/lowered WC pan.
- Provision of grab rails.
- Provision of ground floor WC where upper floor cannot be accessed.
- Widened doorway for wheelchair access.

3.7 Access to Bathing Facilities

3.7.1 Works which may be eligible for assistance include:

- Provision and installation of stair lift/through-floor lift equipment and structural alterations required to allow the installation, where access is required to an existing bathroom above ground floor level.
- Provision of shower (thermostatically controlled) over a bath, including necessary curtain, tiles and grab rail.
- Replacement of bath with shower facility.
- Replacement of shower with a bath.
- Provision of bath and shower where there are 2 or more disabled occupants with differing needs.
- Provision of bathroom extension (see notes on extensions).
- Relocation of bath/shower to facilitate use by wheelchair user.
- Strengthened ceiling and/or preparation works for ceiling track hoist, where hoist is to be provided by Lift provider.
- Widened doorway for wheelchair access.
- Provision of fixed seat/grab rails.
- Non-slip/sloping floor to create shower facility.

3.8 Access to Wash Basin

3.8.1 A wash-hand basin will normally be provided in the same room as the WC.

Works to provide access may include:

- Relocation of wash-hand basin to facilitate use by wheelchair user.
- Replacement of wash-hand basin with more suitable type e.g. replace vanity unit with wall fixed wash-hand basin.
- Replacement of taps with lever taps in association with above.

3.9 Access to Kitchen Facilities

3.9.1 The extent of adaptation work in a kitchen should be related to the extent of cooking and food preparation normally undertaken by the disabled person.

3.9.2 Works which may be eligible for assistance include:

- Rearrangement of kitchen fittings/appliances to facilitate their use.
- Enlargement of the kitchen if it is too small to allow its safe use by wheelchair user.
- Adapted work-top/storage unit for wheelchair user.
- Adapted doorway for wheelchair user.
- Widened doorway for wheelchair user.

3.10 Access to Power, Light and Heat

3.10.1 Works which may be eligible for assistance include:

- Relocating power points to make them accessible.
- Adaptation of heating/lighting controls to make them accessible.

- Replacement of solid fuel fire with other heating appliance in living/sleeping rooms normally used by a disabled occupant.
- Improvement of inadequate heating in living/sleeping rooms normally used by disabled occupant.
- Provision of central heating.

3.11 Access to Permit Care of Other Persons

3.11.1 Where the disabled occupant cares for other persons e.g. spouse, young children or elderly relatives who are normally resident in the dwelling, works may be provided to other rooms in the dwelling to allow the client access to care for those persons, including:

- Provision and installation of stair lift/through-floor lift equipment and structural alterations required to allow the installation, where the client lives on the ground floor but needs access to bedrooms.
- Widened doorways to bedrooms of those being cared for by client, wheelchair user.

3.12 Access to the Garden

3.12.1 In deciding the extent of providing access to the rear garden, the following will be considered.

- Grant assistance will not be given where there is already access to the garden but grant assistance may be given to improve an existing access to make it safe for the client to use. It does not include extending an existing access e.g. creating a side access so a client can also go around the side of a house.
- Generally, the most modest solution for providing access to both the house and the garden will be considered and this can mean that one access may be sufficient to access both the house and the garden.
- Where homes have communal gardens, e.g. blocks of flats served by a single access, grants will not normally be provided for an individual access to the garden unless it can be demonstrated that because of the clients condition the travel distance to the garden would be excessive and unreasonable.

4. How do I access the DFG Grant?

There are a few simple steps required for you to start the application process to the access the grant. The steps are (or refer to the flowchart on page 15):

Step 1 - Contact or email

The first step in accessing the grant is to call or email and request an OT assessment as you think you may require some adaptations; anyone can make this call as long as they have your consent to do so. During the call you will asked a range of questions to help us decide the best support we can offer you.

Step 2 - Occupational Therapy (OT) Assessment

In order to make sure that we can meet your needs we need to work with you to understand what these are. An OT will discuss with you your concerns/issues and look at the most cost-effective solution is to meet those assessed needs. This may mean we can meet your needs in other ways, should all options have been considered as not suitable, then a recommendation for an adaptation is required.

