

Meeting: Caring Sub-Committee

Date: 30 January 2025

Title: Disabled Facilities Grants

Author: Sue Graham, Better Care Fund Manager

Service: Adult Social Care

Wards affected: All

1. Purpose of Report

To provide an overview of the use of the Disabled Facilities Grant in North Tyneside.

2. Recommendations

Members of the Caring Sub-Committee are asked to note and comment on the information presented.

3. Information

- 3.1 The Authority receives the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) from the Government to provide adaptations to older and disabled persons living in homes which, without adaptation, make it difficult for them to undertake everyday tasks like washing and using the bathroom, cooking or getting out and about easily. The grant provides capital funding for the provision of home adaptations. The grant cannot be spent on revenue purposes for example it cannot be spent on ongoing provision of care or staffing costs other than for those staff directly involved in delivering the adaptations.
- 3.2 On 3 January 2025 the Government announced an increase of £0.280m to the current year's grant taking it to £2.319m. This should be spent by 31 March 2025 but the Authority can carry forward unspent grant to use in following years.
- 3.3 The grant value for 2025/26 is also £2.319m

Governance and Links to other Plans and Strategies

- 3.4 Disabled Facilities Grant forms part of the Better Care fund which aims to support an integrated approach to housing, health and social care in a local area. Our approach to using the Disabled facilities Grant is outlined in the Better Care Fund Plan which is agreed annually by Cabinet and the Health and Wellbeing Board and is developed jointly with the ICB. The Better Care Fund Plan is formalised into a s.75 (of the NHS Act 2006) pooled budget agreement signed by the Authority and the ICB following an assurance process carried out by NHS England.
- 3.5 The Better Care Fund Plan links to the following plans and strategies:-
- Equally Well
 - Better Health for All
 - Our North Tyneside Plan
 - Adult Social Care Strategy
 - Adult Social Care Prevention Strategy

Statutory Powers and Requirements

- 3.6 Local authorities have a statutory duty under the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 to provide adaptations for those who qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and this piece of legislation outlines how DFG's are to be administered.
- 3.7 The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 provides general powers for local housing authorities to provide assistance for housing renewal including home adaptations. This legislation allow authorities to provide discretionary elements funded by the DFG under a wider housing assistance policy. Our current DFG policy is written in line with the Regulatory Reform Order.
- 3.8 Local authorities have wide ranging powers and duties to meet the needs of disabled people living in their area who require care and support. The responsibilities of local authorities are set out as follows:-
- For adults in the Care Act 2014
 - For children in Part 3 of the Children Act 1989 as well as section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970

- 3.9 In 2022, the Government published delivery guidance for local authorities which brought together the various pieces of statutory guidance into one document.

[Disabled Facilities Grant\(DFG\) delivery: Guidance for Local Authorities in England](#)

Scope of the DFG

- 3.10 The DFG funds adaptations to privately owned or rented homes including homes rented from a housing association. It does not cover adaptations for council houses.
- 3.11 Adaptations for council houses are funded through the Housing Revenue Account (HRA) and an amount is identified in the Authority's Investment Plan for this purpose. In 2024/25 this amounts to £1.600m.
- 3.12 Within the Better Care Fund there is a carry forward of previously unspent DFG of £1.257m in 2024/25. This underspend arose over a number of years however the in-year grant has been fully spent in 2022/23 and 2023/24.

DFG Eligibility

- 3.13 Support is available to adults or children who have an eligible disability. This includes autistic people, those with a mental health condition, physical disabilities, learning disabilities, cognitive impairments like dementia and progressive conditions like Motor Neurone Disease. It also includes those with age related disabilities and can include people with a terminal illness.
- 3.14 An assessment is carried out by an Occupational Therapist who would assess the disabled person's needs and recommend **necessary and appropriate** adaptations to meet those needs.
- 3.15 A review of the property would also be undertaken to ensure that the proposed adaptations are **reasonable and practicable** considering the age and/or condition of the property.
- 3.16 The Authority would also consider value for money and may consider whether the person could move to a more suitable property or utilise rooms in the property differently.

