



West Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board 24th June 2021

Report Title	Disabled Facilities Grant End of Year Report 2020/2021	
Report Author	Chris Stopford, Private Sector Housing Manager, West Northamptonshire Council (chris.stopford@westnorthants.gov.uk)	
Contributors/Checkers/Approvers		
Other Director/SME	Joanne Barrett, Assistant Director Housing and Communities, West Northamptonshire Council	14 th June 2021

List of Appendices

Appendix A – DFG Data 2020/2021

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To update the Board on Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) allocation and spend across West Northamptonshire for 2020 – 2021.

2. Executive Summary

- 2.1 DFGs are an allocation provided by central government in order to enable people with a disability to remain in, or return to, and live independently in their own homes, thereby avoiding them having to be looked after in a care home or in hospital. This report provides an overview of how the DFG 2020/2021 allocation was spent and the issues that occurred during this period.

3. Recommendations

- 3.1 The Board are asked to note the DFG spend for 2020/2021.
- 3.2 It is a statutory requirement of Health and Wellbeing Boards to oversee local DFG arrangements.

4. Report Background

- 4.1 DFGs are provided in order to enable people with a disability to remain in, or return to, and live independently in their own homes, thereby avoiding them having to be looked after in a care home or in hospital. The adaptations funded by DFGs range from level-access showers, stairlifts and ramping to major property extensions and are granted in consultation with the Council's Community Occupational Therapist (COT) Service. Costs vary from around £3,000 for the former to £30,000+ for the latter. Mandatory DFG funding is limited to £30,000 per application, with any additional funding being through the Council's Discretionary policy or through client contribution.
- 4.2 The timescale to process a DFG application can vary hugely and is dependent on the requirement and availability of various professional partners; requirements for an COT assessment and/or architects' drawings, permissions granted from landlords and planning departments and building control approval. Inevitably, this means that some of the grant funding committed as at 31st March in any given year will not be paid until the following financial year, and the committed but unspent amounts can vary significantly from one year to the next.
- 4.3 Until 1st April 2021 Northamptonshire was a two tier local authority area, as such the DFG was paid directly to Northamptonshire County Council and then distributed to seven District and Borough Councils. Lower-tier authorities have the statutory duty to provide DFGs under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.
- 4.4 From the 1st April 2021, Northamptonshire was split into two Unitary Council's. The funding will be allocated to the Unitary Council's and will then need to be assessed through the Capital Budgeting processes. The statutory duty for the delivery of the service remains.

5. Issues

- 5.1 The total national funding for DFG in 2020/21 remained the same amount as the previous year (£505 million) therefore the allocation and breakdown for Northamptonshire stayed unchanged.
- 5.2 Funding locally, within the West Northamptonshire Sovereign District Councils of Daventry, Northampton and South Northamptonshire being £2,255,260 for the 2020/21 financial year
- 5.2 During 2020/2021 the DFG service has been heavily impacted by COVID19, but managed to mitigate the effects and continue to deliver DFGs. The main issues have been:
- During the first lockdown the construction industry initially almost came to a complete halt until the Government clarified how the industry could continue to work with COVID19 secure practices in place.
 - Supply issues for contractors, with many suppliers unable to open during the first lockdown.
 - Household's reticence to have work done / people coming into their homes, as the client base is essentially people more vulnerable to COVID19 and part of the shielded population.

- Vulnerable council employees who were unable to go into clients' homes, and the Council has to consider how it protected the health and safety of its staff, respond to new remote working arrangements, and ensure that it also operated in a Covid19 secure manner.
 - COVID19 outbreaks for contractors, causing delaying in works and tenders.
- 5.3 High demand for the service continues and different ways of delivering DFGs in 2021/2022 are being explored due to an increase in waiting times. A new Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy for West Northamptonshire, giving a range of additional discretionary grant options alongside the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant is now in place. The aim of the discretionary element is to assist those meeting certain criteria and whose application would cost in excess of the maximum mandatory award of £30,000 and who otherwise would have to make a financial contribution themselves.
- 5.4 The Council's discretionary elements also respond to needs identified in our communities, though the local health agenda and wider national health demands. Examples include the provision of assistance relating to ensuring effective hospital discharge, supporting palliative care at home, and responding to the increasing demands of cognitive impairment in our community

6. Implications (including financial implications)

6.1 Resources and Financial

- 6.1.1 There are no resources or financial implications arising from the report.
- 6.1.2 Funding for the disabled facilities grant regime is confirmed annually from the Department of Health and Social Care, and forms part of the Better Care Fund. This money is ring fenced for the delivery of the grant scheme. Whilst not confirmed, indications are that funding will remain at the same level for 2021/22.

6.2 Legal

- 6.2.1 The Council has a statutory duty under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 to ensure the effective delivery of a mandatory disabled facilities grants. The delivery of additional discretionary grants is activity encouraged, but not statutory, by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. In 2020, the MHCLG advised that 85% of local authorities had a discretionary policy.

6.3 Risk

- 6.3.1 Applications for significant grants, particularly where substantial alterations to someone's home are required, can take several months to process, and the DFG grant may not be fully spent in the year to which it relates.

6.3.2 As Covid-19 restrictions are lifted, an increase in demand is likely, as existing cases are progressed at the same time as new cases come forward. Internal staffing and contractor availability, supplies and lead times remain ongoing risks.

6.4 **Consultation**

6.4.1 Not applicable.

6.5 **Consideration by Scrutiny**

6.5.1 Not applicable

6.6 **Climate Impact**

6.6.1 Not applicable

6.7 **Community Impact**

6.7.1 Not applicable

7. Background Papers

7.1 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) order 2002.