

**NEATH PORT TALBOT COUNTY BOROUGH COUNCIL
SOCIAL CARE HEALTH & WELL-BEING SCRUTINY BOARD**

21st OCTOBER 2021

Report of the Head of Adult Services - Angela Thomas

Matter for information

Wards Affected All Wards

UPDATE ON - THE IMPACT OF COVID-19 ON DISABLED FACILITY GRANTS

Purpose of the Report

To provide a current position update to Members following the detailed report of 24th June 2021 on the impact of the COVID pandemic on the Disabled Facility Grant (DFG) service and recovery.

Executive Summary

The DFG is a statutory requirement of the Authority , which is governed by the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, as amended by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) order 2002.

A DFG pays for essential adaptations to aid disabled people gain better freedom of movement into and around their homes by providing access to essential facilities within their home. The core group of adaptations facilitate access to the living room, bathroom, bedroom, kitchen and / or access and egress to the property.

The grant for adults is subject to a statutory means test. The grant is subject to a maximum limit of £36,000 and is available to homeowners and tenants.

When considering an application the Authority must determine whether the proposed works are reasonable and practicable having regard to the age and condition of the property, and practicalities of carrying out the work, in addition the Occupational Therapists are consulted to ensure that any adaptations are necessary and appropriate.

This report gives an updated position on the affect the global pandemic had on the service and the delivery of DFGs during this time and the current position.

Background

Prior to the start of the pandemic in March 2020 the service was improving its delivery times year on year, this was due to a combination of the Occupational Therapists Service getting faster and improvements being made within the service.

The budget has remained at £3m for the past 12 years.

The tables below indicate the total number of adaptations carried out since 2017/18 and the average end-to-end time taken.

DFG	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Number of jobs	258	300	212	97
Average days	242	232	196	363

Position at end of March 2020

As the pandemic started and the country put into lock down, the service was halted, a number of staff were redeployed to carry out the PPE distribution and continue to do this.

Some staff assisted where possible with facilitating adaptations for hospital discharge to help clear the hospitals and dealt with emergencies and specific requests for help.

On-going works on site were completed where possible, contractors building extensions ceased works, and no new work was started.

Financial Year (FY) 2020 – 2021

During the first quarter as the pandemic hit and focus turned to dealing with the pandemic, no DFG work was carried, the vast majority of DFG applicants are elderly or vulnerable and many were shielding and naturally did not want anyone in their house carrying out works.

As the pandemic took hold the demand for DFGs dropped off as people knew many services had been suspended, the OT service had also rightly prioritised manual handling to support the work that was going on in the community.

By the end of March 2021 at total of 97 jobs were completed on site, less than half of a normal year, 3 extensions were completed, average cost of a grant was £7,300. Total end-to-end time had risen to 363 days.

A total of 205 applications had been received compared to 457 the previous year, at the end of March there were 16 applicants on the waiting list.

There was an under-spend of £1.4m which CPSG agreed could be carried over to FY 21/22.

Current position at 30th September 2021 for FY 21/22

Total Budget for FY 21-22 - £4.4m

Below is a table indicating the current position and also the position as reported in the previous cabinet report in June 2021.

Action	Position at:	
	End of May	End of September
Total new applications received	51	190
Number of live applications	200	226
Value of work in pipeline	£1.8m	£2.2
Jobs completed	19	73
Budget spent	£171,000	£.1.1m
Current end to end	355	345

There is currently a small waiting list of 15 awaiting release into the system with a steady and regular demand coming from the Occupational Therapist Service.

It is anticipated to fully commit the entire £4.4m budget by end of January 2022. The original £3m budget will be fully spent by the end of FY with a full spend of the carry over by September 2022. During the last quarter of 21/22 a waiting list will start to build.

Issues experienced

Demand for builders remains significantly higher than normal with homeowners carrying out home improvements. This is having a knock on affect in having contractors to construct the extensions in the system.

Contractors have informed the service that they see this high demand continuing well into 2022, this is based on on-going requests to carry out works.

Some materials are still difficult to source with some building materials having a significant rise in cost.

Moving forward and recovery

The whole DFG team settled into working from home very quickly and the changes to the system are working well, working from home suits the majority of the team very well, weekly team meetings are in place where the work is discussed plus time for a general chat and catch up.

Demand

The service works very closely with the Occupational Therapy Service, which is at the start of the process for a DFG. The OT's have informed the service that demand has increased and continues to rise.

As work continues on site and builds momentum the end-to-end time will continue to reduce.

Feedback from applicants is very positive and are very happy with the service and time waited.

Summary

The Service has adapted well to the new way of working and the new process and procedures with a high level of grants going through the system and being completed.

The service continues to look for new contractors who can carry out the larger building works.

Currently the service is in a good position to deal with the demand and are almost responsive to all referrals received.

This will continue to be closely monitored throughout the year.

Financial Impacts

No additional impact to the allocated capital budget.

Integrated Impact Assessment

There is no requirement to undertake an Integrated Impact Assessment as this report is for information purposes only.

Valleys Communities Impacts

No detrimental impact.

Workforce Impacts

No impact.

Legal Impacts

No impact.

Risk Management Impacts

No impact.

Crime and Disorder Impacts

Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 places a duty on the Council in the exercise of its functions to have “due regard to the likely effect of the exercise of those functions on and the need to do all that it reasonably can to prevent:

- a) Crime and disorder in its area (including anti-social and other behaviour adversely affecting the local environment); and
- b) The misuse of drugs, alcohol and other substances in its area; and
- c) Re-offending the area”

There is no impact under the Section 17 of the Crime and Disorder Act 1998 through the information contained in this report.

Counter Terrorism Impacts

The information contained in this report is likely to have no impact on the duty to prevent people from being drawn into terrorism.

Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence Impacts

Section 2(1) of the Violence Against Women, Domestic Abuse and Sexual Violence (Wales) Act 2015 introduced a general duty where a person exercising relevant functions must have regard (along with all other relevant matters) to the need to remove or minimise any factors which:

- (a) increase the risk of violence against women and girls, or
- (b) exacerbate the impact of such violence on victims.

The information contained in this report is likely to have no impact on the above duty.

Consultation

There is no requirement for external consultation on this item.

Recommendations

No recommendations - for monitoring and information only.

Reasons for Proposed Decision

N/A

Implementation of Decision

N/A

List of Background Papers

None

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