

Housing Services
Disabled Facility Grant performance 2017
Working Group UPDATE

Introduction

On the 5th January 2016 it was a recommendation of the Environment, Health and Housing committee that a working group be established to specifically look into the Council's delivery of Disabled Facility Grants.

Three consecutive meetings were arranged and undertaken in early/mid 2016 to comprehensively review the service and place 18 recommendations for further investigation/consideration.

This report summarised the work undertaken by the Housing Services section in relation to these meetings and an update on the current and historic performance of the Housing Services Section and partners in relation to Disabled Facility Grants (DFG).

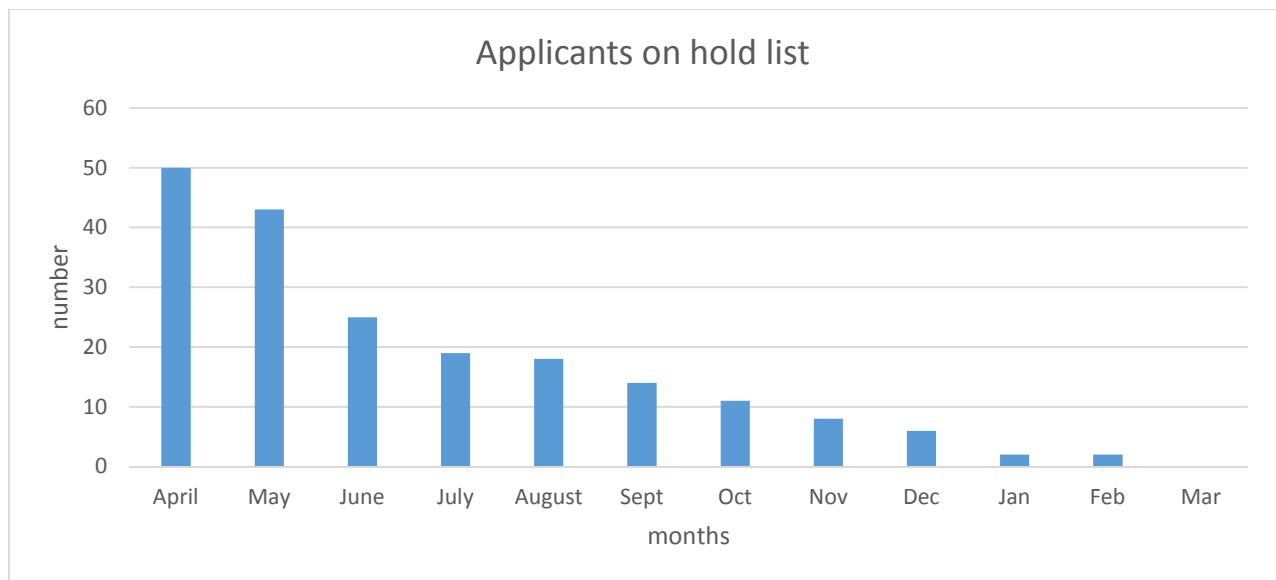
This report should be read in conjunction to the Time Lean Report produced by Alex Scrivens and the new Fylde Council Housing Assistance Policy which has been formulated as a result of the information in this report and government guidance.

Fylde Holding List

Fylde Council have historically had insufficient resources to fully meet the demand placed on the service for DFG adaptations. As such applicants have been placed on a 'holding list' prior to the Council taking a DFG application. Over the past 18 months the Council have been successful at eliminating the holding list of applicants.

Please see over for a month by month breakdown of the holding list and waiting times for applicants as well as a year on year overview of the holding list and waiting times.

Number of applicants of the 'holding list'. (April 2016-April 2017)

