

CABINET
5 SEPTEMBER 2023

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT 2023/24

Responsible Cabinet Member
Councillor Anne-Marie Curry, Adults Portfolio

Responsible Director
James Stroyan, Group Director of People

SUMMARY REPORT

Purpose of the Report

1. The purpose of this report is to advise Members of the capital resources available for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) during 2023/24 and to seek members' approval for the release of these resources to be utilised in accordance with Darlington Borough Council Disabled Facilities Grant and Regulatory Reform Order Policy 2022-2025.

Summary

2. DFGs assist people to live independently by helping to fund suitable adaptations to their properties. They are means tested and are available to owner-occupiers, tenants of private rented properties and Housing Association tenants.
3. DFGs are governed by housing legislation and have set conditions for payment, within these regulations. The Council has a shared service agreement in place with Durham County Council to provide a Home Improvement Agency service to provide guidance and practical assistance to people who are older, disabled or on low incomes to claim a DFG to repair, improve or adapt their homes. They also provide support to people until the work is completed and the contractor has been paid.

Recommendation

4. It is recommended that Cabinet:
 - (a) Note that the sum of £1,063,345 has been allocated to the Council to use for Disabled Facilities Grant adaptations in 2023 -2024.
 - (b) Release this capital funding to enable it to be allocated in accordance with Darlington Borough Council Disabled Facilities Grant and Regulatory Reform Order Policy 2022-2025.

Reasons

5. The recommendations are supported in order to enable the adaptations for those individuals who are eligible to receive a DFG for 2022-23 to proceed.

**James Stroyan,
Group Director of People**

Background Papers

- (i) Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities – Letter to LA Chief Executives - £573 Million for Disabled facilities Grant (DFG) in 2023/24. 09 May 2023
- (ii) Darlington Borough Council Disabled Facilities Grant and Regulatory Reform Order Policy 2022-2025
- (iii) Home Adaptations for Disabled People - A detailed guide to related legislation, guidance and good practice - Home Adaptations Consortium

Lisa Holdsworth: Extension 5861

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| S17 Crime and Disorder | This report has no implications for Crime and Disorder. |
| Health and Wellbeing | Adaptations funded by Disabled Facilities Grants will improve the health and well-being of residents of Darlington. |
| Carbon Impact and Climate Change | The installation of more efficient equipment via DFG will reduce energy usage and provide higher levels of thermal comfort for dwellings benefitting from these measures thus reducing carbon emissions. |
| Diversity | The adaptations provided via Disabled Facilities Grants will improve the accessibility of owner occupied, privately rented and social housing. |
| Wards Affected | All wards within the Borough of Darlington are affected equally. |
| Groups Affected | Disabled Facilities Grant applicants living in owner occupied, privately rented and social housing. |
| Budget and Policy Framework | This report does not recommend any changes to the budget and policy framework. |
| Key Decision | This is not a key decision. The Grant is received from NHS England for the sole purpose of providing adaptations for individuals. |
| Urgent Decision | For the purpose of the 'call-in' procedure this is not an urgent matter. |
| Council Plan | The provision of DFGs contribute to supporting the most vulnerable in the borough. In particular: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Providing care and support when needed • Working with people to build on their strengths to maximize their potential. |
| Efficiency | Adaptations enable people to remain independent in their homes for longer and therefore reduce the need for larger packages of support or admission to residential care. |
| Impact on Looked After Children and Care Leavers | Looked After Children or Care Leavers may also be eligible for a DFG. |

MAIN REPORT

Information and Analysis

6. The purpose of DFG is to fund adaptations to owner-occupiers, tenants of private-rented properties and Housing Association tenants to enable people with a disability to remain in their own home and live independently across the Borough. Adaptations can include ramps, stair lifts and suitable heating systems. The DFG, which has run for more than 30 years, became part of the Better Care Fund (BCF) in April 2015.
7. DFG are national mandatory grants and are available to adults and children with a disability. The maximum grant payable is £30,000 per application and is subject to a statutory means test to determine if the individual is able to contribute to the cost of the works. Following the approval of the Disabled Facilities Grant and Regulatory Reform Order Policy 2022-2025, means tests are only undertaken for ground floor extensions and garage conversions and continue not to apply to grant applications for disabled children.
8. Under the Council's Disabled Facilities Grant and Regulatory Reform Order Policy 2022-2025 a further grant can also be awarded where significant alterations or extensions are required.
9. Durham County Council Home Improvement Agency is commissioned by Darlington Borough Council to provide support to individuals applying for a DFG. This service includes the completion of the grant application, the seeking of quotes for the necessary works, selection of a suitable contractor, oversight of the works up to completion and payment of the grant. The agency will also support individuals to source charitable funding where the client is required to make a contribution to the costs of the works but is unable to do so.

Financial Implications

10. For 2023-2024 the allocation made to Darlington Borough Council via the Better Care Fund is £1,063,345, the same amount as was allocated in 2022-23.
11. Members are required to formally release the monies available to the Council for DFG for 2023-24 as it is a capital resource.

Outcome of Consultation

12. Whilst no formal consultation has taken place with regard to the request to release the capital funding for the DFG to be awarded for 2023-24, consultation did take place in October and November 2022 as part of the development of the Disabled Facilities Grant and Regulatory Reform Order Policy 2022-2025. The release of the capital funding will enable DFG to continue to be made in accordance with the approved policy.

Equalities considerations

13. An Equality Impact Screening Assessment (**Appendix 1**) was carried out in relation to the introduction of the DFG and Regulatory Reform Order (RRO) Policy which was approved by members in 2023. The outcome of this screening was that the introduction of the RRO Policy will not have any adverse effects on people with the protected characteristics and

officers did not identify any potential disadvantage to these groups. The policies provide additional support to eligible individuals in the form of grants/reduced contributions and as such have a positive impact for all recipients.

14. As the funds which are requested to be released will be used in accordance with this policy, no further EIA is required.