

COMMUNITY & HOUSING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	Wednesday 13 th September 2023
Report Subject	Disabled Adaptations Policy
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Housing and Regeneration
Report Author	Chief Officer (Housing & Communities)
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 places a mandatory duty on Local Authorities to provide disabled facilities grants (DFGs). The grant is available for adapting or providing facilities for a disabled person in a dwelling.

This report details the amendments to the policy that have been necessary to align adaptations for the private sector or with those for local authority council housing.

RECOMMENDATIONS

1.00	That the Community & Housing Overview and Scrutiny Committee support the updated Disabled Adaptations policy which covers both private homes and council stock properties.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING DISABLED ADAPTATIONS FOR PRIVATE AND HOUSING SECTOR
1.01	Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 places a mandatory duty on Local Authorities to provide disabled facilities grants (DFGs). The grant is available for adapting or providing facilities for a disabled person in a dwelling.
	PRIVATE SECTOR ADAPTATIONS
1.02	A DFG is a capital grant which is utilised to help individuals living with a disability with financial support towards the cost of adapting their homes to enable them to continue living independently in their home.

1.03	<p>The statutory limit for any DFG is set by the Welsh Assembly Government and is currently £36,000 per application within a five-year period. However, further applications can be made within this period if the customer's medical condition has changed. This case would then be reviewed with the Occupational Therapist upon application.</p>
1.04	<p>A DFG is available to owner occupiers, private tenants, and local authority tenants. For persons living in social housing with a registered social landlord, the tenant is required to request any adaptations directly with their landlord.</p>
1.05	<p>Where the application is for a child, or the applicant is in receipt of certain qualifying benefits, there is no means test and the cost of the adaptation up to the maximum grant will generally be awarded.</p>
1.06	<p>For other applications the amount of the grant will vary from zero to the maximum grant depending on the cost of the approved works and the financial circumstances of the applicant.</p> <p>A means test will be carried out to establish, based on the financial circumstances of the applicant, whether the applicant will be required to make a financial contribution to the adaptation costs.</p>
1.07	<p>The Welsh Government Housing Adaptations Service Standards (revised March 2021) provides all Local Authorities DFG teams with the guidance on the level of service expected including adaptation categories, timeframes, and performance measures to ensure consistency in approach.</p> <p>As such the applicant must own the property or be a tenant and intend to live at the address during the grant period (currently 10 years).</p> <p>In the case of private tenants, the landlord may apply for the grant if they have a tenant who is disabled.</p>
1.08	<p>The council must satisfy itself that the work is necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled person; that it is reasonable; and can be done – the age and condition of the property must also be considered.</p> <p>In order to do this, the property is assessed by a surveyor and an occupational therapist and appropriate considerations will determine the best option for the individual considering their needs and the most cost-effective solution.</p>
1.09	<p>The council must ensure that any adaptation works will provide the most effective long-term solution to meet the needs of the disabled person.</p>
1.10	<p>A Discretionary Grant is offered for all requests for medium sized adaptations, this part of the policy was created to meet the request of Welsh Government in the revised Housing Adaptations Service Standards. As this is a Discretionary Grant it will still be at the discretion of the Disabled Adaptations Manager to determine whether to means test a case or not particularly if the works are complex in nature resulting in a</p>

	combination of medium adaptations which are comparable to the cost of large scale works around £20,000 or above.												
1.11	<p>There may be instances where the disabled person's existing home is not suitable for adaptation, and with the agreement of all parties, the council may decide to assist the household to move into more suitable accommodation.</p> <p>For owner occupiers and private tenants, the Council can offer a Relocation Grant up to the value of £20,000 to assist with the moving and legal costs. This can be considered even if the alternative accommodation needs some minor adaptations to make it fully suitable.</p>												
	LOCAL AUTHORITY SECTOR ADAPTATIONS												
1.12	<p>Adaptations for Local Authority Housing sector follow the same legislation and Welsh Government Standards as the Disabled Facilities Grant. However, there are some differences as the adaptations are paid using the Housing Revenue Account:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The eligibility criteria are slightly different. • The contract holder does not have to make an application they just need to be assessed by an Occupational Therapist. • There is not a means test for contract holders. • There are no financial limitations to the works. • As a responsible Council it's important to make best use of housing stock and the budget available. Therefore, the policy provides full details on what is considered when deciding whether to approve the adaptations, there are other factors considered unlike when approving a DFG. 												
	PERFORMANCE												
1.13	<p>The following table shows the numbers of medium and large adaptations for the Private Sector:</p> <table border="1" data-bbox="319 1467 1082 1841"> <thead> <tr> <th></th> <th>Number Completed</th> <th>Days to deliver (average) Target 238</th> </tr> </thead> <tbody> <tr> <td>2021/22</td> <td>90</td> <td>278</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2022/23</td> <td>123</td> <td>144</td> </tr> <tr> <td>2023/24 (To 31/07/23)</td> <td>40</td> <td>168</td> </tr> </tbody> </table> <p>Please see below a review of each year to explain the increases and decreases in the figures above;</p> <p>2021/22 – All jobs had restarted and are now either completed or have commenced. However, due to the Covid delay and some jobs being outstanding prior to the pandemic, there has been an adverse impact on</p>		Number Completed	Days to deliver (average) Target 238	2021/22	90	278	2022/23	123	144	2023/24 (To 31/07/23)	40	168
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the average number of days to complete the work. There was also an issue whereby many of our contractors were extremely busy after Covid19 and therefore we had a number of jobs with delayed start dates.

