

## **BARNSELY METROPOLITAN BOROUGH COUNCIL**

**This matter is not a Key Decision within the Council's definition and has not been included in the relevant Forward Plan**

### **REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITIES TO CABINET ON 15 JULY 2018**

#### **DFG FRAMEWORK**

#### **1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

To inform cabinet about the provision of Disabled Facilities Grants, proposed changes to procure a Framework Agreement of multiple providers to undertake works related to the provision of Level Access Shower/Bathroom Adaptations on a rotational basis.

The proposed approach is intended to;

- Reduce the current timelines, administration and resource required to procure a contractor on a job by job basis
- Support robust management and monitoring of the contractors engaged in completing the works to ensure compliance
- Reduce the waiting times for adaptations to be priced and completed
- Reduce the number of contractors requiring access to individual properties to assess and price for the works
- Ensure value for money from the works on a consistent basis
- Ensure compliance with the procurement regulations

This in turn will deliver;

- A more reactive and responsive service to meet the needs of the clients
- Improved well-being for vulnerable people
- An increase in spend via the Disability Facilities Grant (DFG)

#### **2. RECOMMENDATIONS**

- 2.1** Cabinet members are asked to approve going to market to establish a Framework Agreement contract for level access showers and bathroom adaptations utilising the DFG funding.

#### **3. INTRODUCTION**

- 3.1** Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) are a mechanism to provide financial assistance to disabled people who meet the eligibility criteria for housing adaptations which enable the person to live independently in their own home.

In Barnsley the Communities Directorate administers the DFG. The scheme is for children and adults living in private sector residential properties who require home adaptations costing more than £1,000 where it is deemed that the adaptation work

is necessary and appropriate to meet the disabled person's needs, and it is practical and reasonable to undertake depending on the age and condition of the property.

The delivery of DFGs is heavily governed by legislation the Housing, Construction and Regeneration Act, 1996. Under this Act all adults who apply for a grant are subject to a financial assessment of means except those who receive certain types of income who will be deemed to be automatically eligible for a grant.

The maximum grant award available is £30,000 although the Council can apply discretion to 'top up' this amount if it is in the interest of the Council and the applicant concerned to do so and an approved policy is in place.

Work funded through a DFG comes under the category of major adaptation work and includes; stair lifts, ramps, provision / building of level access facilities.

Minor adaptation work and equipment (costing less than £1000) to support community care and promote independence for the person is managed by the Equipment and Adaptations team and supplied by the Community Equipment Service.

From April 2017 to March 2018 the DFG processed 905 referrals for major adaptations.

The Government allocation to Barnsley in 2017/18 for DFG's was £2,027,850 and for 2018/19 is £2,382,298

The average waiting time before a standard referral is picked up by the DFG service is currently around 6 months.

The estimated spend for the Level Access Shower/Bathroom Adaptations under the framework is at least £650,000 with a forecast of at least 150 completed.

#### **4. PROPOSAL AND JUSTIFICATION**

- 4.1 There is legislation but not a national single written policy in respect of DFG's. It was recognised in 2015 following an independent review of the DFG process in Barnsley that a broader local policy is needed to assist with the interpretation and implementation of the legislation relating to the adaptation of the homes of disabled people.

As such the Barnsley policy was updated in 2016 and agreed by cabinet that policy updates could be implemented including:

- discretionary financial assistance
- detailed links with other schemes that exist to improve the wellbeing of vulnerable people
- introduction of a fast track process for specified adaptations intended to shorten waiting times for customers, improve the throughput of referrals and increase grant spend

In June 2013 the Government announced the intention to create the Better Care Fund to support the integration of Health and Social Care service delivery. Consequently in 2015 Barnsley's DFG allocation increased significantly to just over

£2.3million compared to just over £1.3m the previous year. In light of this increase it is clear the DFG in Barnsley needs an effective policy and be sufficiently resourced to be able to respond quickly and successfully to meet the needs of disabled people living locally and more quickly.