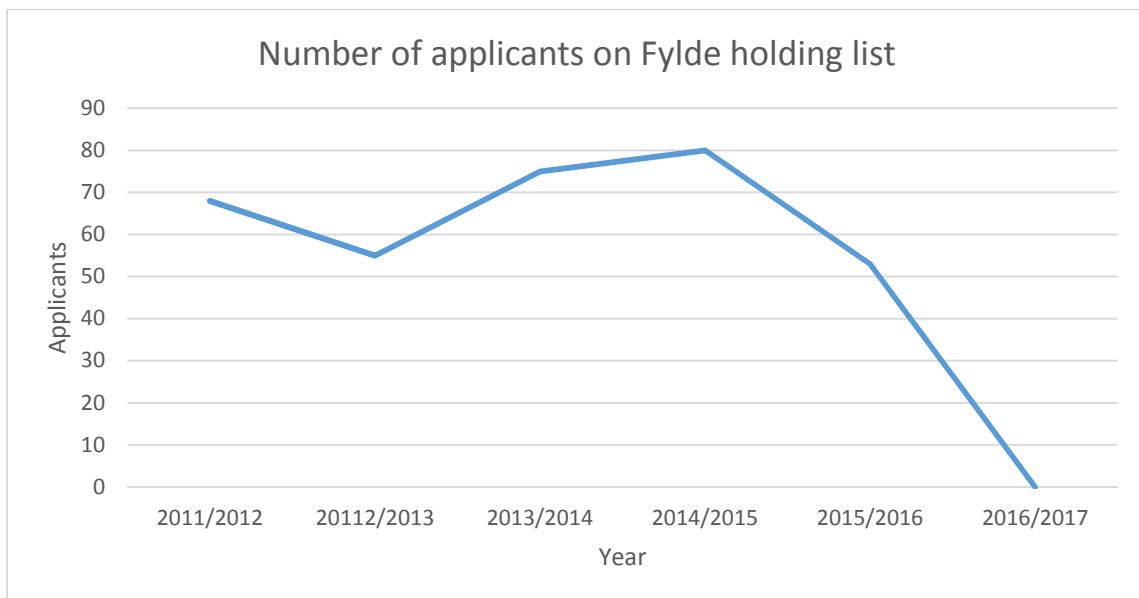
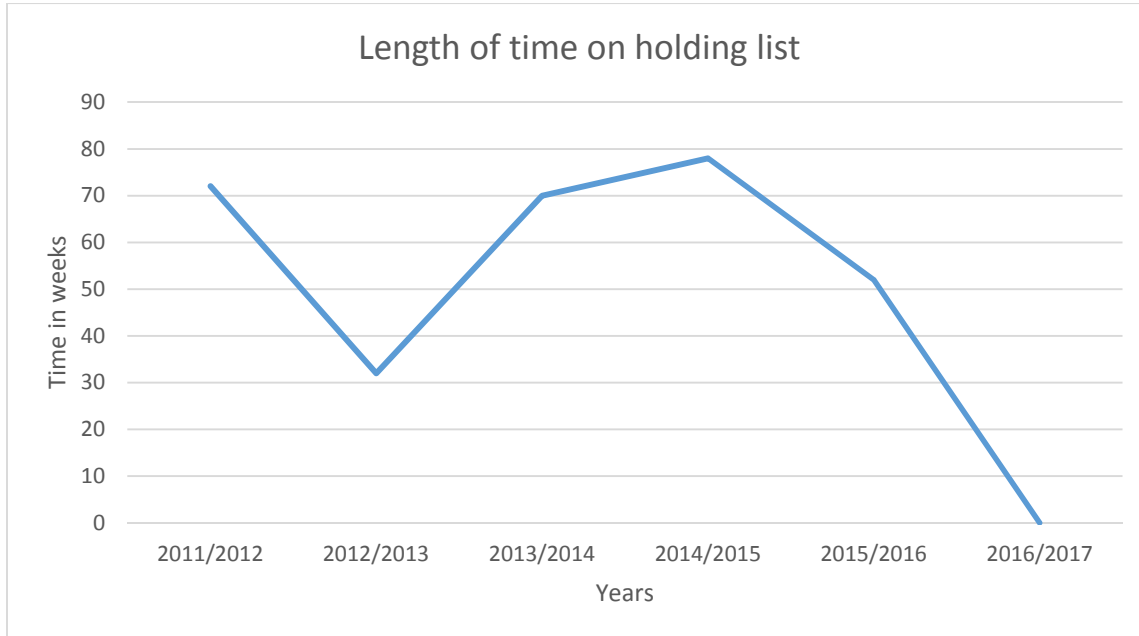


Time applicants are on the Fylde Council 'holding list' (April 2016-April 2017)



Year on year summary of Fylde Council 'holding list' (2011-2017)

Below is a year on year comparison of both the 'holding list' and the length of time on the list. Fylde Council are currently processing applications when they are received by Lancashire County Council (LCC) following discussion at the monthly Priority Panel.



Lancashire County Council performance

DFG's are the joint responsibility of both the district and county council. Applicants must firstly be assessed by an Occupational Therapist (OT) and then a referral placed to the district authority which specifies the necessary work. It is the responsibility of the district authority to conduct the works.

