

## INFORMATION ITEM

REPORT OF	MEETING	DATE	ITEM NO
DEVELOPMENT	ENVIRONMENT, HEALTH AND HOUSING	5 JANUARY 2021	10
<b>DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT AND PRIVATE SECTOR ASSISTANCE POLICY UPDATE 2019/20 AND CURRENT POSITION UP TO QTR 2 2020/21</b>			

### PUBLIC ITEM

This item is for consideration in the public part of the meeting.

### SUMMARY OF INFORMATION

This report provides an update to Committee on the management of the Disabled Facilities Grant and Private Sector Assistance Policy within Fylde during 2019/20, and the current position at Qtr 2 2020/21.

The Housing Services Private Sector Assistance Policy was first approved by Committee in June 2017. It was amended in June 2018 to include recommendations intended to increase the take up of Disabled Facilities grants.

In November 2019 a further review was required, due to the increase in the number of Disabled Facilities Grant applications, without a corresponding increase in the Better Care Fund allocation.

### SOURCE OF INFORMATION

Internal Housing Services operation

### LINK TO INFORMATION

[Disabled Facilities Grants Fylde Council](#)

[Private sector assistance policy Nov 2019](#)

[Procurement of Disabled Facilities Grant Equipment June 2020](#)

### WHY IS THIS INFORMATION BEING GIVEN TO THE COMMITTEE?

Update on the management of the disabled facilities grant programme in Fylde and the private sector assistance policy between April 2019 to October 2020.

### FURTHER INFORMATION

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## **REPORT**

### **Background**

#### **Fylde Council Private Sector Assistance Policy, Disabled Facilities Grant**

1. Disabled Adaptation Grants enable eligible applicants to make changes in their home environment which allows them to live more independently in their homes.
2. The grants have a key role to play in reducing admissions to hospitals, providing safer and more effective discharge from hospital and preventing an increase in demand for social and residential care.
3. Adaptations delivered include; Level access showers, wet rooms, ramped access, door widening and equipment such as stairlifts and through floor lifts.
4. The Housing Services Private Sector Assistance Policy adopted in June 2017 created a framework for the delivery of various forms of grant assistance to benefit Fylde residents. The most significant was the introduction of Adaptations Grants which were administered in much the same way as Disabled Facilities Grants, but with greater flexibility. From June 2017, the 'test of resources' was no longer a requirement for grant works costing less than £6,000 for a single adaptation.
5. In June 2018, Environment Health and Housing Committee approved amendments to the policy with recommendations intended to increase the take up of Disabled Facilities Grants, these included:
  - a. To remove the 'test of resources' where 2 adaptations are required costing under £10,000.
  - b. To remove the 'test of resources' from adaptations requested by an Occupational Health Therapist where equipment is procured by Lancashire County Council.
  - c. To increase the grant award by up to £20,000 above the Disabled Facilities Grant maximum of £30,000 to carry out eligible work identified by an Occupational Health Therapist.
6. In November 2019 a review of the amendments in June 2018 was required to take into account the increase in the number of Disabled Facilities Grant applications without a corresponding increase in the Better Care Fund allocation, these included:
  - a. For a single adaptation of a value of up to £6,000: The standard means test is carried out and, if the applicant would have a contribution of £12,000 or more towards the cost of the work, they would be ineligible for grant aid.
  - b. For two adaptations up to a value of £10,000: The standard means test is carried out and, if the applicant would have a contribution of £20,000 or more towards the cost of the work, they would be ineligible for grant aid.
7. The Private Sector Assistance Policy is regularly reviewed and there are no proposed amendments to the current policy dated November 2019.

#### **Overview of the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) and Adaptation Grants**

8. Customer requests are initially taken by Social Care teams within Lancashire County Council and customer assessments are then carried out by Occupational Therapy teams. Adaptation recommendations are then sent to Fylde Council who undertake casework support, checking the eligibility of customers, undertaking

technical surveys, contractor procurement, managing the required works and monitoring the quality of work.

9. Lancashire County Council have undertaken additional recruitment of Occupational Therapists as well as adopting new ways of working to streamline the referral process. As a consequence Fylde Council have continued to receive a significant number of requests for adaptations. It is not likely that demand for disabled adaptations will alter in the short/medium term.
10. Lancashire County Council (LCC) have previously procured equipment which is installed through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) process. District Councils have now taken over these responsibilities from 1st December 2020 where stairlifts and through floor lifts are required for adults and children. Hoists will remain the responsibility of Lancashire County to procure under existing arrangements.
11. A procurement process has been undertaken jointly with Preston City Council using Housing Consortium Procurement services and following the evaluation of the competition bids the contract for Stairlifts and Lifting Equipment has been awarded to Stannah Lift Services from 1<sup>st</sup> December 2020 for an initial term of 5 years, with an optional extension of 2 years. The estimated annual contract cost for Fylde is £72,878.68 (Stairlifts £54,177.48 and Through Floor Lifts £18,701.20) which will be funded by the Better Care Fund grant allocation.
12. During 2020/21 the Covid Pandemic impacted on the physical delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants for a time. During this period the Housing Service continued to assess applications to enable the service to be in a position to have applications assessed and ready to deliver when the first lock down restrictions were lifted in July 2020. As such the Housing services team remains on target to fully commit the DFG budget in 2020/21.
13. The service has also worked with Contractors to implement a comprehensive Risk Assessment for undertaking and inspecting works in clients homes that have regard for Covid 19 secure working practices.

