

Disabled Facilities Grant Capital Funding Briefing

2021/2022 – Community Connections



This Executive Decision relates to Disabled Facilities Grant allocation specified via the Better Care Fund for 2021/22.

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 whilst also striving to reduce hospital admissions.

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.

Works conducted in this area directly link to Pledge 3 which states;

We will fast tract applications for Blue Badges, Disabled Facilities Grants and disabled parking spaces for those with terminal illnesses.

The DFG allocation is specified via the Better Care Fund (BCF) and is for the provision of adaptations to disabled people's homes to help them to live independently for longer. Following the approach taken by the Department of Health in 2015-16, the DFG will again be included within the BCF for 2021/22. 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.

For 2021/22, Plymouth's allocation has been increased from £2,479,859 in 2020/21 to £2,813,781. This money will be combined with £1,476,803.03 being carried over from 2020/21. This carry over was a direct result of the impact of COVID-19. COVID-19 impeded the delivery of works for prolonged periods of time both due to government advice/guidance and the client group containing significantly high numbers of vulnerable clients not wishing for works to be conducted in their homes due to the fear of contracting COVID-19. We are now seeing these concerns subside with the rollout of the vaccination programme and decreasing rates of infections locally and as such Community Connections contractors are back out conducting adaptations where it is safe to do so.

Throughout 2020/21 Community Connections successfully completed 157 cases with an average cost of £6449. This average cost is a reduction of £569 from 2019/20 and is likely due to the reduced number of large adaptations completed. Large adaptations often require significant destructive works within the home environment and result in clients staying with respite or alternative accommodation which was often not viable or available during the COVID-19 pandemic. The impact of this in 2021/22 is that average costs are likely to be greater than in previous years whilst we address the low number of large adaptations completed.

The recording of case completion is a display of the amount of homes where all adaptations required have been completed and final payment made. A referral received frequently requires multiple adaptations to be conducted to achieve this status and as such it is worth noting that in every completion multiple adaptations are likely to have been facilitated by Community Connections. Adaptations range depending on client need, however examples range through a bathroom, stair lift, through floor lift, ramp, kitchen door widening and full extensions.

Moving into 2021/22 we are carrying forward a current active caseload of 139 cases with a known commitment of £906,543.31. In addition to this we have 62 cases now ready to be progressed alongside an extensive list of

referrals which are currently pending further information from clients, landlords or interested parties to progress.

The Dynamic Purchasing System embedded in 2019 has continually been developed with our partner in delivery INCIC and will continue to be used in 2021/22. 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.

Looking forwards in 2021/22 we understand that the demand for DFG's is going to be significant. Community Connections are continually reviewing this demand and in preparation are bringing in 2 additional resources to ensure that complex cases continue to get the oversight they require and other cases remain progressed as swiftly and seamlessly as possible. We will continually review this during the year to ensure where possible the team meets the city's need.

Community Connections will continue to use a priority rating based up the date of referral and the priority of need rating given to the client by our partner Livewell South West.