

RIBBLE VALLEY BOROUGH COUNCIL REPORT TO HEALTH & HOUSING COMMITTEE

Agenda Item No. 8

meeting date: 25 MAY 2017
 title: DFG POLICY AMENDMENTS
 submitted by: CHIEF EXECUTIVE
 principal author: RACHAEL STOTT, HOUSING STRATEGY OFFICER

1 PURPOSE

- 1.1 To propose a revision to the disabled facilities grant policy to improve the grant process and to take into consideration comments made during the consultation period.
- 1.2 To take effect from 1 June 2017.
- 1.3 Relevance to the Council's ambitions and priorities
- Community Objectives – To address the housing needs of older and disabled occupants across the borough.
 - Corporate Priorities – None.
 - Other Considerations – None.

2 BACKGROUND

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

- 2.1 The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) provides funding to older and disabled people in owner occupied, privately rented and social housing to help them to make changes in their home environment, such as the installation of wet room showers, stairlifts and ramps, which allow them to live more independently in their homes.
- 2.2 DFG also has a key role to play in reducing admission to hospitals, providing safer and more effective discharge from hospital, preventing an increase in demand for social care and delaying or reducing admission to residential care.
- 2.3 DFG was first introduced as part of the Local Government and Housing Act 1989 and was further developed in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

Table 1 illustrates the increase of DFG funding nationally from 2015 onwards:

Table 1: DFG Better Care Fund allocations

Year	BCF Funding	DFG Funding	DFG as % of BCF	% increase in DFG from 2015/16

2015-16	£3.8 Billion	£220 Million	5.8	-
2016-17	£3.9 Billion	£394 Million	10.1	79%
2019-20	£5.3 Billion	£500 Million	9.4	127%

- 2.4 Ribble Valley's DFG allocations have increased in line with this national picture.
- 2.5 In 2014/15 (the final year that the DFG was provided from the DCLG) the Council received £119,536 in DFG funds. In 2015/16 (the first year of the BCF funding arrangements) the Council received £160,895 and for 2016/17 the Council has received £273,220.

Proposal 1: To optimise the use of the Council's DFG allocation

- 2.6 Ribble Valley Borough Council now has the opportunity to use the DFG funding more flexibility under the provisions of the 'Social Care Capital Project' element of the Better Care fund as specified in the grant award. Therefore a number of policy changes are recommended to take effect from 1 June and these recommendations are made on the expectation that current levels of funding for DFGs will be maintained.
- 2.7 Firstly, to offer households who would normally fail the means test and therefore not receive any assistance a grant towards a single adaptation to be known as the **Ribble Valley Adaptation Grant**.
- 2.8 The OT will advise the client of the two routes available to them (see Appendix 1) the flowchart sets out the options. If the client chooses the Ribble Valley adaptation route, then they will receive grant assistance towards one piece of equipment or adaptation. The OT will decide which item should take priority and be funded.
- 2.9 The Ribble Valley adaptation will fund the prioritised item to a maximum value of £5000.
- 2.10 Any unforeseen works or additional costs over £5000 will require the client to self fund and this will be made clear from the application date.
- 2.11 One Ribble Valley adaptation is available for each applicant every five years.
- 2.12 Availability of the Ribble Valley adaptation grants will be at the discretion of the Council and will be reviewed on an annual basis, will be reported to each Committee and is subject to sufficient funds.
- 2.13 The Ribble Valley adaption grant will offer funding towards one item from the following list:
- Bathroom conversion (ie removal of bath and installation of Level Access Shower/Wet Room) – average cost £3,662.90
 - Stairlifts (these are procured via LCC) - £2,447.52
 - Ceiling Track Hoists (these are procured via LCC) - £3,696.16
 - Wash-dry toilets (these are procured via LCC) - £3,125.90
 - Ramping inside or outside of the property
 - Any other adaptation works set out in the referral up to a maximum of £5,000

Proposal 2: Introduce the provision to allow a discretionary grant above the DFG maximum (subject to budget availability)

- 2.14 The mandatory DFG maximum grant is £30,000. This upper limit has been in place since 2008.
- 2.15 To date the Council's policy has reflected the legislation, and under its existing policy 'grant assistance will be limited to the maximum grant in accordance with the legislation which is currently £30,000'.
- 2.16 The proposal is that the Council permits the award of a discretionary grant, in cases where the list of works recommended by the OT exceed £30,000, in order to enable all the recommended mandatory works to be undertaken.
- 2.17 To ensure that the Council retains financial control of its resources, it is further recommended that the policy should clearly state that this facility would be subject to budget availability and that such additional grant should not exceed £10,000.
- 2.18 The additional £10,000 will help to prevent long delays in complex cases, which otherwise would stall while other funding solutions were explored.

Proposal 3: Introduce a 10% fee applicable to each DFG and non-DFG adaptation

- 2.19 Administering the grant process is complex and often involves a considerable amount of technical work. The legislation permits Councils to apply a management fee which is added to the overall grant amount awarded to each customer.
- 2.20 Since 2002 the Council's administrative fee to be applied to each grant has been fixed at 5%.
- 2.21 Across Lancashire, Lancaster Council operate an 'in-house' HIA service and apply an 18% fee on each DFG. Hyndburn Council charge a 15% fee, West Lancashire charge 12%, whilst Preston and Rossendale both apply a 10% fee. Of all the Councils in Lancashire that charge a fee, Ribble Valley is currently the lowest fee.
- 2.22 The fee is not 'paid' by the applicant but is deducted from the overall grant provided to the applicant. That is to say the net effect is that it reduces the amount of grant available to the applicant.
- 2.23 In most cases a 10% fee would not cause any problems in the execution of the work, but in cases which are around the mandatory limit of £30,000, it could cause difficulties. However, the facility to offer an applicant a sum in excess of £30,000 as described in recommendation 2, would address this scenario.

