



REPORT FROM: HOUSING, HEALTH AND ENGINEERING SERVICES
MANAGER

TO: POLICY and RESOURCES COMMITTEE

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NATIONAL REVIEW OF DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS AND OTHER ADAPTATIONS

PURPOSE OF REPORT

To inform the committee of the national review of the disabled facilities grants and the report that was published in December 2018 and inform the committee the changes we are introducing to the delivery mechanism of disabled adaptations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- (1) That the attached summary of the report be noted.
- (2) To continue to lobby for an allocation formula that more accurately reflects the level of need in Pendle.
- (3) That the changes in the delivery mechanism are noted.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION

- (1) To try and ensure that the funding meets the needs in Pendle.
- (2) To improve the delivery of disabled adaptations.

ISSUE

The Department of Health and Social Care appointed the University of West of England to carry out an independent review of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) in England. The University worked with Foundations, the Building Research Establishment, Ferret Information System and an

experienced Occupational Therapist to look at both the operation of the grant and the wider delivery of home adaptations to support the independence of disabled people living in their own homes.

The existing Disabled facilities grant has been in place for over 30 years and was introduced as part of a raft of grants designed to improve the poorest housing stock. It has been on several occasions and is currently governed by the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

Of all the grants introduced in 1989 the Disabled facilities grant is the only mandatory grant remaining and despite increases to the annual DFG budget, demand for adaptations has always outstripped supply in Pendle and this is set to continue as the population ages. The allocation of funding to individual authorities is historic and does not always accurately reflect the level of need. The review sought to ensure that home adaptation policy remains fit for purpose and that funds are being allocated as effectively as possible.

The review explored:

- How the DFG is used currently – who gets what and how it's delivered.
- How the DFG could change in the future – focusing on the means test, the £30,000 upper limit, the allocation formula and methods of delivery.
- The link between adaptations and health and social care services, including timely discharge from hospital.
- The changing aids and adaptations market – considering new innovations and technology, market development and supporting people who are not eligible for a DFG
- The impact of Section 36 of the Equality Act 2010 on adaptations to communal areas.

The report was published in December 2018 and made a number of recommendations under the headings:

- Strategic oversight
- Local history
- Working better together
- Allocation of resources and other funding issues
- The Means Test
- Regulation and the upper limit
- Developing a market
- Tenure and equality

To date there has been no Central Government response to the review.

Changes to the delivery process in Pendle

Whilst there has been no response from Central government to the review we have looked at the recommendations and our processes. This had led to us looking to change the way we deliver certain elements of the grant process.

Over the last 2 years the Council has received increases in the funding received from the Governments Better Care fund. Unfortunately the increased funding has not resulted in increased delivery of adaptations and last year for the first time we failed to commit all the funding.

Whilst we are usually able to commit funding the completion of the adaptations often fall into the next financial year resulting in a substantial underspend being reported year on year. The delivery of grant within a particular financial year is affected by the legislation which allows applicants 12 months from approval to carry out the work and claim the funding. We cannot require an applicant to use our agency service.

The table below shows the difference between the commitments and spend over the last 3 years

Year	Number of Approved Grants	Budget inc slippage	Amount committed	Amount spent
16/17	83	865,540	885,177	407,394
17/18	96	1,312,476	1,372,533	680,571
18/19	70	1,441,461	1,349,922	615,779

Due to a reduction in staffing within the wider Environmental Health Residential team and problems with recruiting suitable staff the Technical Officers have had to take on some enforcement work along with the grant delivery. We are currently looking at bringing in a temporary member of staff dedicated to DFG work to help with delivery.

We have recognised, having read the National review of Disabled Facilities Grants and Other Adaptations that we can change our processes to reduce the time taken to deliver a disabled facilities grant and reduce the time taken to complete the work on site.

Prior to the review being published we made changes to our fee structure for our agency service so that more funding was available for the adaptation where the cost of the work was at the maximum £30,000 available

We have changed the way we deal with the financial assessment to ensure that we have all the relevant information at an earlier stage meaning that applicants are aware of any contribution and that officers can design the scheme of adaptation and get it on site with minimal delays.

We have increased the number of contractors on our tender list as lack of contractors was causing some delays.

We are also working towards an agreed schedule of rates with our contractors to eliminate further delays in tendering each adaptation again reducing the time taken from initial visit to completion of the adaptation and increasing the number of applications that can be completed every year.

We are confident that these changes will enable us to commit the available funding in the current financial year and increase the annual spend.

IMPLICATIONS

Policy: None arising from this report

Financial: None arising from this report

Legal: None arising from this report

Risk Management: None arising from this report

Health and Safety: None arising from this report

Sustainability: None arising from this report

Community Safety: None arising from this report

Equality and Diversity: None arising from this report

APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and other adaptations: External review Summary

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and other adaptations: External review main Report