DFG Purposes

3.17 The mandatory ways in the DFG can be used are laid down in law:-

- Access to the home or garden
- Making the premises safer
- Access to the principal family room or bedroom
- Access to a toilet
- Access to a bath or shower
- Access to a wash hand basin
- Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food
- Better heating
- Control of power light and heat
- Caring for others

3.18 An Authority may also include discretionary purposes in its DFG Policy in line with the Regulatory Reform Order. In North Tyneside we include:-

- A discretionary top up value to the mandatory grant maximum value
- Assistance to move to a more suitable property
- Provision of high-cost equipment
- Maintenance of equipment
- Removal of category 1 hazards

DFG Values and Means Testing

3.19 The Government lays down the maximum value of a mandatory DFG as £30,000. This value has been in place since 2008 with no annual uplift for inflation.

3.20 The Authority's Policy identifies a further amount of £14,100 (uplifted each year by RPI) of discretionary funding which may be made available to top up the mandatory grant limit.

3.21 Grants are means tested for adults who are owner-occupiers or tenants. Passporting benefits apply. Where the disabled person is not in receipt of a passporting benefit, the initial test is whether the household has saving in excess of £28,030 (uplifted each year by RPI).

3.22 Different rules apply if applicant is the landlord. A contribution from a landlord may be requested if the adaptation could increase the rent charged as a result of the works.

3.23 Adaptations for council houses funded through the HRA are not means tested.

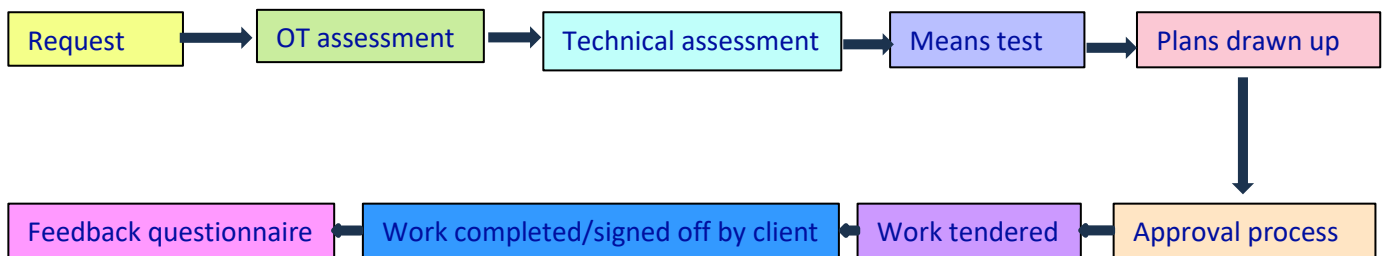
Application and Process Overview

3.24 Information and advice on DFGs is available on [MyCare](#).

3.25 Application for individuals is through our social care Gateway service which can be accessed via MyCare, by telephone (0191 643 2777) or by email childrenandadultscontactcentre@northtyneside.gov.uk

Professionals (for example Health professionals) can also refer a client for assessment which may lead to a DFG application.

3.26 An overview of the process is shown below:-



Performance Information

3.27 The following information relates to DFG funded adaptations (excluding HRA funded works on council houses).

	2021/22	2022/23	2023/24
By Age:-			
17 years and less	19	16	22
18-65 years	46	66	65
66 years plus	74	77	90
Total	139	159	177
By Value:-			
£999 and under	0	0	2
£1,000-£4,999	42	50	50
£5,000-£14,999	85	100	114
£15,000-29,999	9	8	9
£30,000 plus	3	1	2
Total	139	159	177
Grant Value	£1,869,024	£1,869,024	£2,032,115
Total spend	£1,769,384	£1,869,024	£2,032,115
(Under)/over spend	(£99,640)	0	0

3.28 In 2024/25 we expect to deliver approximately 160 adaptations and to fully spend the original DFG allocation of £2.039m. An additional £0.280m was announced on 3 January 2025 and the service is looking at the extent to which this can be spent in 2024/25. Any unspent funding can be carried forward to fund adaptations in future years.