Within the grant last year there was scope to recruit to a Caseworker and Project officer which has already contributed to adding value to the service enabling more work to be undertaken facilitating timely and cost effective delivery of DFG's locally.

The majority of other Councils have adopted a policy outlining the way DFGs are delivered to meet local need.

The next step in creating efficiencies in Barnsley while ensuring all Level Access Shower/Bathroom adaptations projects are completed to high standards and distributed to approved contractors; is to introduce a framework for these specific adaptations which is intended to shorten waiting times for customers, reduce backlog and improve the throughput of referrals and increase grant spend.

Approving this policy will contribute to the delivery of an enhanced DFG service.

In parallel to this the team are also developing better ways of working in line with digital first such as e-forms as well as alternative permanent and temporary ways of working in order to reduce backlogs and waiting times within the next 12 months.

## **5. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES**

### **5.1 Stay the same/do nothing: The cumbersome tender process will continue to add 3 weeks waiting times to all Level Access Shower/Bathroom Adaptations**

Alternative frameworks: Alternative framework models were considered but could lead to compromises and resilience concerns as these would have included only one or a small number of contractors.

Alternative models may have been at odds with BMBC vision in particular for "local vibrant economy local economy" if a large organisation outside of the borough were to be successful.

Berneslai Homes agreement: Berneslai Homes do not have capacity to perform all works required. However DFG is currently working with BH under a pilot scheme with view to developing a partnership going forward.

Take this framework approach: DFG have been piloting the allocation of work to contractors on a rotational basis under a waiver agreement since February 2018. So far this has shown that waiting times have reduced. This agreement would be implemented in the understanding that it is for an initial 12 months with the option to extend by 2 x 12 months.

As a Framework Agreement the Council is not committed to any minimum level of spend via this route and can enact the extensions as it requires. This will allow the DFG team managing the Framework Agreement to monitor and review the agreement and contractors and retender to reflect changes in the market or requirements as required.

The benefits of this include allowing flexibility dependant on unknown future influencers, any changes in priorities and the Health & Social Care system wide review of assistive living / adaptation services.

## **6. IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE/SERVICE USERS**

- 6.1 Eligible disabled people living locally, their families and carers will benefit from further efficiencies for more adaptations / equipment as their need will be met more quickly. Having a more efficient framework policy for such adaptations is now considered nationally as best practice.

## **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 7.1 The DFG process is very much demand led. Removal of the formal request for quote process for each adaptation by property will mean a reduction in waiting times allowing applicants to receive adaptations sooner.

There is already budget for the Level Access Shower Adaptations which has been underutilised. This efficiency will allow the budget / grant allocation to be used more quickly where it is intended to promote independence and improve prevention measures for service users sooner rather than later, allowing them to remain in their own home and limit the requirement for residential or acute care provision

## **8. EMPLOYEE IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The adoption of this policy has no employee implications for the Council.

## **9. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 9.1 Legal advice has been provided regarding the procurement process and capacity to us BH to deliver in the interim building services and the suggested framework has been created in collaboration with Corporate Procurement and Legal Services officers.

## **10. CUSTOMER AND DIGITAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 10.1 Customers will receive adaptations sooner. There are no positive or negative digital implications.

## **11. COMMUNICATIONS IMPLICATIONS**

- 11.1 Information will need updating to reflect changes to the Councils DFG policy for providing assistance for major home adaptations. It should be anticipated that this may lead to an increase in demand for the provision of Level Access Showers. However existing capacity, budget and more efficient processes applied should be able to accommodate this.

## **12. CONSULTATIONS**

- 12.1 Occupational Therapists in relation to referral processes, adaptation pressures and priorities.

All members of the Communities DMT have had the opportunity to comment on the proposed policy and their comments acknowledged.

Procurement and Legal in relation to legislation and the DFG's flexibility to assist with providing adaptations utilisation approved contractor via fair agreement.

