

BARNSELEY 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

DFG Policy Updates

1. PURPOSE OF REPORT

This report is to seek agreement to implement a number of changes to the Disabled Facilities Grant Policy and approach.

2. RECOMMENDATIONS

2.1 Cabinet members are asked to approve the following amendments to the DFG policy and approach to DFG allocations :

- a) That a 'Help to Move' property provision is established (see page 19 of Policy).
- b) That provision is established for Shared Lives Carers providing Interim Care for Vulnerable Adults leaving Hospital (see page 23 of Policy).
- c) That provision is made for waiving of the means testing for some Fast Track Adaptations where applicants qualify: Stair Lifts, Through Floor Lifts, Ceiling Track Hoists, Access Ramps in line with paragraph 4.1c. (see page 20 of Policy).
- d) That the approach to Dual adaptations is improved (see page 22 of Policy).
- e) The procurement framework for accessing level access showers is formalised (see page 21 & 22 of Policy).
- f) That all the above amendments are subject to being implemented for 12 months, with regular review to ensure there are no unintended consequences and can be reversed if required. A report on the impact of recommendation C and E above is presented to Cabinet in 12 months time.
- g) That future minor changes to the approach to DFG are dealt with through Delegated Decision Making (see page 24 of Policy).

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 through 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 (SWYT) and supplied by the Community Equipment Service.

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.

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 which created further opportunity to broaden the approach to adaptations. The Barnsley policy was updated in 2016 and agreed by cabinet (CR404).

This proposal should also be considered in the light of the 'Barnsley Plan' and the overall priority to support people to remain at home for as long as possible and to return home as quickly as possible following hospital admission.

4. PROPOSAL AND JUSTIFICATION

4.1 Further amendments to the policy are proposed below :

a) Help to move property provision is established.

Rationale : To assist with the acquisition of other more suitable accommodation and where the Council is satisfied that this will benefit the disabled person at least as much as improving or adapting their existing accommodation. Barnsley will approve up to £7500.00 for this purpose

This is in line with Article 3 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 example

b) That provision is established for Shared Lives Carers providing Interim Care for Vulnerable Adults leaving Hospital

Rationale : Shared Lives Service in partnership with the Barnsley Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) is providing cost effective preventative care solutions to meet the needs of vulnerable adults leaving hospital

Discretionary monies will be used to provide adaptations within the homes of Shared Lives Carer(s) who is registered to provide support as part of this scheme. Funding will be provided for the types of adaptations that are normally provisioned for disabled people via a Disabled Facilities Grant.

The Council will accept the recommendation within an OT assessment as evidence that the adaptation is necessary and appropriate to support an accessible and safe living environment for individuals on the scheme and carer(s).

c) Provision is made for waivering of means testing for Fast Track Adaptations (Stair Lifts, Through Floor Lifts, Ceiling Track Hoists, Access Ramps)

Rationale : DFG Barnsley will waiver contributions and means test for fast track items unless the applicant is fully contributing to the cost of their care package as a result of a prior means test or has more than or equal the threshold in savings.. Under the current policy, the contributions are negligible vs time spent performing the means tests. The cost of undertaking the means test (cost in staff time is approx. £5k to nett £8k of income) barely outweighs the income it brings in. This should also be balanced with the cost of keeping someone in a hospital bed and the overall benefits to wellbeing. In addition the staff time saved, can be more valuably deployed in reducing the response times to referrals and save on the extra costs of addressing those delays. Any change in the volume and nature of applications for DFG will continue to be closely monitored whilst this provision is in place for 12 months and kept under review during that period to respond to any unintended consequences arising. A report will be presented to Cabinet again in 12 months time on the impact of this provision.

d) Improving the approach to Dual adaptations

Rationale : To promote a person centered approach, in cases where more than one adaptation is approved by the panel the second adaptation can be brought forward on the waiting list to be completed whilst the first is being undertaken: if this is deemed in the best interest of the applicant as a more viable and is less intrusive option than having more than one program of works at one property at separate times. It is also more efficient for the DFG team and approved contractors involved.

e) The formal Introduction of the framework for level access shower

Rationale : These are assessed and fitted for people with mobility problems who cannot safely manage a bath, as such a shower adaptation will usually become the preferred option. For some a shower over a bath will be suitable, and for others the easiest way to provide a shower is to simply install a standard tray. But this will still leave a 150-200mm step to negotiate. In many cases the only solution is to remove

the bath and provide a level access shower area as well as adapting where necessary the W.C. and basin etc.

Given these types of adaptations are high frequency BMBC implemented a pilot scheme February 2018 where six approved contractors are rotated to perform these adaptations on a call off/rotation basis. This initially reduces waiting times by around three weeks instead of waiting for tender process. It will continue to reduce waiting lists and reduce budget underspend as there will be four more approved contractors to complete the work, ensuring BMBC can surpass statutory adaptation and approval timescales. An official Framework has been approved by Cabinet, approved contractors have been selected via a Procurement Tender exercise and formal implementation is impending. A report on the impact of this framework will be presented to Cabinet in 12 months time.

f) All the above amendments in section 4 of this report are subject to being implemented for 12 months

Rationale: Performance will be closely reviewed to ensure there are no detrimental consequences and initiatives can be reversed if required. They will only be implemented having regard to the amount of resources available at the time. If the DFG team does not have sufficient resources to deal with the grant referrals that have been passed to them by the Occupational Therapists we reserve the right to suspend or remove “fast track” process for identified adaptations.

g) Future minor changes to the approach to DFG are dealt with through Delegated Decision Making

Rationale : To allow a more proactive and faster reacting decision process it is requested that subsequent operational working practice policy amendments are made via delegated mechanisms, with a caveat that any potentially larger scale amendments are communicated as appropriate to check as to whether they require full cabinet approval.

5. CONSIDERATION OF ALTERNATIVE APPROACHES

5.1_ Stay the same/do nothing: cumbersome process will continue to add unnecessary waiting times to all the majority of adaptations.

Alternative approaches: Alternative models were considered but could lead to compromises and resilience concerns; once the backlog has been cleared options to increase the number of referrals will be considered.

Barneslai Homes agreement: Barneslai 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 policy update approach: All indications are that waiting times will reduce.

6. IMPLICATIONS FOR LOCAL PEOPLE/SERVICE USERS

6.1 Eligible disabled people living locally, their families and carers will benefit from further flexibilities in the DFG policy and improved response times.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 The DFG process is very much demand led. The policy update will mean a reduction in waiting times allowing applicants to receive adaptations sooner.

There is already budget for additional 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 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 Public information will need updating to reflect changes to the Council's DFG policy for providing assistance for major home adaptations.

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. No comments challenging the request have been received. Comments from DMT include that this request is a *"series of very sensible steps to take"*.

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

Berneslai Homes

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.

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 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 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 and provide invaluable support to people with multiple long term conditions and other health conditions.

17. REDUCTION OF CRIME AND DISORDER

- 17.1 There are no crime and disorder implications

18. RISK MANAGEMENT ISSUES

- 18.1 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.

There may be a risk of an increased number of referrals the team may find difficult to cope with but the capacity created by efficiencies made should negate this and allow increased productivity. All initiatives will be under close monitoring and review to address and issues promptly.

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

Appendix 1 – Policy Document
Appendix 2 - EIA

24. BACKGROUND PAPERS

N/A

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

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Financial Implications/Consultation



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(To be signed by senior Financial Services officer where no financial implications)