

## Disabled Facilities Grant Capital Funding Briefing

2024/2025 – Community Connections



This Executive Decision relates to Disabled Facilities Grant allocation specified via the Better Care Fund for 2024/25.

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.

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 2024/25. 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 2024/25, Plymouth's allocation has been elevated to £3,069,132 from £3,059,312. This money will be combined with £450,182 being carried over from 2023/24. This carry over is a legacy 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. Legacy funding has been reducing year on year, and this year it is anticipated that we will spend the total amount.

Throughout 2023/24 Community Connections successfully completed 255 cases (374 individual pieces of work completed in homes) with an average cost of £10,528.73. This average cost is an increase of £1,084.71 from 2023/24 and is due to the increased costs of materials and labour as well as the 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 from a bathroom, stair lift, through floor lift, ramp, kitchen adaptation and door widening to full extensions and loft conversions.

Moving into 2024/25 we are carrying forward a current active caseload of 81 cases with a known commitment of £890,562. We have 100 validated cases ready to be progressed with a forecasted cost of £1,051,300. Further we have 333 cases in pre validation (pending permissions, checks and means testing) with a forecasted cost of £2,702,600. 136 of these cases are being delivered in Plymouth Community Homes (PCH) properties.

The Dynamic Purchasing System embedded in 2019 has continually been developed with our delivery partner and will continue to be used in 2024/25. The system encourages local tradespeople, who have displayed that they are competent and professional, to competitively 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.

Looking forwards in 2024/25 we understand that demand for DFG's is going to be significant with known cases forecasted to outstretch the allocated budget. Community Connections will be continually reviewing this demand ensuring where possible all validated cases are progressed according to client need and budget. In addition to this Community Connections will be:

- Embedding the newly instigated Discretionary Funding Panel - reviewing all cases set to exceed grant maximum
- Speaking the with Better Care Fund to understand if there are additional funding opportunities or looking for information in respect of what other parable areas have implemented to manage demand and budget limitations
- Speaking with PCH to increase their funding allocation per property from £5,000 to £7,000. Whilst not increasing the amount available (£400,000) this additional allocation will increase PCC's ability to claim their full allocation.
- 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.
- Working with suppliers to achieve best market price for products used in adaptations.
- Reviewing all proposed works and completions to ensure value for money whilst meeting client 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 Southwest.