Legal & Berneslai Homes with regard to developing an agreement and associated SLA to utilise in house contractors e.g. Berneslai Homes in future.

The Northern Adaptations Group (NAG) in respect of DFG policy development and interpretation of legislation specifically post implementation of the Better Care Fund.

### **13. THE CORPORATE PLAN AND THE COUNCIL'S PERFORMANCE MANAGEMENT FRAMEWORK**

- 13.1 The Council aims to ensure that housing needs and aspirations are met by enabling access to a home that is well maintained, warm, and affordable in a peaceful and secure environment.

Barnsley is working towards a better future for people living in the Borough with the aim of making the Borough a thriving, unique place to live, work, visit and trade.

The Housing Delivery Plan 2014-2033 has a number of key ambitions one of which is to support young, older and vulnerable people to live independently. The delivery of DFG's contributes to achieving this ambition.

### **14. PROMOTING EQUALITY, DIVERSITY AND SOCIAL INCLUSION**

- 14.1 Assistance for the improvement or adaptation of properties is an essential element of providing an effective response to meet the needs of an aging population and vulnerable people.

Grants such as DFG's support disadvantaged and low income households and more specifically DFG's enable older and disabled people to live independently in their own homes and has a positive impact on their physical, emotional and social wellbeing and equality and diversity issues.

### **15. TACKLING THE IMPACT OF POVERTY**

- 15.1 Grants such as DFG's and the flexible application of discretionary amounts such as those proposed within the policy support disadvantaged and low income households

### **16. TACKLING HEALTH INEQUALITIES**

- 16.1 Primary Care Services are putting in place support and interventions to reduce reliance upon acute services.

More disabled children are remaining in their home with appropriate albeit often increasingly costly adaptations.

Grants such as DFG's and the flexible application of discretionary amounts such as those proposed within the policy support disadvantaged and low income households.

## **17. REDUCTION OF CRIME AND DISORDER**

17.1 There are no crime and disorder implications

## **18. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES**

18.1 The removal of the tender process for Level Access showers may still have a negative impact on performance reporting even though waiting times for applicants will reduce. However, so far all indication from the pilot DFG have run since February 2018 displays the team has capacity.

Risks of quality standards decreasing have been mitigated by the tender pass / fail and quality questions. DFG also has a quality checking performance monitoring mechanisms in place to address any contractor quality issues.

## **19. HEALTH, SAFETY AND EMERGENCY RESILIENCE ISSUES**

19.1 There is no health, safety and emergency resilience issues identified resulting from the implementation of the policy.

All approved adaptations are subject to schedule of work, pre-construction and construction phase plan and risk assessment. A programme of announced and unannounced site inspections by the Council and Health & Safety Executive exists.

The Council has comprehensive Health and Safety management and monitoring procedures in place.

## **20. COMPATIBILITY WITH THE EUROPEAN CONVENTION ON HUMAN RIGHTS**

20.1 The provision of DFGs and the delivery of these in a flexible way to meet the needs of the local disabled population support the individual to live as independently as possible within their own home and community. In addition provision of home adaptation not only supports the wellbeing of the disabled person, their safety and security but can also contribute to the reduction of carer stress and supports the right to a family life

## **21. CONSERVATION OF BIODIVERSITY**

21.1 In respect to the conservation of biodiversity all approved adaptations are subject to a specification of works, pre-construction and construction phase plan that considers conservation of biodiversity issues as appropriate

## **22. GLOSSARY**

N/A

**23. LIST OF APPENDICES**

N/A

**24. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Invitation To Tender

Specification Document

Tender Pass or Fail and Quality Questions

\*These papers are not included as they are commercially sensitive

If you would like to inspect background papers for this report, please email [governance@barnsley.gov.uk](mailto:governance@barnsley.gov.uk) so that appropriate arrangements can be made

**Report author:** Bevan White

Service Manager Assistive Living Technologies & Disabled Facilities Grants Team

Financial Implications/Consultation



.....  
*(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer)*