

## West Northamptonshire Health and Wellbeing Board 9<sup>th</sup> July 2024

<b>Report Title</b>	<b>Disabled Facilities Grant End of Year Report 2023/2024</b>	
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### List of Appendices

#### Appendix 1 – DFG Data 2023/2024

#### **1. Purpose of Report**

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- 1.1. To update the Board on Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) allocation and spend across West Northamptonshire for 2023 – 2024

#### **2. Executive Summary**

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- 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 2023/2024 allocation was spent and the issues that occurred during this period.

#### **3. Recommendations**

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- 3.1 The Board are asked to note the DFG spend for 2023/2024
- 3.2 It is a statutory requirement of Health and Wellbeing Boards to oversee local DFG arrangements.

## **4. Report Background**

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- 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 31<sup>st</sup> 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**

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- 5.1 The total national funding for DFG in 2023/2024 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 2023/24 financial year
- 5.3 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.
- 5.4 The 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.

## 6 Service Performance

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- 6.1 The customer journey within West Northamptonshire Council spans a number of specialist teams including Adult Social Care, Children’s Trust, Community Occupational Therapy, and the Home Adaptations Team. This data seeks to provide assurance regarding the complete customer journey.

Process Stage	Average Days	Shortest Time	Longest Time
Wait for OT assessment	Longest wait for Assessment – 84 days (May 2024)		
OT assessment to Grant Approval	4.2 days	0	177
Grant approval to Commencement of Works	35.7 days	0	184
Days Commencement of Works to Completion	28.9 days	1	137

- 6.2 By way of benchmarking this information, each year the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities (DLUHC) collect performance information from local authorities. This is published, in the latest information ([Performance of Housing Authorities in DFG Delivery \(foundations.uk.com\)](https://foundations.uk.com))

- From the date of submission, local authorities have a maximum period of 6 months (130 working days) to approve or decline a valid application. All but 10 authorities meet this target, with an average of 29 working days overall. This is an improvement on 2020/21 where 20 authorities failed to meet the target and the average approval time was 37 days. **In the case of West Northamptonshire this was 4.2 days**
- From the date of approval, adaptation works should be completed within 12 months (260 working days), with the best practice guidance recommending within 80 working days. The average in 2021/22 was 88 working days, down one day from 89 working days in 2020/21. **In the case of West Northamptonshire this was 64 calendar days, approximately 46 working days.**

## 7 Service Customer Feedback

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- 7.1 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:

*Unfortunately, my father xxxxx passed away on Friday xxx. He was so thankful to yourselves for supplying him with a stair lift, it really did make all the difference to the last few months of his life.*

*Thank you for your calls this morning. As I said on the phone, the OT that visited us was XXX on 10 February. Her recommendation was for ramping/levelling (front or back), wet room and stairlift with possibly second lift for upper floor. I have to complement you on your telephone manner and the way you spoke to me. It was most pleasurable to receive such "customer service". Thanking you for your assistance.*

It was all done very efficiently and professionally, I was kept up to date during the whole process. First class communication and explanation of all work carried out with absolute professionalism. It all works perfect for me, it's a treat to use wet room, I love it. It's safer and easier access, making my life much better than before work was done.

I was going to contact you to say a Huge thank you for enabling me to have this work done. It is fabulous and so much easier for me. Thank you again XXX you truly are a star. Hope you have a lovely Bank Holiday weekend. Xxx

#### *Examples of Work Completed*





## **8 Implications (including financial implications)**

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### **8.1 Resources and Financial**

8.1.1 There are no resources or financial implications arising from the report.

8.1.2 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 2024/2025.

## **8.2 Legal**

8.2.1 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.

## **8.3 Risk**

8.3.1 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.

## **8.4 Consultation**

8.4.1 Not applicable.

## **8.5 Consideration by Scrutiny**

8.5.1 Not applicable

## **8.6 Climate Impact**

8.6.1 Not applicable

## **8.7 Community Impact**

8.7.1 Not applicable

## **9 Background Papers**

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