



**Service Delivery
Committee**

13 October 2015

**Matter for
information and
Decision**

Title: **The Delivery of Adaptations for the Disabled and Disability Facilities Grants (DFG)**

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1. Introduction

This report is to provide Members with information on a potential alternative means of delivering adaptations for disabled residents and providing a more comprehensive housing support service.

2. Recommendation

That options for the Council to join the Lightbulb project as the means of delivering DFG's and adaptations for our own disabled tenants are explored further with a view to joining the project as soon as possible subject to a further report containing all the necessary details and assurances.

3. Information

3.1 Legal Duty

The provision of DFG's by District Councils is a mandatory duty. They are means tested grants that are intended to address a number of specified needs to enable a degree of independent living in the clients own home. These grants are available to owner occupiers and private sector tenants (including Housing Association tenants) following an assessment of their needs. DFGs are not available to Council tenants.

Adaptations in our own stock are provided under our own policy and have to be funded from the Housing Revenue Account. This can lead to differences in provision between tenures.

There is a significant return on investment to the public purse from these grants because they can delay the need for residential care or care provided in the home due to enabling more independent living. The maximum grant is £30,000 however the average grant is approximately £7,000.

Historically there have often been waiting times for DFGs due to the mismatch between demand and available funds. This has resulted in many Councils utilising their own funds to supplement the government funding and better meet demand. Here additional capital funding (top-up by OWBC) of

£78,068 was provided and this is regarded as sufficient to meet present demand with having to resort to a waiting list.

3.2 The Lightbulb Programme (Lightbulb)

Lightbulb is a County-wide partnership project established in order to redesign housing services across the county so that they become a fully inclusive service that can deliver a better service to clients and savings to the wider health and social care economy in Leicestershire. The three key ambitions of the programme are to provide:

- A single point of contact for referrals:
- A single, holistic assessment process, including a housing based assessment, accompanied by case management service for those who need it:
- A broader offer of housing support and advice with access to handyperson, services. Cost effective recycled furniture, affordable warmth advice and practical support including housing based assessment

The fundamental aim of the Lightbulb project is therefore to provide a better standard and a more cohesive and comprehensive service to the disabled. This is being tested in a number of pilot projects across the County. One of these is currently providing DFG's in both North West Leicestershire (NWL) and Blaby Districts and is currently providing a much faster service than was achieved previously.

This is done using a dedicated team based at and managed by Blaby District Council and including dedicated OTs seconded from the County. This team undertake the entire process from initial referral to completion of the work, pulling in additional specialist assistance as may be required in certain cases.

Performance is the subject of regular reports to each member Council and contracts contain provisions should performance fall below what the Council would consider acceptable.

Other pilots are scheduled to start in other districts providing other elements of support. These are detailed at Appendix 2 and include the following:

- Affordable warmth
- Handyperson
- Home safety
- Assistive technology
- Housing options advice for future planning
- Access point for other services such as social support, money advice, falls prevention etc
- Customer insight work to help scope the Lightbulb offer
- Links with other preventative services - First Contact, Local Area Co-ordination

3.3 Current Arrangements in Oadby and Wigston

The table below summarises the strengths and weaknesses of our current arrangements together with the opportunities presented by the Lightbulb project and the external threats to the continuation of our current service.

Strengths	Weaknesses
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County OT may already have contact with Client • DFG service delivered by an experienced and dedicated local contractor with this Council providing admin support and monitoring • Positive Internal Audit report in 2015 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reliance on County Council for OT assessment • Fluctuations of County OT staffing levels causes peaks and troughs in demand, adds delay for clients and makes spend unpredictable. • Single contractor with no alternative arrangements for resilience • Recent loss of experienced admin staff led to delays and need for retraining on systems • Disjoined service with multiple people/agencies involved • Stand alone with separate arrangements for additional housing services
Opportunities offered by Lightbulb	Threats
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • True end to end holistic service managed by and based at District Council • Would deliver DFGs and Council tenant adaptations • Potential to expand and add on other housing related services increasing the range of services for residents • Increased resilience through bigger team whilst retaining local knowledge of current provider • Single point of contact for clients • Funding kept separate and dedicated to each partner district • Regular reports of performance, service provided and quality assurance. • No increase in costs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Funding for DFGs now no longer received by Districts but paid to County Council as part of Better Care Fund • No ring fencing for DFG element of Better Care Fund • Potential isolation as other Districts join Lightbulb • Potential risk to service and failure to deliver duty due to loss of key personnel • Reduced Government funding but increased demand for statutory entitlement.

