

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No.

meeting date: THURSDAY, 22 SEPTEMBER 2011
title: DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT UPDATE
submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
principal author: RACHAEL STOTT

1 PURPOSE

1.1 To update Committee on the investigation into the reduction of disabled facilities grant referrals.

1.2 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities:

- Council Ambitions – To meet the identified housing needs of households in the borough.
- Community Objectives – To achieve a balanced housing market.
- Corporate Priorities – None.
- Other Considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

2.1 At the last Health and Housing Committee meeting in July, Committee were informed of the reduced number of recommendations received from the Occupational Therapist and the impact this was having on an under spend of a disabled facilities grant budget. Members requested that this position was investigated.

2.2 A meeting was held on 30 August in the Council Offices with the Occupational Therapy Manager, Senior Occupational Therapist from Clitheroe Hospital and a Social Services Occupational Therapist for Ribble Valley. They were aware of the reduction in workload and felt this was due to a number of issues.

3 ISSUES

3.1 Firstly the introduction of 'Fair Access to Care Services' in April 2011. This has resulted in the criteria for eligibility for disabled facilities grants being changed. All people are assessed and their needs are categorised into bands: mild, moderate, substantial and critical. Up until April 2011, all adaptations required from bands moderate, substantial and critical were eligible. However since April only bands substantial and critical have been eligible. This has obviously reduced the overall numbers of households now entitled for grant aid.

3.2 Another change to the service has been the increased screening prior to the occupational therapies assessment. The customer service team at Social Services take all enquiries and these are then passed into an intake team who again screen the enquiry to establish the banding of the person's need.

- 3.3 If the applicant does not give a full medical detail at this stage it is likely they will not be recommended for a full assessment but signposted as to where they can buy appropriate aids.
- 3.4 Another change has been the use of Review Assessment Support Officers (RASOR's) these are not fully qualified occupational therapists and these carry out assessments rather than the fully qualified Occupational Therapist. This may result in the long-term prognosis of the client not being fully assessed and therefore only a minor adaptation less than £1,000 is taking place. Providing a more short-term solution to the person's needs.
- 3.5 The Occupational Therapy Manager explained that other district councils had raised the same concerns and she understood Preston City Council and Lancaster City Council have requested that they are given the addresses of the houses banded in moderate need. As these would have previously been eligible for a disabled facilities grant and the Council is now looking to pilot a scheme to provide the adaptation for these households through the Disabled Facilities grant route.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications
- Resources – The budget secured for Disabled Facilities Grants is at risk of not being fully committed due to these changes in eligibility. Continuing to use short-term measures will ultimately result in double funding as the needs of the applicant increase.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – Addressing the persons banded as in moderate need would require the service of an Occupation Therapist.
 - Political – Addressing housing need is a corporate ambition of the Council.
 - Reputation – Inclusion in the pilot scheme would raise our profile amongst Mid Lancs authorities.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

- 5.1 Instruct the Chief Executive to investigate the opportunity for Ribble Valley to be included in a pilot scheme with Preston and Lancaster to offer DFG support to applicants in moderate need, and to report back to this Committee with the project proposal as appropriate.

CHIEF EXECUTIVE

For further information please ask for Rachael Stott, extension 4567.