As of June 2017 applicants in the borough are on average waiting 142 days for an assessment by an Occupational Therapist before a valid referral can be made to Fylde Council. The North District of Lancashire (Fylde, Wyre and Lancaster) have subsequently been made a priority area for improvement in delivery times by LCC.

Fylde Council are currently reviewing the options to employ a private OT using our Better Care Fund (BCF) contribution. LCC are prepared to provide the details of applicants which are on their 'waiting list' however they must first undergo an initial screening to ensure they are likely to be DFG applications and contact the clients direct in order to comply with relevant Data Protection Laws on sharing information.

Lancashire districts (anonymized)	Average waits for OT assessments for DFG cases (all days)
Central Lancashire districts average	113.6
A	102.3
B	122.2
C	107.6
D	117.0
East Lancashire districts average	51.9
E	43.0
F	58.0
G	56.9
H	49.1
I	50.0
North Lancashire districts average	116.7
FYLDE	141.8
J	94.8
K	133.9
Grand Total	91.1

% of DFG's following assessment by an Occupational Therapist

LCC estimate in Fylde 28% of the applicants awaiting OT assessment will result in a DFG. LCC are currently in the process of recruiting 14 additional OT's across Lancashire however these officers may not be in post for several months. This figure is relevant to Fylde council as if we recruit a private OT a number of assessments may not lead to a DFG and therefore the cost will need to be covered from another source.

	DFG	OTHER
North	34.1%	65.9%
FYLDE	28.0%	72.0%

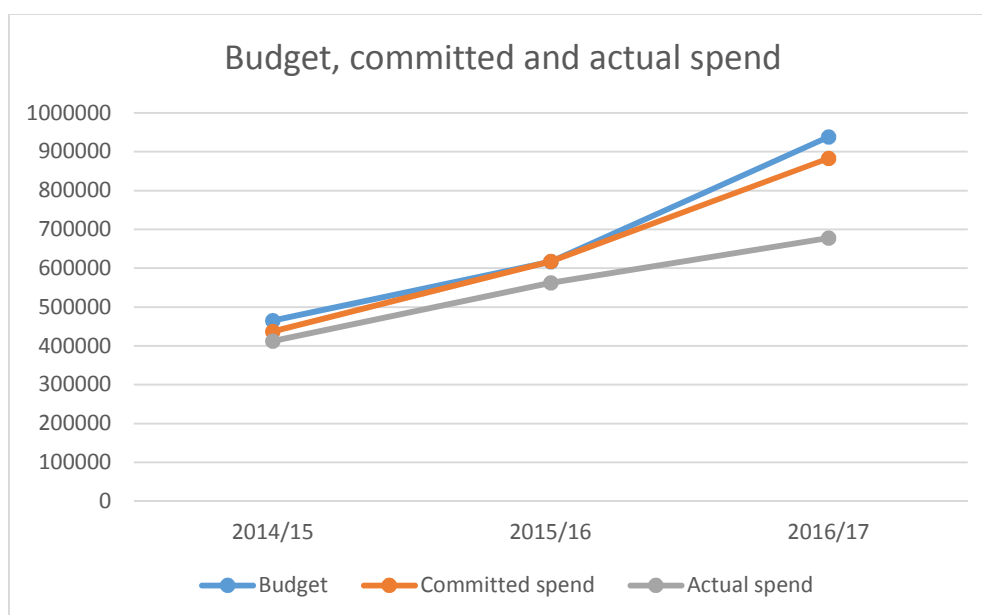
Fylde DFG budget

The table below highlights the DFG budget year on year including the committed and actual spend as well as the carry-over between financial years. The table highlights that in 2016/17 £55,088 of the DFG budget was uncommitted (budget – committed). It also highlights that last year there was a significant carry-over of funds which is also likely to occur this year. The figures highlight the increasing workload being placed on the service (doubling of committed spend since April 15).

The increase in the DFG budget has resulted in the Council eliminating the holding list for applicants and having the ability to explore new options to expand the service. A report is due to the Environment, Health and Housing Committee in June 2017 to explore the options to allocate these additional sources of funds to maximise DFG delivery.

There is a potential risk that future uncommitted funds will be returned to LCC and not allocated to residents of Fylde.

	Budget *	Committed spend	Actual spend	C/over
2014/2015	465,000	436,962	412,531	52,469
2015/2016	617,000	617,909	562,685	54,315
2016/2017	938,000	882,912	677,653	260,347
2017/2018	1,159,565	81,828	130,338	-
	* inc c/over, repayments, and RP contribution			



Satisfaction survey results

Fylde council send satisfaction surveys to all our customers after they have received a Disabled Facility Grant. The following are the results of these surveys for 2016/17.