#### Summary of DFG grant delivery 2019/20

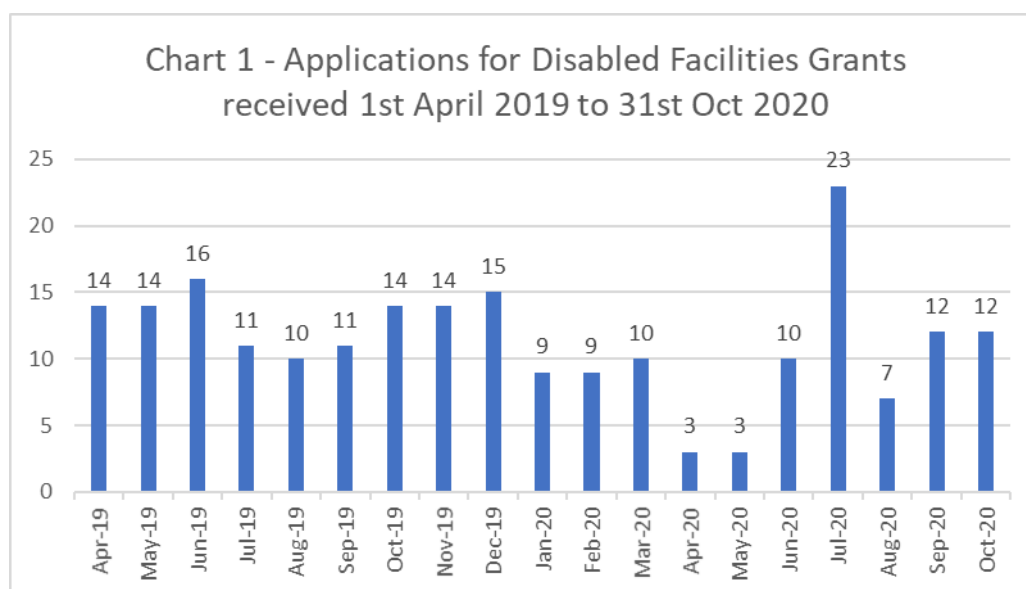
2019/20 BCF allocation received in June 2019	Supplementary funding allocation 2019/20	Progress Housing Association Contribution	Total funding allocation
<b>£1,090,401</b>	<b>£0</b>	<b>£40,000</b>	<b>£1,130,401</b>

14. In the previous years a supplementary allocation of Better Care Funding has been announced in December of each year, however this top up grant funding was not made available in 2019/20.
15. During 2019/20 a total of 127 grants were delivered.
16. During 2019/20 100% of the BCF grant allocation was committed against the service performance target of 100%.
17. During 2019/20 satisfaction levels with the service were high. Customers who agreed or strongly agreed that the adaptation had increased their independence were at 95%. Customers who rated the DFG service as good or excellent were 98%.

## Summary of DFG grant delivery 2020/21

2020/21 BCF allocation received in June 2020	Supplementary funding allocation 2020/21	Progress Housing Association Contribution	Total funding allocation
<b>£1,090,401</b>	<b>£146,826</b>	<b>£80,000</b>	<b>£1,317,227</b>

18. The Better Care Fund Allocation has remained static in 2020/21 however on the 8<sup>th</sup> December 2020 an additional £146,826 of funding assistance was announced for Fylde Council by The Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG).
19. At the end of quarter two in 2020/21 49% of the BCF grant allocation has been committed. Despite the covid pandemic and increase in budget the service remains on target to fully commit the funding allocation.
20. During 2020/21 satisfaction levels with the service remain high. Customers who agreed or strongly agreed that the adaptation had increased their independence were at 100%. Customers who rated the DFG service as good or excellent were 100%.
21. Progress Housing have agreed to double their contribution in 2020/21 to £80,000. A new service level agreement between Fylde Council and Progress Housing group has been formulated. This contribution will be reviewed annually in line with the Better Care funding.
22. Chart 1 illustrates the fluctuation in referrals from Occupational Health from April 2019 to October 2020 for adaptations. Demand is normally around 10 to 14 referrals per month. In April and May 2020 this fell to 3 as the first lockdown took effect. They have subsequently returned to their previous levels.



23. On a monthly basis, applications are assessed and awarded priority in line with the Housing assistance policy. This priority is based on the persons in most urgent need for adaptation work as determined by the Occupational Therapist assessment.

24. Table 1 below details the demand for adaptations as of September 2020. We currently have 29 clients on a holding list, where the application is received but is awaiting approval. Applicants at the end of September were on the holding list for an average of eight weeks, however urgent cases are processed immediately. The average waiting time to complete an approved Disabled Facilities Grant for the work to complete is around eight weeks.

Table 1 – Current demand for Disabled Facilities Grants as at Sept 2020				
New Applications Received (September 2020)	Applicants on the holding List	On-going cases (prior to approval)	Approved (April-September)	Cases on hold due to client factors
12	29	48	57	7

25. At the same time last year we were receiving similar numbers of new applications per month, with a corresponding 20 applications on the holding list. The average waiting times for the adaptation to complete from grant approval is at a similar level to 2019, 8 weeks.
26. The service is confident the full BCF allocation will be fully allocated in 2020/21 despite the impact of Covid 19 on the number of Occupational Health referrals during April and May, 2020 and the impact on delivering adaptations in clients homes.

Ends