3.4 Proposed funding arrangements 2015/16

The DFG capital grant (previously paid directly to District Councils) is being incorporated into the Better Care Fund (paid to County Councils) as of 2015/16 and this element of the grant is not to be ring fenced for the provision of adaptations. The County Councils proposed arrangements for Districts to access this funding for 2015/16 are set out at Appendix 1.

There is concern that the lack of any ring fence and financial pressures could result in some of this funding being utilised by the County Council for other purposes. As can be seen the proposed arrangements at appendix 1 include a requirement for Districts to return any underspend to the County to be utilised in the Better Care Fund.

Future arrangements are not guaranteed although the County Council have indicated that the Lightbulb project is a priority for them and that Councils who participate are most likely to have the full amount of DFG funding made available to them.

3.5 Current performance

At the last meeting this Committee received a report detailing demand patterns since 2012 and projected demand in the current financial year

Demand is running at or possibly a little above predicted level as, following a slow period there has been an increase in the number of referrals being received via Leicestershire County. It is too early to draw any conclusions from this but we will continue to monitor as the 2015/16 financial year progresses.

A DFG can be approved and works completed in as little as 3 to 4 months although actual times vary. This assumes for example the applicant provides the information for assessing any financial contribution promptly. It also depends on the nature and extent of the work. Where only building control approvals are required (e.g. to convert an existing bathroom to install level access shower) this is included in the time indicated but where full plans and planning permission are required (e.g. to build an extension) times will be considerably longer and may take up to a year to complete. If the property is rented there can be delays and sometimes difficulties in obtaining the landlords permission.

Adaptations to Council properties are dealt with in the same timescales following as much as possible the same procedures but does not include a financial assessment stage, proof of ownership checks.etc.

Implications	
Financial (PL)	CR5 Effective utilisation of resources/assets. In delivering the programme, Officers will seek to help the maximum number of households within the budget that is available. Spend on this budget will achieve a significant return on investment by removing the need for residential care.
Risk (APM)	CR6 Regulatory Governance. The Council is expected to determine the needs of its residents and to deliver through it its private sector housing renewal policy in response to priorities. CR4 Reputation. The risk of failing to deliver, or to deliver slowly, the statutory duty to provide mandatory DFGs.
Equalities (VQ)	An Equality Impact Assessment has been undertaken and appropriate mitigation measures are being developed and monitored
Legal (CA)	DFG's are mandatory grants and once need is established the grants are required for improving the quality of life of a person with disability, particularly in their home.

Appendix 1

BETTER CARE FUND 2015/16

PROCESS FOR PAYMENT OF DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS

Introduction

This discussion document sets out a proposal for the payment of Disabled Facilities Grants to District Councils in 2015/16.

Background

Disabled Facilities grants (DFGs) are grants provided by local authorities to help meet the cost of adapting a property for the needs of a disabled person.

In recent years DFG funding has been paid to District Councils directly from the Department for Communities and Local Government (DCLG), however from 2015/16 this funding will be incorporated into the Better Care Fund (BCF) and paid to Leicestershire County Council.

As a result of this change in practice, it has become necessary to arrange a new mechanism for payment DFG funding to district councils from 2015/16.

DFG Allocations

The DFG funding allocation for Leicestershire totals £1.7m for 2015/16. Individual district allocations are detailed in the table below:

District	Allocation £'000
Blaby District Council	256
Charnwood Borough Council	425
Harborough District Council	199
Hinckley & Bosworth Borough Council	250
Melton Borough Council	133
North West Leicestershire District Council	298
Oadby & Wigston Borough Council	177
	1,738

Guidance from NHS England stipulates that DFG funding will have to be allocated to District Councils in order for them to meet their statutory duties.

Process

In the absence of guidance from the DCLG for payment of DFG's in 2015/16, the following process is proposed:

- District Council's will issue an invoice to the County Council for their DFG allocation as detailed above.
- The invoice shall not be dated before 1st April 2015.

- Invoice to be marked for the attention of Richard George and sent to the following address:
 - Leicestershire County Council, PO Box 507, Sale, Cheshire M33 0EJ.
- The County Council will pay the invoice within its normal 30 day payment policy.
- For the purposes of audit, District Council's shall maintain appropriate financial records to record expenditure and at the end of the financial year complete a certificate of expenditure. (The format of the certificate has yet to be designed, but is likely to be 'light touch').
- In the event of an underspend the district council must notify the LCC Assistant Finance Business Partner at the earliest opportunity. Underspends shall be returned to the County Council for re-investment in the Better Care Fund.
- No additional Better Care Fund funding will be paid if a district council overspends against its DFG allocation.