Proposal 4: To commission use of a private Occupational Therapist

- 2.24 Although these changes will improve delivery the most significant issue within the borough is the lack of OT referrals being received. Therefore, it is proposed that the Council investigate the option of employing a private occupational therapist and additional training for staff to become trained assessors.

3 ISSUES

- 3.1 Members will recall that proposals to amend the Council's DFG policy were considered and agreed at the meeting of this Committee held on 30 March 2017 minute number 611 refers. This included for a period of consultation.
- 3.2 As part of the consultation LCC Social Services OTs and NHS OTs have been consulted on the revised scheme and the comments have been taken into account.

4 RISK ASSESSMENT

- 4.1 The approval of this report may have the following implications
- Resources – Improve utilisation of the Better Care fund allocation for Ribble Valley.
 - Technical, Environmental and Legal – The Council would make available a mandatory and discretionary grant for disabled adaptations.
 - Political – The proposal will enable an increased number of adaptations and number of people that will benefit from the service.
 - Reputation – This proposal demonstrates the Council's commitment to improve the DFG service.
 - Equality & Diversity – The grant will become more accessible and benefit more households.

5 **RECOMMENDED THAT COMMITTEE**

- 5.1 Agree with the revised DFG scheme as set out at Proposals 1, 2, 3 and 4 contained in this report.
- 5.2 Implement the revised scheme from 1 June 2017 subject to LCC confirming the proposals meet the BCF grant award conditions.
- 5.3 Instruct the Chief Executive to monitor the new process and report back to Health and Housing Committee after 12 months of operating the new scheme.

RACHAEL STOTT
STRATEGIC HOUSING OFFICER

MARSHAL SCOTT
CHIEF EXECUTIVE

BACKGROUND PAPERS

(If any)

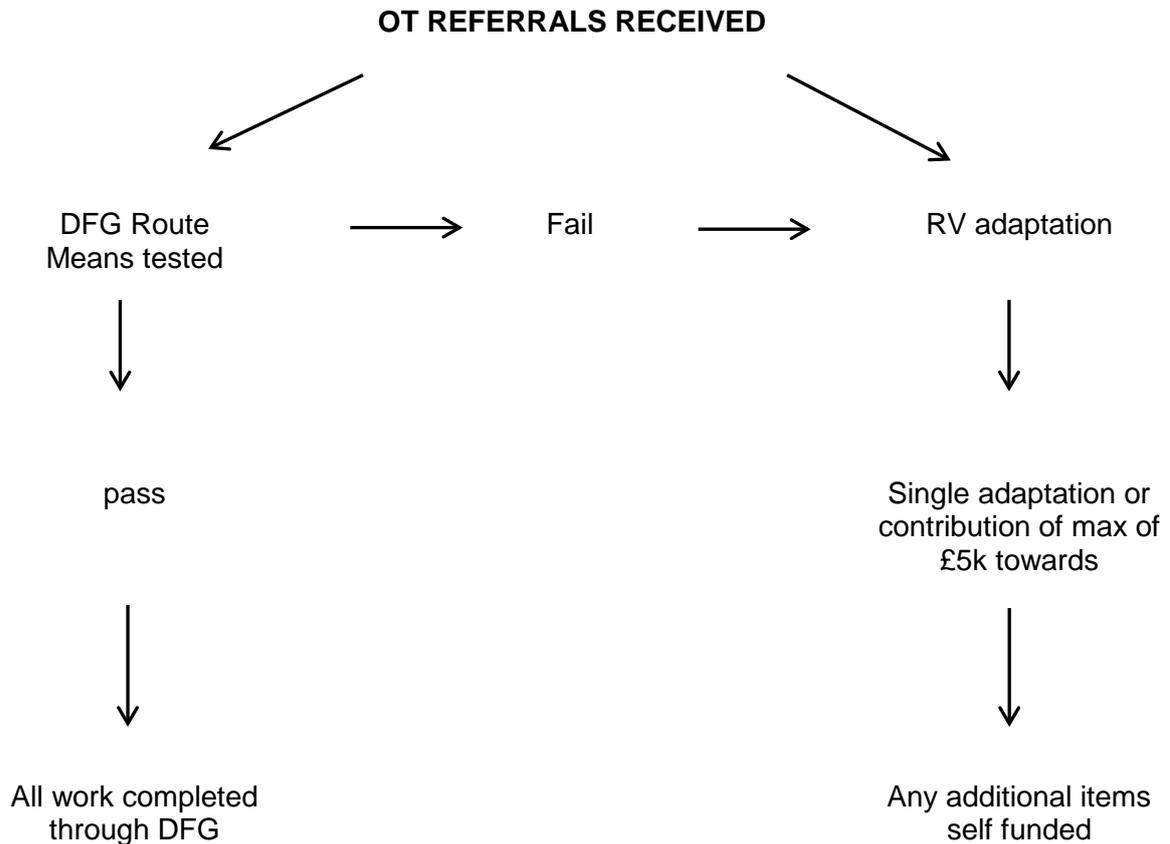
For further information please ask for Rachael Stott, extension 3235

REF: RS/250517/H&H

DFG PROCEDURE

OT ASSESSMENT

OT advise the option of DFG which will cover the cost of all required adaptations to the property or RV adaptation route which will provide grant towards one piece of equipment or adaptation which will be decided by the OT as to what should take priority.



- Only one RV adaptation offered – no repeat application within 5 years.