

Appendix B – Consultation comments

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Housing Occupational Therapist for Gosport Borough Council

3.1.4 Removal of means testing for repairs/ improvements below £5000 - stairlifts and level access showers. Can this include simple ramping which is often a barrier to people accessing their homes and getting out to essential medical appointments? I agree with Brian Bull that waiving the means test would be a huge benefit to many Gosport residents and could lead, in the long term, to being more cost-effective for the Council in time and money. Currently, people who are not eligible for a DFG due to their income and do not have savings that would enable them to fund the works themselves are left without essential adaptations, or adaptations are arranged privately that do not meet their long term needs.

3.1.6 The Council employing the services of a private OT. As you know, Jane Bradford and I are now in seconded Housing OT posts from Hampshire County Council for Fareham and Gosport. There is a similar arrangement in Havant and East Hants areas. Since we have been in post, we have more than halved our waiting lists, and reduced the delays for an OT assessment. Can this be added as an option to be considered in the policy for the long term, as currently the secondments are for one year? Other District and Borough Councils have opted for employing an in-house OT which also ensures that waiting times for an OT assessment are reduced, but they do not have the same advantages of the link to Adult Services.

Sarah Jeffrey, Commissioning Officer

Hampshire County Council Adults' Health and Care

Thank you Richard. This looks comprehensive and the changes to policy that you are proposing are very much welcomed. Can I just check that deep cleans are included within the scope for discretionary grants? And also that referrals for simple adaptations/repairs will be accepted from other health and social care professionals not just OTs?

Foundations

Had a skim read through the draft policy. It's commendably brief and to the point in the main. Some of your ideas on the discretionary use are great and I hope they will unlock a few schemes that might not otherwise have come to fruition.

It's worth remembering that the legislation doesn't require an OT to assess need. If delays are arising from the County not having enough OTs or not triaging cases so that less complex ones are being dealt with by OTAs and/or TAs and delays are arising, then perhaps a different solution can be found? I know that collectively in Hampshire joint working has been difficult, and a pragmatic answer may be the one which you have devised, but it does seem a shame.

If you are charging a 15% fee to the DFG I don't think you can justify it being an 'administrative' fee. If you are providing an agency service (drawing up specs, evaluating tenders, etc) then I think it might be difficult to claim you don't take any responsibility for the contractor's work. There have been LGO judgements in this area.

And I wondered if you were considering any framework type arrangements for some types of adaptation (ramps, stairlifts, and showers)? It would avoid the need to get two quotes on every occasion.

*Brian Bull, Housing Renewals Team Leader
Housing, Neighbourhood and Building Services at Portsmouth City Council*

For ease, I have answered your further query regarding framework raised by Foundations below too.

Tony is correct regarding the wording for the 15% fee, this is the Agency Service Fee, which the client will sign a form agreeing to this fee. If they do not sign, or wish to use their own contractors (which they are given the option too and quite within their rights too) we, the HIA Agency purely administer the grant and do not charge a fee onto the grant.

With regards to the framework. Essentially as the contract is between Gosport Borough Council and Portsmouth City Council. The contractor element is PCC responsibility. I have been in contact with our procurement in the past and with the current process we have in place this suffices. I attach the HIA Agreement and blank copy of the JCT contract advising and confirming PCC have no responsibility over the contractor and their performance. This ultimately is between the client and contractor and we are simply inviting a contractor to tender for the client. The contractor is selected on a fair rotational basis obtained from a list from Constructionline. The client is always given the choice once the contractor has visited and provided their quote, whether the client is in agreement with having this contractor carry out the works. I hope this makes sense, but happy to discuss further if you need any further clarification.

I think it may be worthwhile adding into the Policy that Portsmouth City Council Private Housing Team are administering the DFG's on behalf of Gosport Borough Council. The OT's are great and explain to clients that we (PCC) administer the grant on behalf of GBC, but sometimes clients do get a little confused at first contact then they receive a call from PCC when they live in Gosport. Once we explain we are assisting the client understands, but it may be worth adding a section into the policy if you feel necessary.