

## BRIEFING REPORT

Additional in Year Funding 2020/21 - Disabled Facilities Grant



This Executive Decision relates to additional in year allocation of funding for Disabled Facilities Grant specified via the Better Care Fund for 2020/21.

The Council has a statutory duty to approve mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) for major adaptations. This work supports people of all ages to live in suitable housing so they can remain independent, thereby helping to contain the potential increase in costs to Social Care Services.

The legislation governing DFGs is the 1996 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act. DFGs are mandatory and are available from local authorities in England and Wales, subject to a means test unless in scope of discretionary works. The grants are to provide adaptations, to the home environment to enable independence and keep people living in their own homes, in safety and with dignity.

The DFG allocation is specified via the Better Care Fund (BCF). The additional in year funding was announced on 3<sup>rd</sup> December 2020 by Kelly Tolhurst, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Rough Sleeping and Housing. This additional funding will be subject to the same grant conditions as the main £505 million DFG fund that was paid to local authorities in May and will increase the overall DFG baseline for 2020-21 to £573 million. This additional allocation will see Plymouth receive a further £333,922 building on the initial allocation of £2,479,859.

Funding is for the provision of adaptations to disabled people's homes to help them to live independently for longer. This continual commitment is to encourage areas to think strategically about the use of home aids/adaptations, use of technologies to support people in their own homes, and to take a joined-up approach to improving outcomes across health, social care and housing.

Throughout 2019/20 Community Connections successfully completed 252 cases with an average cost of £7070. To note the recording of a case completion often refers to the successful installation of multiple adaptations such as a bathroom, stair lift and ramp.

Whilst the delivery of Disabled Facilities Grant work has been hampered as a result of COVID-19 there have been 82 adaptations completed across the city so far this year. Further there are over 100 other cases in varying stages of adaptation delivery.

The Dynamic Purchasing System embedded throughout 2019/20 has and will continue to be used in 2020/21. The system encourages local tradespeople, who have displayed that they are competent and professional, to tender for works offered by the local authority on behalf of the client. Works carried out are done so with an insurance backed warranty for 2 years and clients are given the opportunity to extend this cover, outside of the grant, should they wish. Utilising this system coming out of the current COVID-19 crisis will enable registered contractors to begin their business recovery. Works being undertaken currently by Community Connections will see a large upload of works to the system, enabling contractors to be prepared, supply chains checked and clients to be given piece of mind.

Additional in year funding will permit proactive activity to be undertaken in relation to waiting lists held by Plymouth City Councils Community Connections Team. Currently there are in excess of 250 known clients who are due to return information to the service to progress their application. Work to progress these cases through to a valid application will be undertaken resulting in contact being made with clients

to understand and overcome blockages on a case by case basis. This work in turn will increase financial demand and thus determine the spend of this additional in year funding. Further as cases are progressed to valid application, opportunities to expedite specified adaptation types will be considered. Upon the completion of waiting list reviews an analysis of root causes to blockages will be conducted and measures implemented where possible to prevent further occurrences. This will ensure that we continue to offer a service which is accessible and suitable to all the city's residents.

Decision to be taken:

1. Approve the Briefing Note.
2. Approves an increase to the capital programme of £333,922 for the project financed by Better Care Funding for the provision of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants and assistance offered through the Independent Living Policy in 2020/21
3. Delegates the approval of spend to Craig McArdle, Strategic Director for People