

West Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board 27th July 2023

Report Title	Disabled Facilities Grant End of Year Report 2022/2023	
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List of Appendices

Appendix 1 – DFG Data 2022/2023

1. Purpose of Report

- 1.1. To update the Board on Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) allocation and spend across West Northamptonshire for 2022 – 2023

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 2022/2023 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 2022/2023
- 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 £5,000 for the former to £30,000+ for the latter. Mandatory DFG funding is limited to £30,000 per application.
- 4.2 The Council's Home Adaptations Policy, enabled through the Regulatory Reform (England and Wales) Order 2002, provides for a range of additional funding on a discretionary basis. This includes schemes providing a £15,000 top up to the mandatory grant, and schemes focused on supporting resettlement, hospital discharge, palliative care, dementia friendly and other long-term cognitive impairments
- 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 a 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.

5. Issues

- 5.1 The total national funding for DFG in 2022/2023 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 being £2,558,938 for the 2022/23 financial year
- 5.3 High demand for the service continues across West Northamptonshire. As reported to the Health and Wellbeing Board previously the impact of the Covid19 pandemic resulted in a reduction in service demand during 2020/21. This demand has been recognised in the increased demand for service during 2021/2022, and 2022/2023 with clients, previously shielding, now approaching the Council for assistance.
- 5.4 The impact of the national economy has had a significant impact on the costs of adaptations works. We have seen significant increases particularly in the costs of construction materials. This has resulted in high expenditure across all grant types.
- 5.5 The new Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy for West Northamptonshire, adopted in April 2021, has continued to be promoted within our community, and our sector contacts particularly the health and VCSE sectors. This has seen the range of options for discretionary home adaptation assistance being offered by the service, see data in Appendix 1. 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.

- 5.5 This transformational work, supported by the Directorates Transformation resources, will see the recognition of existing best practice, benchmarking with our services, engagement with service users, and the development of a new operating model that seeks to reinforce the Council's vision for a 'great place to live, work and thrive' being at the heart of the team's delivery culture.
- 5.6 The Home Adaptations Team across the whole of West Northamptonshire Council, whilst not seeking affirmation of the impact of their work, regularly receive comments and compliments from customers, some examples of these are reproduced below:

Before my driveway had been built, I was having to walk down a steep slope and over the road to my car. Due to my mobility problems, this was very difficult and in bad weather dangerous.

The Council officer was very understanding and supportive from the start to the finish. She was friendly and approachable if I needed anything.

The contractors were friendly and helpful through the time they were here and were empathetic to my situation.

Having the driveway done has made such a difference to my life . I am now able to get into my car right outside the house, meaning less pain and discomfort as well as reducing my risk of falling



I am writing to provide some feedback on the recent adaptation to our home, namely the creation of a downstairs shower / wet room for my mother who is elderly, disabled and has Alzheimer's disease.

Before we had the shower put in we were really struggling. Trying to wash mums hair in the sink and then do a strip wash was extremely difficult because of her poor mobility. It put a lot of strain on both of us both physically and mentally and was very stressful. Obviously we couldn't do this every day .

When I made an enquiry to the council about the possibility of a downstairs shower room being built in an existing shed adjacent to the toilet I wasn't sure if it would even be possible.

I was sent some paperwork to be filled out and was then assigned a caseworker.

The caseworker came out to visit us at home to measure up the area and see if the build would be possible. She spent a long time talking to me and my mum and assessing the property. She was very personable and understanding. She listened to all our needs and concerns and was very empathetic. She talked us through all the stages of the development if it were to go ahead and we were given her contact details should we need her at any time .

Everything went through as Kim had explained and the process was very straightforward. Everything happened in a timely fashion from surveyors and quotes from builders and completing paperwork for the grant. It was pretty much stress free.

The builders came to do a prestart meeting with us. They came across as very competent and experienced in this type of build. They discussed how the job would go, fixtures and fittings and time frames. They were very mindful about the time frame as my mum had to stay at my sister's home whilst the building took place as the downstairs toilet would obviously be out of action.

Every day when they arrived they said what they were going to do on that day and had a clear plan.

Some days we were at work and we gave them a key to our home so they could come and go. They were completely trustworthy and got on with the job in hand.

Their workmanship was of a very high standard and we were absolutely delighted with the overall finish.

Nothing was too much trouble for them and they wanted everything to be just right for mum.

When the job was finished they gave us their contact details in case of any problems.

We have not had any problems and our case worker Kim came out to inspect the work.

It's impossible to say how much having the new shower has improved our lives.

To just be able to shower mum at anytime is great. It is so much of an improvement on what we were doing before providing so much more privacy and dignity for mum. It has removed much of the stress for both of us and I only wish we had done it sooner.

In summary, the whole process for us has been excellent from start to finish. Using the Care and Repair facility took any stress away from us and having an assigned Case worker meant we had nothing to worry about and we were kept fully informed throughout.

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. The Council has received confirmation that funding will remain at the same level for 2023/2024.

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.

6.4 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.