3.29 Timescales for Q2 2024/25 are reported as follows:-

- Average time from request to approval is 95.25 days (Previous quarter 109.90 days)
- Average time from approval to completion is 78.78 days (Previous quarter 65.41 days)
- Average time from request to completion is 173.82 days (Previous quarter 175.31 days)
- Average time from assessment to completion is 194.13 days (Previous quarter 202.45 days)

3.30 We ensure clients are 'waiting well' through implementing temporary equipment/solutions where appropriate and by regular contact through the waiting period to monitor each individual's situation.

Customer Feedback

3.31 Feedback is monitored through a satisfaction survey for each completed job. There is a response rate of approximately 23% with high levels of satisfaction recorded – 96% satisfied or very satisfied.

3.32 Complaints and compliments are monitored on an ongoing basis to establish any lessons to be learnt. There have been three formal complaints in the last year, two disagreeing with assessments and one around the private renting of a stairlift when no DFG request was made.

Current and Future Trends

3.33 The following current and anticipated trends are noted:-

- Significant number of high cost children's cases are coming through
- Increasing number of cases relating to behaviours where it can be more challenging to assess long-term needs
- Overcrowding can be an issue in some cases – exacerbated by the national shortage of housing

- Costs of works have increased significantly in recent years - mandatory maximum of £30,000 has been in place since 2008
- Capacity of inhouse services to undertake this work is limited
- Shortage of external contractors to undertake this work
- Demand is expected to increase significantly in coming years due mainly to the growth in the numbers of older people (numbers of age 75+ expected to increase by 30.8% between 2020 and 2030), complexity in children's cases also increasing
- Government announced a review of social care in January 2025 – DFG will form part of this review.

3.34 We are reviewing our current policy in line with changing needs and anticipated demands.

Improvement Work Plan

3.35 A multi-agency working group has been established in North Tyneside to develop practice guidance and review the procedure for accessing DFGs. This will ensure resources are allocated to achieve positive outcomes for people, carers, and families and will ensure equity and transparency, embedding robust evidence-based practice and professional reasoning.

3.36 The terms of reference for this group is to establish a set of agreed principles for decision making and to develop practice guidance to support professional reasoning. For example issues are identified in the following areas:-

- Clarity regarding which Act or duties are being addressed
- Restrictive practice and Deprivation of Liberty (DoLs)
- Use of risk assessments and positive risk taking
- Demonstrating/trialling equipment at the equipment loan centre as part of assessment to ensure proposed solutions will deliver required outcomes
- Shared care arrangements and understanding the benefits of adaptations for adults or children's social care as well as for the individual or family
- Identifying overcrowding. Statutory overcrowding re floorspace and expectations around children sharing bedrooms
- Establishing an appeals process

3.37 A regional review of DFG best practice is also due to be carried out in 2025 led by North East Association of Directors of Adult Social Services (NE ADASS).

3.38 The local and regional work will inform a review of the current Housing Assistance Policy. Any revisions to the Policy will require public consultation and Cabinet approval.

3.39 Developments are also planned around data and intelligence. There is a need to improve collection of equalities data to support equalities impact assessment. Improvements in performance reporting are also in progress.

3.40 Funding issues are also being reviewed with concerns identified around the following issues:-

- Establishing hardship
- Use of discretion/alternative contributions/loans for shortfalls
- Legal charges
- Respite provision during works
- Top ups re choice

Timescales for our internal review is for completion by April 2025. We are awaiting confirmation of timescales for the regional work. We anticipate the development of proposals for a revised policy and procedures by the autumn of 2025.

The current DFG policy can be found [here](#).