

Disabled Facilities Grant 24/25 Additional Allocation Capital Funding Briefing

2024/2025 – Community Connections



This Executive Decision relates to additional in year 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, DFG has been 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 was £3,069,132 which the £422,313 will be added to. This money will be combined with £450,182 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 or allocate the total amount in year.

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.

There are currently 532 cases with Community Connections at various stages (242 application pending validation, 159 valid application pending delivery, 131 in progress), this equates to 773 separate adaptations in homes and comes at a cost of £4,233,742. This exceeds the current budget and we are receiving more than one referral every working day, placing further strain on the budget.

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.

Throughout this financial year (2024/25) demand for DFG's continues to be significant with service known cases exceeding the allocated budget. Community Connections have been continually reviewing this demand ensuring

where possible all validated cases are progressed according to client need and budget. In addition to this Community Connections have focused work on the following areas:

- 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.
- 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.
- Completing a public consultation exercise regarding proposed changes to maintain clients needs being met whilst deploying more cost effective and sustainable solutions to adaptations.

Community Connections will continue to use a prioritisation system to progress cases based on the date of referral and the priority of need, a RAG + Fast Track rating given to the client by our partner Livewell Southwest or Children's Social Care.