

Grants & Loans

Private Housing Renewals Policy 2012



Grant for Urgent Work Affecting Health and Safety

If you own your own home, or you rent a home in the private sector and have a repairing obligation, and your home has fallen into disrepair and now has hazards which present a risk to your health and safety, you may be eligible for a Grant for Urgent Work Affecting Health and Safety up to a maximum of £3,000 to pay for the repairs to bring your home back up to an acceptable standard.

This factsheet explains who can get a Grant for Urgent Work Affecting Urgent Health and Safety and how to apply.

Who is eligible for this grant

You qualify:

- You **MUST** live within Reading Borough (You pay your council Tax to Reading Borough Council) AND
- You **MUST** either:
 - Be an owner occupier and have lived in the property for at least three years before the date of application OR
 - Be a tenant living private rented accommodation (*as long as it isn't owned by a member of your family*) with obligations for carrying out repairs AND
- You **MUST** be in receipt of at least one of the following principle means tested benefits (*Income Support, Housing Benefit, Disabled Persons Tax Credit, Income based Job Seekers Allowance, Working Families Tax Credit (income limit £16,190), Child Tax Credit (income limit £16,190), Working Tax Credit (income limit £16,190), Guaranteed Pension Credit, Income Based Employment Support Allowance and any other benefits deemed as means tested in the future*) AND
- Your property **MUST** be identified as having Category One or Category Two hazards following an assessment using the Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS)

(If you are a private tenant without repair obligations and you believe your home has health and safety hazards please contact the Council's Public Health Team or Houses in Multiple Occupation Team)

What is the Housing Health and Safety Rating system (HHSRS)

HHSRS is a system used by all councils to identify and rate the risk of harm to people living in the property. It looks at 29 different health and safety areas.

What this Grant covers

This Grant can only be used to pay for work needed to bring the property up to standard and ensure your home is free from the Category One and Two safety hazards as defined by HHSRS.

Examples of work that could be included in the scheme include:

- Repairs to stairs or floors to minimise the risk of falls
- Remedying dampness or other faults to bring the property into a reasonable state of repair
- Provision of hot water (only if your boiler cannot be repaired and you are not able to get funding from an energy efficiency scheme)
- Replacement of dangerous electrics

The grant can also cover any essential costs (Planning Permission, Building Regulations, Home Improvement Agency Fees).

The grant cannot be used for:

- Maintenance work
- Window replacement
- Full heating system
- Extensive repairs
- Decorating
- Energy efficiency work that could be paid for by an energy efficient grant available for energy suppliers

How to apply

If you are interested in applying for this Grant please contact our independent Home Improvement Agency (HIA) who will help you through the grants process. They will

- check you meet the qualifying criteria for this Grant
- carry out an HHSRS inspection of your home to identify any qualifying hazards and provide a list of the work needed to bring your home back up to standard.

- Help you get quotes for this work from at least two contractors
- Help you complete a Grant application form and check you have the supporting documents to prove your eligibility
- Submit your application to the Council for approval

The approval process

Once we have received your application we will assess your application and double check your eligibility - we will write to let you know if your application is successful within 21 days.

Do not start any work until you have received written confirmation from the Council.

There is limit to the funding available for this grant - this money will be allocated on a first come first served basis.

Getting the work done

Once you have received confirmation that your grant has been approved your contractors can start work our Home Improvement Agency will help you manage the work.

The work must be completed within 12 months of your grant being approved

Paying for the Work

The Council will pay the grant direct to your contractor once:

- the work has been completed to a satisfactory standard **AND**
- we have received an acceptable invoice (*on official headed paper, with full details and costs of the work carried out*) **AND**
- we have received any certificates or warranties required for the work carried out **AND**
- you have signed a consent form confirming you are satisfied with the quality of the work*

** if you tell us there is a problem we will inspect the work - if we believe it is of a sufficiently good standard we will make payment without your consent.*

Unforeseen work

Our Home Improvement Agency will contact the Council if any unforeseen works arise once your grant has been approved and the work has started.

The Council may increase the amount grant awarded to pay for these additional works up to the maximum grant payable.

The Council will not pay for additional works carried out without prior permission.

If the cost of the work exceeds the grant.

Your will be responsible for the costs of any unforeseen works which exceed the maximum grant.

Conditions for this Grant

The following conditions apply:

- All work must be completed within 12 months of your grant being approved (*extensions may be granted if you can provide adequate reasons why the work cannot/could not be completed within this timescale*).
- We will register a Local Land Charge against your home. If the property is sold within five years the grant must be repaid in full.

- You will not be eligible for further grant funding from the Council within three years of receiving this grant.

If you breach any of the conditions of the grant you will be asked to repay the grant in full.

Appealing our Decision

If we refuse your Grant application we will explain why.

If you think we haven't have assessed your situation fairly you can ask us to look at your application again. However, you should be aware that:

- although we can review your application against our current policy for this Grant, we can't change the rules
- we have limited funds available for this grant - once the funds have run out we cannot award any further grants during that financial year (April - March).

Complaints

Complaints about the Council

If you are unhappy with:

- the way you have been treated by a member of the Private Sector Renewal Team or
- we have not done something we said we would

... please let us know as soon as possible.

You can complain directly to the staff working with you or, if you prefer you can contact the Council's Complaints Manager.

Complaints about the HIA

If your complaint is about services and support provided by the Home Improvement Agency you should address your complaint directly to them.

They should give you a copy of their complaints process when they first visit you at home.

Useful Contacts

Home Improvement Agency

Aster Living Berkshire West

Tel: 01635 588 811
Email: bwcr@ridgewaycommunity.org.uk

Council Services

Private Sector Housing Team

Tel: 0118 937 2562
Email: prsa.team@reading.gov.uk

Complaints

Tel: 0118 937 3737
Email: complaints@reading.gov.uk

Planning Permission

Tel: 0800 626 540
Email: planningcomments@reading.gov.uk
Web:

Building Control

Tel: 0118 937 2449
Email: buildingcontrol@reading.gov.uk

This information can be made available in alternative formats (such as audio or Braille) and languages on request. Please contact the Private Sector Housing Team