

Access Advisory Panel: Briefing Note on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)

Legislation

Local Authorities are under a mandatory obligation to provide a grant to assist with adaptations to disabled persons home under the Housing, Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, as amended by the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) Order 2002. The DFG assistance is available to eligible applicants for certain works, subject to a test of the applicant's resources.

Adaptations and eligible work

The purposes for which a DFG may be given are set out in the legislation and include:

- Facilitating access to and from the dwelling
- Provision of a room usable for sleeping
- Provision of a bathroom
- Making a dwelling safe
- Access to a principal family room
- Movement around the dwelling
- Facilitating preparation and cooking of food

An application for a DFG can only be made following a referral from a relevant Occupational Therapist within Adult Social Care.

Funding

Currently the Council receive an allocation from central government to fund the DFG programme and has allocated further funds through the Capital programme.

Each applicant completes a Test of Resources, or a "means test" which is undertaken in accordance with the legislation. Currently families of disabled children under 19 years are free from means testing.

The maximum amount of mandatory grant available is currently £30,000; however in 2010 the Council agreed a policy to increase this amount in appropriate circumstances, such as where a grant is being provided for a disabled child and the grant would enable the child to remain in their home without the need to resort to residential care.

Bracknell Forest Homes currently have a commitment to spend their own resources on disability adaptation that formed part of the offer document when BFH was

established. This commitment formally comes to an end in the not too distant future which may add additional financial pressure on to the council.

Demand for Service

The number of homes adapted in recent years is shown in the Table below. The rate of spend and throughput of grants is dependant on a number of factors, predominately the rate of referrals from the Occupational Therapists within Adult Social Care. Regulatory Services using staff with appropriate housing knowledge provide the necessary professional input to deliver a solution for a client once their need has been determined. It is difficult to predict the exact spend in advance as demand fluctuates, and on average it takes 12 weeks to progress a referral through specification, tender, approval and build.

	2009-2010	2010-2011	2011-2012	2012-2013 (to 31/10/12)
Number of adaptation (completed grants)	80	67	71	44
Council Contribution	£210,443	£303,416	£265,972	£350,000 (budget)
Government contribution	£300,000	£300,000	£320,700	£300,000
Total spend on adaptations	£510,443	£603,416	£586,672	£357,400

The basis of the Governments allocation used to be on a matched funded 50/50 contribution up to a predetermined limit. Expenditure beyond this limited required a bid being made to government for additional funds but with no certainty. Since 2010/11 the match funding ceased and the Council now just gets an allocation. The funding is not ring fenced. The Bracknell Forest Disabled Facility Grant policy was adopted by the Executive in March 2010. It set out conditions under which the Council would award funding above the prescribed maximum limit. The policy recognises that in some instances it is better to spend a little more on an adaption funded from these funds rather than have to find the balance from the Adult and Social Care budget. Either way the Council has a duty to fund the costs of the need.