

Independent Living Assistance Policy Review 2025 Briefing

Community Connections - Major Adaptations



Introduction

Demand for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) remains consistently high. With an ageing population and a growing number of residents living with multiple long-term health conditions, it is imperative that Plymouth City Council maintains a relevant and up-to-date Independent Living Assistance Policy (ILAP). This ensures we are equipped to meet current and future needs, enabling residents to live safely, independently, and with dignity in their own homes.

The ILAP has been reviewed to ensure it remains legally compliant, relevant to residents' needs, operationally effective, financially sustainable, strategically aligned, and trusted by stakeholders.

Legal and Regulatory Compliance

Ensures alignment with the latest legislation, including the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Guidance 2022 and other statutory changes. Maintains legal defensibility and reduces the risk of challenges.

Relevance to Resident Need

Reflects the changing needs of residents, including demographic shifts and evolving expectations around accessibility and independence. Supports a person-centred approach to service delivery.

Operational Effectiveness

Improves clarity and consistency in decision-making by incorporating lessons learned and feedback from professionals. Enhances service delivery and reduces delays or disputes.

Financial Sustainability

Ensures efficient use of public funds by reviewing funding mechanisms and cost recovery processes. Supports better coordination with internal and external funding sources.

Strategic Alignment

Aligns the policy with broader council priorities such as the Plan for Homes 4 and the Armed Forces Covenant. Strengthens the council's ability to deliver on housing and wellbeing objectives.

Stakeholder Confidence

Demonstrates transparency and responsiveness to residents, partners, and professionals. Builds trust and reinforces the council's commitment to high standards of support.

Context

The review reflects:

The latest Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Guidance (2022)

- Legislative changes since the last policy review
- Feedback from resident, client and professional consultation
- Evolving best practice in supporting independent living

Consultation

As part of the Policy review, public and professional consultation has been conducted receiving strong and constructive engagement, shaping local policy. Respondents expressed clear support for proposed amendments to the Independent Living Assistance (ILA) Policy, including the introduction of low-interest loans, continued availability of discretionary Moving On Grants, and access to a marketplace for privately funded works. Innovative delivery methods, such as modular construction, ramps, and wall panelling, were welcomed, alongside practical adjustments like omitting hardstanding's, where alternative access solutions (e.g. platform lifts or ramps) are viable. The consultation also revealed enthusiastic backing for the council's commitment to achieving Net Zero and for encouraging contractors to employ apprentices, reflecting a shared vision for sustainable development and inclusive growth.

Key Policy Updates

General Updates

Policy aligned with the 2022 DFG Guidance, incorporating updated legal duties and best practice for local delivery.

Legislative references updated to reflect recent changes in housing, social care, and equality law.

Clause 2.5.4 – Landlord Consent

Clarification added regarding the progression of DFG-funded works where landlord consent

Clause 3.1.6 – DFG Maximum for Under-18s

Discretionary assistance will be considered where appropriate, with funding explored from adult/children's services, charitable sources, and client contributions.

Sections 3.2, 3.3 & 3.6 – Discretionary Assistance

Reframed discretionary clauses to focus on maximum funding limits rather than specific types of work.

Updates reflect actual usage patterns and feedback from professionals.

Clause 3.2.1.1 – Means Testing for Children

Clarification that means testing applies to parents/guardians when adaptations are for a child. Financial assessments will determine contributions above the mandatory grant.

Clause 3.7 – 'Nil Grant' Applications

Increase in the administration fee to 2.5% to cover PCC's costs for processing applications where no grant is awarded.

Clause 20.0 – Strategic Alignment

New references added to PCC's Plan for Homes 4 and the Armed Forces Covenant, reinforcing our commitment to inclusive housing support.