Any customer enquires which report they are unsatisfied with the service are investigated by the Principal Housing Services Officer.

	LCC	Fylde	Fylde
DFG 2016/17 Customer Survey	8. How do you rate the length of time taken from your request for help to the OT visiting you?	10. How do you rate the way in which Fylde BC office staff dealt with your enquiry?	15. Overall, how would you rate the level of the service you have received?
Excellent	46%	78%	80%
Good	37%	22%	18%
Adequate	6%	0%	0%
Poor	11%	0%	2%

Customer comments

Below are a range of comments left by customers.

“The officers at Fylde Council have provided an excellent service enabling my daughter to be safe and independent. Thank you”

“Fylde Council people very helpful and understanding”

“I use to dread going upstairs. That is no longer an issue”

“I am now able to shower for the first time in months”

“I can get a shower, for years I have just had a small sink of water in my room. I would like to add the whole team where amazing I can’t praise them enough”

“Given me 100% improvement on my personal needs”

“Has given me dignity, being able to bathe in my home instead of at relatives”

“basically it has enabled me to get outside my house”

“Both for my husband and myself it has made it easier to cope on a daily basis”

Benchmarking

Fylde Council now benchmark our DFG processing times across Lancashire. It was the focus of the Lancashire DFG group to focus on times rather than standardised processes which can vary between council's for a variety of reasons such as team sizes, budgets and audit requirements. Below are the average times from receiving a referral from an OT to a completed adaptation. This table highlights that some districts still retain a 'holding list' of applicants (such as Council's E,H and I).

Average time scales to complete work from application to completion across Lancashire in working days (31st January 2017)

	Average number of working days from referral received (from LCC) to application approved	Average number of working days from approval to work complete	Average total start to finish
District			
A	45	46	91
B	61	53	114
Fylde	25	65	90
C	75	36	111
D	57	59	116
E	261	60	321
F	47	82	129
G	32	87	119
H	129	91	220
I	113.29	47.63	160
J	61	69	130
K	70	41	111

Time Lean report

The DFG service has undertaken a time lean review conducted by Alex Scrivens, a copy of that report is attached to this report.

The report recommends several changes to improve delivery times and reduce file/paper sizes. Some of these recommendations have financial implications and will require further analysis/trail prior to delivery.

Task and Finish Group Implementation Plan

This is an update on the 18 recommendations made from the task and finish group in 2016.

Task ID	Task Name and Details/Description	Comments	Progress Update/ Status
1.	Circulate a list of charities we contact when a contribution is required	Provided in report two.	completed
2.	That 5 sample applicant/contractor files be made available for the next meeting of the group to enable the group to gain a better appreciation of the process.	Provided in meeting two. Several files and documents inspected.	completed
3.	Members requested details of the current holding list breakdown including details of age, be made available at the next meeting.	Provided in report two	Completed
4.	That officers contact other districts seeking the average price for a Level Access Shower.	Provided at meeting two	Completed
5.	That officers provide a list of ongoing DFG's and waits in comparison to statutory time limits.	Provided at meeting two	Completed
6.	That the Chairman and Vice- Chairman of the Environment, Health & Housing Committee, Councilors Ben Aitken and Viv Willder attend the next meeting of the Prioritisation Panel (PP).	Attended priority panel (20/4/2016)	Completed

Task ID	Task Name and Details/Description	Comments	Progress Update/ Status
7.	That subject to availability and/ or if appropriate, key personnel be invited to the next meeting of the working group.	Attendance at meeting two of Kate Kelso (OT) and Gary Savage (Hospital discharge manager)	Completed
8.	That a link be sent out to the Ombudsman Report 'Making a house a home: Local Authorities and disabled adaptations' which was referred to in meeting one.	Link was included in the minutes for meeting one	Completed
9.	That returned quotations should provide further details of the split between materials and labour.	New schedule has been devised which requests split of materials and labour. Now being sent to all contractors. Now in place.	Completed
10.	Members noted the service was last audited in 2012 and recommended that it be audited again soon.	Confirmed internal audit of DFG section for 2017/18	Completed
11.	The Working Group expressed their concerns with the LCC current procedure and requested that the implementation of a self-assessment tool should be looked at as a matter of urgency.	This item was raised to LCC. Some concern was raised that a self-assessment tool kit may both deter people from applying or raise expectations if the details are incorrectly inputted to the website. In addition the process still requires a medical assessment and therefore the client may fail the medical assessment despite meeting the financial requirements. LCC have initiated a "fast track" service across Lancashire to ensure DFG work is passed through their system faster.	Completed