2022/23 – The small number of legacy cases that had been outstanding had been completed within this financial year apart from two cases. This meant that stats for delivery should now be providing a truer picture of performance.

2023/24 – The two large legacy cases have now been completed; however, they will have impacted on the days to deliver, but hopefully the current large adaptations which are on time may help the stats by the end of the financial year.

1.14 Care and Repair currently deliver all of the small adaptations for the private sector. Please see below information on the number completed.

	Number Completed	Days to deliver (average) Target 21
2022/23	987	8
2023/24	328	8

1.15 The following table shows the numbers of adaptations for the Local Authority Sector:

	Small	Medium	Large
2022/23	531	137	2
2023/24 (To 31/07/23)	136	37	0

In addition to aligning the policy we are also aligning the performance reporting to meet Welsh Government standards.

2.00		RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS			
2.01	See below chart for spend to date (31/07/23) and the projected costs.				
	General Fund (Capital)		Budget	Spend to 31/7/23	Projected Spend
	DFG	2023/24	£1,660,000	£279,060	£1,592,000
	Welsh Gov Enable Grant	2023/24	£286,171	£113,762	£341,288
	Housing Revenue Account		Budget	Spend to 31/7/23	Projected Spend
	LA	2023/24	£1,000,000	£178,144	£677,748

3.00		IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT	
3.01	Under the five delivery principles of the Well-being of Future Generations Act the revised Disabled Facilities Grant Policy can have the following impacts:		
	Ways of Working (Sustainable Development) Principles Impact		
	Long-term	Positive impact on longer term solutions to enable disabled people to remain in their own home for longer.	
	Prevention	Positive - Enabling the grant will have a significant positive preventative impact for people.	
	Integration	Positive- The Grants policy and the wider best practice group that reviews and aligns best practice is a positive example of integration across sectors.	
	Collaboration	Positive - As above.	
	Involvement	Positive - The policy has been through a consultation process and user/customer satisfaction is built into the process to ensure user involvement in shaping improvements to service.	
	Well-being Goals Impact		
	Prosperous Wales	No Impact	
	Resilient Wales	No Impact	
	Healthier Wales	Positive - The Disabled Facilities Grants are there to support disabled people to be in a position to live safely and more comfortably in their own home for longer.	

		The revised policy sets out the process for disabled facilities grant in a clear and easy to understand way.
	More equal Wales	Positive - By supporting disabled people to live more comfortably and safely in their own homes will also contribute to enabling them to fulfil their potential no matter what their background.
	Cohesive Wales	No Impact
	Vibrant Wales	No Impact
	Globally responsible Wales	No Impact
	<p>The revision of the Disabled Facilities Grants Policy, when implemented will contribute to the Council's Well-being objective of 'Caring Council' through:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provision of appropriate interventions (i.e., support or adaptations) to assist people to remain in their homes wherever possible 	
3.02	We have carried out an integrated impact assessment, see appendix 3.	

4.00	CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT
4.01	A consultation exercise is ongoing which includes: Disability Forum, Vision Support, Older Peoples Group and Armed Forces.

5.00	APPENDICES
5.01	Appendix 1 – Draft Policy
5.02	Appendix 2 – Revised Housing Standards
5.03	Appendix 3 – Impact Assessment & Risks

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None.

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	<p>Contact Officer: Jen Griffiths, Service Manager – Housing, Welfare and Communities Telephone: 01352 702929 E-mail: jen.griffiths@flintshire.gov.uk</p>

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) – A statutory grant of up to £36,000 to help individuals living with a disability with the cost of adapting their homes to enable them to continue living at their residence with the maximum amount of independence.</p> <p>Small Adaptations - anything which is not classed as medium or large. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Grab Rails • Small Ramps • Stair/Mop stick Rails • Key Safes • Additional electrical sockets or accessible taps, etc <p>Medium Adaptations - anything which is not classed as small or large. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Level Access Showers • Stair lifts • Ceiling Track Hoists • Large ramps • Or a combination of these adaptations installed as one job <p>Large Adaptations - these are works which will require specialist assessments, statutory approvals, and major adaptations to a property such as extensions and through floor lifts. An Occupational Therapists assessment will be required, and planning permission may be needed. Examples include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building an extension to provide a downstairs bedroom and/or bathroom • Through floor lift • Significant internal structural modifications e.g., relocate bathroom or kitchen