Other Issues

This process for payment of DFG allocations will be for 2015/16 only. The situation will be reviewed for 2016/17 taking into account of any changes through the integration of housing adaptations services across Leicestershire (Light Bulb Project).

The statutory responsibility for the provision of DFGs will remain with district councils.

Recommendations

Section 151 Officers are requested to:

- Note the contents of this report and provide comments on this proposal

Officer to Contact:

Richard George
 Assistant Finance Business Partner
 Leicestershire County Council
 Telephone: 0116 3058318
 E-mail: richard.george@leics.gov.uk

Appendix 2

Pilot 1 (Blaby and NWL)		
Overview	Anticipated outcomes/outputs	Update
<p>This pilot is focusing on adaptations processes, exploring:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrating processes currently delivered at County/district level Consolidating processes across districts Removing blockages, duplication and delay points Identifying opportunities to triage and target calls and enquiries by extending the offer Improving self help options through advice and information Linking with/utilising other solutions (handyperson, assistive technology, affordable warmth etc) Exploring opportunities for smarter procurement 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Improve outcomes for customers (speedy, simple and personable services which can offer the right solution for the individual) Contribute to the prevention of hospital admissions/readmission and support timely hospital discharge Contribute to the reduction or avoidance of admissions to residential or nursing care Achieve better value for money 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Anecdotal information from the team is positive about co-location arrangements eg better communication, more efficient, things are being considered more holistically Process improvements have been identified and are being tested out Handyperson scheme (through LCC Adaptations team) operational Housing Support Co-ordinators start during Sept Performance information being collected via <i>Flare</i> Workshop arranged for Oct – A&C and Lightbulb staff – to identify process change required to move the pilot further forward
Pilot 2 (Hinckley)		
<p>This pilot aims to focus around a GP practice in the Hinckley area and will explore:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The development of a broader housing support officer informed by clinical input and customer insight Shaping a housing support offer that can respond to specific health related issues eg respiratory disease, risk of falls Better targeting of housing support services (eg links to CCG risk stratification work) Links with other prevention initiatives such as First Contact and Local Area Co-ordination Links with wider CCG plans to reshape community 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contribute to the prevention of hospital admissions/readmission and support timely hospital discharge Contribute to a reduction in GP visits Improved outcomes for customers Better targeting of resources by linking the Lightbulb offer to specific health conditions Contribute to an increased use of assistive technology as a preventative measure Development of a comprehensive housing needs assessment to support the delivery of Lightbulb services Improved links/integration with local VCS 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pilot outline established and agreed Interface/referral processes between First Contact and Lightbulb agreed Housing needs assessment being developed Housing offer drafted Performance framework to be drawn up with GP surgery

health services in Hinckley	services	
Pilot 3 (Melton)		
<p>This pilot aims to demonstrate the cost benefits of remedying poor housing (as identified through the HHSRS) and will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identify 'poor' housing linked to NEA funding bid and Housing Health and Safety Rating System (HHSRS) • Identify caseload of homes for targeted actions • Utilise NEA/other resources to undertake remedial measures and eliminate hazards • Measure and project potential benefits to health and wider society using established methodology (BRE Housing Health Cost Calculator) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduction in overall cost to the NHS over time is modelled • 'payback' period of different remedial works is modelled • Reduction in costs to wider society over time is modelled 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • meeting held with BRE to progress use of the Housing Health Calculator • NEA bid submitted by Public Health
Pilot 4 (Charnwood/OPU)		
<p>This pilot will take a similar shape as Pilot 2 but be linked to the Older Person's Unit in Loughborough. It aims to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop a housing support offer that can respond to specific health related issues, linked to key presenting issues as identified by OPU clinicians • Develop a referral mechanism from the OPU into Lightbulb and a holistic housing needs assessment • Use the Housing Support Co-ordinators to co-ordinate a range of solutions based on the housing needs assessment 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Contribute to the prevention of hospital admissions/readmission and support timely hospital discharge • Contribute to a reduction in GP visits in the longer term • Improved outcomes for customers • Better targeting of resources by linking the Lightbulb offer to specific health conditions • Contribute to an increased use of assistive technology as a preventative measure • Contribute to the reduction or avoidance of admissions to residential or nursing care 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visit arranged to the OPU, to discuss pilot proposal with clinical staff (including OPU consultant) • Meeting arranged by CBC to discuss what the housing support offer in Charnwood could look like • Initial meeting with The Bridge to discuss VCS involvement in the pilot • Processes developed as part of Pilot 2 will support this pilot