Step 3 - Priority Needs Assessment (PNA)

If it has been deemed that the adaptations are necessary, a Priority Needs Assessment is then completed. The PNA:

- Confirms the necessary and appropriate adaptations
- Determines the relevant priority

Prioritisation Panel Process

For citizens where it is proposed that adaptations are necessary and appropriate the Occupational Therapy Service will present the case to the Prioritisation Panel for approval.

The Prioritisation Panel is made up of Occupational Therapist Senior Practitioners.

If approved a Priority Needs Assessment is completed and includes:

- What the need for the citizen is
- What alternatives have been considered
- The recommendation (proposed solution)
- Level of priority

Each recommendation will be assigned a level of priority:

Level 2	you have a medium level of priority
Level 3	you have a high level of priority

Birmingham City Council would aim for all recommendations to be completed within the timescales set out in the legislation. The priority levels detailed above will be used in order to complete and deliver the recommendations with priority given to completing Level 3.

If a citizen's health deteriorates from the initial assessment there will be the opportunity for their case to be reprioritised, subject to advice and information from Health or Social Care.

Step 4 - Application for DFG funding

The PNA is submitted for consideration for a mandatory grant, you will be contacted to progress your application, including a means test if applicable.

As part of the process this could include a survey to confirm that your property is suitable for the proposed works (reasonable and practicable), if your property is deemed as not suitable, this will be discussed with you.

If a property doesn't meet the Housing Health and Safety Rating System Standard (free from Category 1 hazards), Birmingham City Council reserves the right to use its discretion to undertake required works to resolve identified hazards in order to enable the adaptations to proceed.

Step 5 - Grant decision

A decision on your application for a DFG grant is then made, this considers:

- Proposed adaptation meets the needs identified
- If the proposed recommendations exceed the DFG maximum grant allocation (if funding does exceed the Council may use its discretion based on the individuals assessed need)
- If a contribution is required

Step 6 - Decision notification

You will be notified of the outcome of the grant application:

- Application approved - if approval is given your contractor will contact you to arrange a start date for works.
- Application declined - Should the works required not be feasible you will be contacted to discuss alternative options but the initial request for funding would be declined.

Step 7 - Works Completed

5. Timescales

- 5.1 By law Birmingham City Council must consider applications for DFG and make determinations on those applications within 6 months of receipt. The Council considers that an application for a DFG has been submitted at the point of a satisfactorily completed application form, along with quotations for the work, landlord certificates and any relevant permissions that are required. Where a grant is to be means tested, evidence of financial income and savings and signed certificates of future occupation. Birmingham City Council shall provide support to applicants to assist them with this process.
- 5.2 Whilst applications must be determined within 6 months of receipt. Once an application for a DFG is approved the Council must ensure that the DFG is completed within 12 months.

6. Means Tested Contributions

- 6.1 During the DFG application process a test of resources may be undertaken to determine whether a citizen has the means to make a financial contribution towards the cost of works undertaken.

7. Repayment of Disabled Facilities Grant

- 7.1 Where the cost of an extension exceeds £10,000 Birmingham City Council will apply a land charge to the homeowner's property in line with current valuations for a maximum of 10 year.

- 7.2 Homeowners who have previously had DFG funded adaptations carried out in their property who subsequently move to another home within the Birmingham City Council boundary and require further grant aid to install similar adaptations, these works will be subject to land charge if the cost exceeds £5,000.
- 7.3 In those cases that charges have been levied, Birmingham City Council must be satisfied that it is reasonable for this repayment to be made and will consider this in line with current DFG legislation.

8. Delivery of Adaptations

- 8.1 Birmingham City Council has an agreed list of contractors to undertake adaptation works.
- 8.2 Homeowners not wishing to use Birmingham City Council's framework or use an alternative contractor, can still apply for a DFG should they choose to. In these circumstances the applicant shall be solely responsible for making the application, sourcing contractors and overseeing any works undertaken. Works undertaken in these circumstances must be completed to the satisfaction of Birmingham City Council prior to the release of any grant funding.

