

INFORMATION SHEET

SUMMARY OF PRIVATE SECTOR HOUSING RENEWAL FUND POLICY FOR GRANTS AND LOANS

INTRODUCTION

The Council's revised policy is effective from the 1st July 2008 and provides a range of grants and loans to owners and landlords of private housing who wish to undertake essential works of improvement or repair. Some grants are means tested and restricted to those on low income.

Demand for grants is usually high and we generally deal with cases in chronological order. In addition, if you make an enquiry for a Renovation Grant you will initially be contacted by our Home Improvement Agency who will discuss your needs and explain the options available to you. The following is a summary of the current policy:

Home Renovation Grant. This grant provides assistance for owner occupiers towards the cost of bringing their property up to the Decent Homes standard. This standard is briefly:

- Works to remove health and safety hazards under the Government's new Fitness Rating system.
- Works to put the property in reasonable repair.
- Works to ensure that the property has reasonably modern kitchen and bathroom facilities.
- Works to provide an efficient heating system and effective insulation.

In the case of heating or energy conservation works, where an owner qualifies, we will arrange for the funding to come through our partner (Creative Environmental Networks) in the form of a 'Coldbuster' grant.

Owners will be eligible if they are aged 70 and over or if they or a member of their household is disabled. There is also a financial means test and the grants are restricted to those who receive certain means tested benefits or who are on a low income. The maximum grant will be £6,600. Other conditions will include:

- (i) The applicant must have owned and lived at the property for at least 5 years and continue to own it and live there for 15 years after work has been completed, or repay the grant; and
- (ii) once the £6,600 grant has been paid, the property will not be eligible for another similar grant for a period of 10 years; and
- (iii) where the estimated cost of works exceed £6,600, owners will be required to raise the balance of money before any grant is paid.
- (iv) all works required to bring the property up to the Decent Homes standard must be undertaken unless the applicant is aged 75 and over.

Loans Assistance. The Council will assist owners who need to borrow the balance of monies through the 'Houseproud' equity release scheme and through direct Council loans. Houseproud equity release loans will be available to owners aged 60 and over **or** where there is a disabled member of the household. The Council will pay up to £600 towards the legal, valuation and arrangement fees where an applicant proceeds to raise money in this way. The minimum 'Houseproud' loan will be £3,000. There will be 3 repayment options under 'Houseproud':

- (a) Capital and interest repayment.
- (b) Interest only repayment.
- (c) Interest and capital roll-up (available only to those aged 75 and over).

For owners aged 59 and under, the Council will, subject to meeting the eligibility criteria, provide a loan with 3 repayment options as follows:

- (a) Interest only with capital repaid on eventual sale (maximum £15,000).
- (b) Deferred interest for a period of 5 years with the interest rolling-up and then the loan being paid as interest only with capital repayment on eventual sale (Maximum £10,000).
- (c) Indefinite interest roll-up with capital repayment on eventual sale (Maximum £10,000).

In each case, applicants will be offered the opportunity to obtain independent financial advice. The individual circumstances of applicants will also be considered in each case. It should be noted that, for applicants in receipt of specified means tested benefits, the Department of Work and Pensions will often undertake to pay the interest charges on loans which were obtained in order to fund certain works to the dwelling.

Empty Property Grant. This Grant will be available to owners of empty properties for the refurbishment and occupation of the dwelling. The standard will again be Decent Homes. Generally, the grant is restricted to owners of properties which have been empty for at least 6 months. This grant is flexible and ranges from £15,000 for 3 year nomination rights for a tenant on the Housing Waiting List, to £25,000 for a 5 year term. The grant will be paid at 100% of eligible costs, eg, if works cost £20,000, then a 3 year letting grant will provide £15,000. Funding is time limited because it is provided by Central Government until March 2009 and grants must be approved by that deadline.

Landlords' Grant. This Grant will be available in privately rented dwellings where the landlord is accredited under the London Landlord Accreditation Scheme. Works will again be to the Decent Homes standard and can also include fire protection. The maximum Grant will be £5,000 and the property must continue to be let for a minimum of 5 years after works are completed. Details of the LLAS scheme can be found on www.londonlandlords.org.uk or by calling 020 7974 1970. At the moment, no new enquiries are being taken for this grant because of a large number of cases already submitted. It is hoped to re-open enquiries towards the end of 2008/09.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). There are two forms of this grant both of which are means tested. The first is mandatory, where a person has a disability and requires adaptations to their home which falls within certain criteria. This could include, eg, a stairlift or a level-access shower. The limit for this grant is £30,000. There is also a discretionary grant, limited to £10,000, which is available for items recommended by Adult Social Services Occupational Therapists which are not available under a mandatory DFG. The exception to this is where the adaptation is for a disabled child in which case the extra £10,000 may be used for mandatory items and is not means tested. A repayment condition now applies to Mandatory DFGs which exceed £5,000 and provides for a maximum of £10,000 in grant aid to be repaid in the event of the dwelling being sold within 10 years of works being completed. The repayment terms for the discretionary grant are the same as for Home Renovation Grants. If you think you may qualify for these grants, then you need to contact the Council's Occupational Therapy Service on 020 8871 6270.

Coldbuster grant

This grant, whilst ultimately approved by the Council, is not processed directly by us but through our partner organisation, Creative Environmental Networks (CEN) who also arrange the contractors. The grant is intended for heating and energy efficiency improvements and applicants may be either private tenants or owner/occupiers. The works may also extend to replacing some windows, electrical rewiring and ventilation. Applicants must be in receipt of one of the following benefits:

Income Support
Income based jobseeker's allowance
Council tax benefit
Housing benefit
Guaranteed pension credits
Working families tax credit (incomes less than £15,050)
Child Tax credit (incomes less than £15,050)
Disability Living Allowance
Attendance Allowance

Landlords may also apply on behalf of their tenant if that tenant meets the above criteria. The maximum grant is £6,000 and there is no requirement to repay the grant on sale or at the end of the tenancy. Currently, the grant is only available until the end of March 2009 because funding has been obtained from Government for a limited period.

HOW TO APPLY

If you think that you may be eligible for one of the above grants, please contact our staff on 020 8871 6171 for us to log a grant enquiry and receive an information pack.

The pack will give you all the information you need in order to start the process and will also explain the option of using the Home Improvement Agency to handle your case and engage approved builders.