



Cabinet

Tuesday, 8 February 2022

Disabled Facilities Grant Policy

Report of the Director – Neighbourhoods

**Cabinet Portfolio Holder for Communities and Climate Change,
Councillor A Brennan**

1. Purpose of report

- 1.1. This report will inform Cabinet of revisions to the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant Policy.
- 1.2. The current Policy is entitled Disabled Facilities Grant Policy 2018 to 2023. The revised Policy will not be given a date range but will be further revised to reflect any changes to local or national policy and practice or within five years of the approval of this Policy.
- 1.3. The Policy has been revised to mirror changes to the county-wide Disabled Facilities Grant Policy, and to reflect the impact of material and labour cost pressures within the construction sector.

2. Recommendation

It is RECOMMENDED that Cabinet:

- a) approves the revised Disabled Facilities Grant Policy, as attached at Appendix 1; and
- b) approves that any further revisions to the Policy due to statutory changes may be delegated to the Director – Neighbourhoods in consultation with the Cabinet Member for Communities and Climate Change.

3. Reasons for Recommendation

- 3.1. The Council is keen to ensure that residents are given the assistance they need to remain independent in their home for as long as practically possible. An effective and resourced Disabled Facilities Grant Policy reduces demand on other public sector services, such as hospitals, nursing, and residential care.
- 3.2. The revised Policy aligns with the county-wide Policy, which has been adopted or will be adopted by the other districts and boroughs in the County.

This in turn provides consistency for clients and supports more aligned working practices between the districts and boroughs, and the County Council.

4. Supporting Information

- 4.1. The provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) is mandatory under the provisions of Section 23 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. The DFG capital allocation is awarded to districts and boroughs through the Better Care Fund, which is administered by Nottinghamshire County Council as part of their public health role. There is national guidance relating to who is eligible for assistance and how DFGs should be administered.
- 4.2. The current Disabled Facilities Grants Policy has been reviewed, the driver for the review being a commitment from the Nottinghamshire districts and boroughs to establish a common policy for private sector DFGs. This includes applications from private householders and tenants, including tenants of Registered Providers. This is the sum total of the client base for Rushcliffe Borough Council, as the Council does not own housing stock where the arrangements are slightly different
- 4.3. Representatives from Nottinghamshire district and borough councils' DFG teams and the County Council's Occupational Therapy (OT) service meet on a regular basis to discuss the DFG process. Each district and borough have their own DFG Policy, based upon national guidance. As the OT service works across the county, it was agreed that having a single DFG Policy would provide clarity for the OT services, local residents and contractors working cross boundary. This would ensure a consistent level of service provision and provide an opportunity for joint working and more alignment in the future.
- 4.4. The key change is to increase the upper limit on grants for major adaptations. This proposal increases the maximum discretionary grant from £10,000 to £20,000, thereby increasing the overall grant available from £40,000 to £50,000.
- 4.5. A DFG award consists of two elements, a mandatory grant, and a discretionary element. The mandatory grant level is set nationally, currently at £30,000. The majority of grants awarded are below the mandatory level. However, some adaptations, in particular house extensions, cost over and above the mandatory amount. The Council along with their other districts and boroughs in the county have a discretionary budget that allows them to top up the grant awardable under the legislation.
- 4.6. The Council's current discretionary limit per application is currently £10,000. However, a growing number of major adaptations are priced above the current £40,000 limit, thus bringing in to question our ability to meet the needs of households with urgent needs. The inflationary pressures within the construction sector are much documented. As such it is proposed on a county-wide basis to raise the discretionary limit per applications to £20,000.

- 4.7. It is also proposed that the DGF, up to the maximum of £20,000, will be placed as a legal charge on the property for 10 years, where the grant recipient has a legal interest in the adapted property. Currently only the first £10,000 of a mandatory DFG is placed as a legal charge. This means that in exceptional circumstances the total legal charge could reach £30,000.

Other key revisions include:

- 4.8. The maximum discretionary grant payable where there are dual residency arrangements for a child will increase from £10,000 to £30,000. The funding will be placed as a legal charge on the property for 10 years. Previously the £10,000 legal charge was for an indefinite repayment period.
- 4.9. The previous limit of £10,000 to assist a resident being discharged from hospital to relocate to suitable accommodation has been removed and replaced by the term 'reasonable cost' thereby giving the Council flexibility with the level of help it can provide.

5. Risks and Uncertainties

The demand for DFGs has increased this year compared with previous years. Conversely inflationary pressures in the building sector have increased leading to concerns about the overall funding allocation.

6. Implications

6.1 Financial Implications

The priorities and tasks identified within the Disabled Facilities Policy will be contained within existing BCF allocations. In the event of any changes to the BCF allocation, expenditure plans will need to be reviewed.

6.2 Legal Implications

The provision of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) is a statutory requirement

6.3 Equalities Implications

The Disabled Facilities Grant Policy takes account of the effect of the Council's priorities on all residents of the Borough and is supported by the Council's Equality and Diversity Scheme. An equality impact assessment has been carried out and no adverse impacts have been identified.

6.4 Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 Implications

None

7. Link to Corporate Priorities

Quality of Life	The DFG Policy enhances the lives of our disabled residents through investment to make their homes fully accessible.
Efficient Services	An aligned Policy at the county level allows us to explore more joined up working practices.
Sustainable Growth	n/a
The Environment	Large scale works will adhere updated environmental regulations, thereby improving the efficiency of the dwelling.

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For more information contact:	Donna Dwyer Strategic Housing Manager 0115 914 4275 ddwyer@rushcliffe.gov.uk
Background papers available for Inspection:	None.
List of appendices:	Disabled Facilities Grant Aligned Policy Document