



Report to Health and Housing PDR Panel

Date: **17 January 2013**

Report of: **Director of Community**

Subject: **DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS - ANNUAL REPORT**

SUMMARY

This report outlines the Council's achievement in the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants programme in 2011/12, the progress in delivering this year's programme and the challenges for 2013/14.

RECOMMENDATION

That members note the improvements made in the delivery of the Disabled Facilities Grants programme, the demand and progress made in delivering this year's programme and the challenges for 2013/14.

INTRODUCTION

1. Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) are mandatory grants provided to enable a qualifying disabled person to live independently in their own homes. The grants are subject to a statutory test of financial resources which is prescribed by the Government. A one off grant enabling the adaption of a bathroom into a level access shower room can negate the ongoing costs associated with providing an expensive personal care package. There is also the added benefit of restoring a customer's dignity as they are able to attend to their own personal hygiene needs. The majority of DFG's are for disabled people who need a stair lift and or a level access shower. DFG's are also available for families with a disabled child and on occasions this necessitates a ground floor extension to provide a bedroom with an en-suite bathroom.
2. In 2011/12 the way we provided the DFG service was reviewed, with changes implemented with an aim to reduce the backlog of cases and to increase the speed of delivery. The other aim was to try and reduce the actual cost of materials for the installations.
3. This report reviews the current demand for DFG's and the number of DFG completions for the last financial year 2011/12 and the current year's programme up to 12th December 2012.

PROCEDURE and ROLES

4. All enquiries for a disabled facilities grant need to go via Hampshire County Council's Occupational Therapists (OTs) Service:
5. It is the role of the OT's to assess a disabled customer's needs, making a referral to the Local Authority where appropriate for grant funding to carry out essential adaptations to their client's home to facilitate independent living.
6. It is Fareham Borough Council's role to determine how best those needs can be met by adapting the property. The Council must be satisfied that the works are necessary, appropriate, reasonable and practical. The Council fulfils this responsibility by inspecting the property and preparing a schedule of eligible works as guidance for the applicant and their building contractor or agent. Fareham Borough Council is also responsible for processing the grant application and determining the amount of any grant to be awarded.
7. The Home Improvement Agency (In Touch) is there to provide advice and assistance to grant applicants acting as their agent, helping them to complete the grant application form, gather proof of ownership, income, savings and gathering estimates from reliable building contractors. The Home Improvement Agency will also arrange for the work to be carried out once the grant has been processed and approved by Fareham Borough Council.

SERVICE IMPROVEMENTS

8. A county-wide procurement exercise was carried out in 2011 in partnership with Hampshire County Council (HCC) and the other Hampshire District/Borough Councils which resulted in a single supplier being awarded a contract to supply all bathroom equipment including shower formers, screens and grab rails. The increased buying power has resulted in a decrease in the average cost of the

materials across the county of approximately £420 per case

9. The other major improvement over the last couple of years has been in the working relationship with, the Home Improvement Agency (In Touch) and with HCC's Occupational Therapists (OT) department. This new partnership approach has resulted in a significant reduction in the waiting times for grant funded adaptations to be carried out.
10. In the past, there were occasions when a customer had to wait up to a year before an OT would visit them to assess their needs and make a referral to the Council for a DFG. When a referral was made the average time that a customer would have to wait before the adaptation was completed was over 29 weeks. This meant that some customers were waiting an average of 18 months from the date of their request for essential adaptations to be completed. As a result of the changes that have taken place the average time taken from the date of request to a completed case has been reduced to an average of 9 months, so far in 2012-13, reducing the time taken by an average of 9 months compared to the same period last year.
11. The major difficulty with managing the budget is that at any moment in time there are around 70 pending cases. A case that may have entailed a significant amount of work, with resources allocated could be cancelled at any time potentially leading to a budget under spend. Conversely, working on too many cases expecting that there will be cancellations could lead to overspending the budget. We also have to be mindful of requests from OTs to bring forward priority cases which will require funding.

The breakdown of the number of DFG cases completed in 2011-12 is shown in the following table:

Disabled Facilities Grants 2011-12 all completed cases.			
<i>Tenure</i>	<i>Number</i>	<i>Value £</i>	<i>Av. cost per case</i>
Owner Occupier	57	£300,903	£5,279
Private Rented	5	£ 20,625	£4,125
Housing Assoc.	4	£ 10,559	£2,639
Children DFG cases			
Owner Occupier	6	£131,230	£21,871
	Contribution from Children's Services for a special case	(£10,000.00)	
TOTAL	72	£463,317	£6,435

CURRENT DEMAND FOR DFG'S 2012-13

The current demand for DFG's in 2012/13 (up to 12 Dec 2012) is set out in the table below:-

Description	Output
Number of cases referred by OT's	134
Number of cases pending (awaiting inspection and preparation of a schedule of eligible works)	46
Number of cases where application is pending (i.e. paperwork is with applicant for completion and they are gathering proof of ownership, income and savings, builders quotes etc, with the assistance of In Touch)	22
No of grants approved	21
Value of grants approved (inc on site)	£177,242
No of cases where building works are on site	13
Value of works on site	£136,007
No of grants completed	71
Value of completed grants	£388,514
Average time taken from referral to completion	22 weeks
Average cost of DFG (completed cases)	£5,472

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

12. The DFG programme is funded through a Government grant of £250,000 per annum from the Department of Communities and Local Government (CLG) together with £170,000 from the Council's own capital programme. Due to the difficulties encountered during the last financial year there was a carried forward amount of £235,702 which gives a total budget for 2012/13 of £655,702.

13. Although the average cost of a DFG has reduced this year, the demand for DFG's has risen. If the current trend in the number of OT referrals continues, demand is set to increase by 36% on the previous year. This is likely to place an additional demand on the DFG grant budget in 2013/14, with the risk that some cases may have to be deferred until the following financial year. Fortunately, the Council has just received confirmation that we have been allocated an additional one-off payment of £75,000 from CLG which is being set aside for next year's DFG programme.

RISK ASSESSMENT

14. There is a risk that if there are not sufficient resources available to meet the demand for DFGs then disabled people may have to wait longer for their adaptations to be carried out. If this was the case Officers would work closely with OT's to prioritise those with the most urgent needs for the adaptations to be carried out.

CONCLUSION

15. Over the past year there have been significant improvements in the operational procedures for DFG whilst also achieving a reduction in the overall cost of the adaptations themselves. However, the increase in referrals for DFGs, due in some part to the ageing population and greater awareness of the help available, is likely to continue to add pressure to the Council's budget without any increase in central government funding. This could result in longer waiting times for an adaptation to be carried out and therefore reduced customer satisfaction.

16. There is also an added uncertainty as CLG may be using a new funding model to calculate the amount of grant awarded to Local Authorities for DFG expenditure in 2013-14 which may result in the Council coming under greater pressure to meet any shortfall in funding.

Background Papers: None

Reference Papers: None

Enquiries:

For further information on this report please contact Giles Hearn. (Ext 4404)