Task ID	Task Name and Details/Description	Comments	Progress Update/ Status
		<p>This pilot scheme is now fully implemented across Lancashire. Fast track DFG's are now being received by Fylde.</p> <p>Several Councils have now (or are in the process) of removing the means test whilst BCF budgets remain high.</p> <p>Based on this it is unlikely that a self-assessment means test will be adopted by LCC.</p>	
12.	Members suggested that the detailed processes involved in the administration and delivery of DFG's should be reviewed as part of the corporate 'lean-time' approach to help facilitate support process of further service improvement and efficiency.	<p>DFG's have undertaken the time lean process.</p> <p>(please find attached report)</p>	Completed
13.	To express this Council's concerns to LCC about the delays and ask for more resources to be presented.	<p>E-mail sent to Catherine Whalley (Head of Service Social Care Service) 20/4/16. Confirmation that 20 additional OT's will be employed by LCC from 1st June 2016.</p> <p>In addition two OT managers have been appointed.</p> <p>See email from Catherine Whalley to Paul Walker dated 21/4/16.</p> <p>Although the task is technically completed it is suggested this remains as a key recommendation to LCC in the final report.</p>	Completed

Task ID	Task Name and Details/Description	Comments	Progress Update/ Status
14.	To find out when the possible recruitment of further OTs is likely to happen	<p>OT managers in place.</p> <p>20 OT's to be recruited from 1st June 2016.</p> <p>As 1/5/2017 14 OT's are still to be recruited.</p> <p>North district has been highlighted as a priority for LCC to improve delivery times of OT assessments.</p> <p>'Fast tracking' in place however delays still remain in this process.</p>	<p>Completed</p> <p>Recruitment is however still ongoing</p>
15.	It was agreed further work needed to be undertaken to understand the average prices supplied from other district councils	<p>Prices which have been submitted have not been exact and have been more estimates than actual figures.</p> <p>Benchmarking across Lancashire districts is now more common practice through the DFG board which Fylde are members.</p> <p>Districts have commented on the difficulty of benchmarking prices given that clients' needs and therefore adaptations are different as are properties across the county.</p> <p>However it was felt it was a worthwhile exercise and to continue to monitor prices of adaptations.</p> <p>Further work related to this will be undertaken by the Lancashire DFG group.</p>	Completed

Task ID	Task Name and Details/Description	Comments	Progress Update/ Status
16.	The Working Group requested that comparison information (i.e. over a period of years if available) was provided regarding the numbers of clients contributing to the works.	Completed to be presented if required at meeting three.	Completed
17.	The Working Group requested copy of crib sheet which is sent to OT's.	Completed and sent on the 22/4/16 with the minutes from meeting two.	Completed
18.	For Fylde and Wyre to investigate a pilot for 12-18 months to employ their own OT with a view to reduce the waiting list.	<p>Wyre council now employ a private OT.</p> <p>If Fylde undertake the employment of a private OT it is likely to be on a case by case basis rather than as a temporary/fixed term contract.</p> <p>Lancashire County Council are currently undergoing a re-structure of their Occupational Therapy Department and are currently advertising for 14 OT posts.</p> <p>The cost for visits which do not result in a DFG will need to be covered by the council. This issue is covered in the draft housing assistance policy.</p>	Underway

Conclusion

1. Fylde Council have successfully eliminated the 'holding list' for clients waiting for a DFG.
2. Lancashire County Council are still experiencing some difficulties in relation to assessing clients and that increasing workloads have been placed upon Occupational Therapists and social services departments. That this may impact on current and future service delivery by Fylde Council.
3. Despite a previous pledge by LCC (May 16) to increase OT recruitment a number of vacancies remain which is affecting service delivery in Fylde.
4. Funds are increasing year on year currently giving Fylde Council the opportunity to explore new ways of delivery of the DFG service. Allocating resources now whilst these funds are available will assist in processing more applications and future proofing the service.
5. The DFG service has undertaken a 'time lean' review. The review concluded.
"Based on the full process mapping review, we feel that there are little more changes that could now be applied that would make the current procedures more LEAN."
6. Fylde Council currently process grant applications (on average) faster than other districts in Lancashire.
7. That future uncommitted BCF funds may be returned without being allocated to Fylde residents.