
**Manchester City Council
Report for Resolution**

Report to: Executive – 26 July 2017

Subject: Disabled Facilities Grant

Report of: Strategic Director (Development)
Strategic Director (Commissioning)

Summary

The Disabled Facilities Grant for disabled adaptations has increased from £2.8m in 2015/16 to £6.3m in 2017/18 and will be paid by the Department of Health to the Council as part of the Better Care Fund. This report provides an outline of proposals to utilise the increased funding with the aim of ensuring that vulnerable individuals can remain safe and healthy in their own home and seeks approval to delegate implementation arrangements and update of policy.

Recommendations

The Executive is recommended to:

1. Approve the proposals to increase accessibility to Disabled Facilities Grant to enable more people to be supported in their own home, including:
 - The abolition of the means test as set out in section 4
 - Review of the upper grant limit to £50,000 as set out in section 5
 - An increase in the technical fee by 2% to 10% to fund additional technical capacity to facilitate delivery as set out in section 6
 - A revision of the Regulatory Reform Order Policy to enable funding of additional related works or access to complimentary funding through the RRO as set out in section 7
 - Registered Providers permitted to retain a proportion of their contribution towards to the cost of major adaptation work to assist people to move home as set out in section 8
 - Expansion of the Housing and Care and Independent Living advice service as set out in section 9
 - Adapting accommodation to support disabled homeless individuals as set out in section 10

2. Delegate final approval to the Director of Housing and Residential Growth, Deputy City Treasurer and Executive Director for Strategic Commissioning in consultation with the Executive Member for Homelessness, Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

Wards Affected

All

Manchester Strategy outcomes	Summary of the contribution to the strategy
A thriving and sustainable city: supporting a diverse and distinctive economy that creates jobs and opportunities	Vulnerable and disabled residents who are assisted to live in housing that is in good repair and appropriate for their needs, will be more able to thrive and live independently.
A highly skilled city: world class and home grown talent sustaining the city's economic success	Residents living in adequate housing that is in good repair and appropriate for their needs are more able to enjoy improved health. They are also more likely to be able to access employment and have opportunities to develop new skills, interests and talents.
A progressive and equitable city: making a positive contribution by unlocking the potential of our communities	Vulnerable and disabled residents who are assisted to live independently in their homes will have an opportunity to remain in and contribute to their local community. They will also have an increased potential to become economically active and to make a positive contribution to the City's growth and success.
A liveable and low carbon city: a destination of choice to live, visit, work	Housing that is kept in good repair and kept up to modern standards in terms of decency and thermal efficiency will improve the quality and choice of housing in the City and contribute to creating neighbourhoods of choice where people want to live, bring up their children and work.
A connected city: world class infrastructure and connectivity to drive growth	Residents who have improved health and greater opportunities to become economically active will be more likely to support the regional economy and drive growth.

Full details are in the body of the report, along with any implications for

- Equal Opportunities Policy
- Risk Management
- Legal Considerations

Financial Consequences – Revenue

Revenue implications are minor and will be managed within Better Care Fund and/or Housing Revenue Account resources.

Financial Consequences – Capital

The majority of financial implications are capital and will be contained within the revised Disabled Facilities Grant allocation, approvals for which are already in place.

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Background documents (available for public inspection):

The following documents disclose important facts on which the report is based and have been relied upon in preparing the report. Copies of the background documents are available up to 4 years after the date of the meeting. If you would like a copy please contact one of the contact officers above.

9th Edition of the Manchester Home Improvement and Relocation Assistance Policy 2017.

Executive 28th June, Capital Programme – Proposed Increases, recommendation 1d

1.0 Introduction

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to increase the take up of the Disabled Facilities Grant allocation and to offer complementary assistance to help vulnerable individuals to remain safe and healthy in their homes.

2.0 Background

- 2.1 In 2014, in response to growing backlogs of people awaiting adaptations and a shortfall in capital funding, the Director of Housing was tasked with reviewing the delivery of DFG. The review encompassed the whole system and resulted in a number of fundamental changes; re-specification of the eligible works; re-procurement of a new DFG contract framework; Delivery of DFG works by social landlords to their own stock; and a voluntary contribution by registered housing providers of 40% of the cost of the adaptation to their stock. This enabled backlogs to be tackled and demand for DFGs to be managed within an enhanced capital budget.
- 2.2 In February 2016 the Department of Health wrote to all Local Authority Directors of Adult Social Services, to announce Specific Capital Grant allocations for 2016/17.
- 2.3 The letter stated that Manchester's allocation of DFG was to increase from £2.9m to £5.7m and stated that the DFG payment would be included within the Better Care Fund as an un-ring-fenced capital grant. The letter also referred to the discontinuation of the Social Care Capital Grant. This funding is now included within the DFG allocation, to support people to remain independent in their own homes – reducing or delaying the need for care and support, and improving the quality of life of residents.
- 2.4 In April 2016 the Council received the formal allocation of DFG letter, from the Director of Housing Standards at the Department of Communities and Local Government. The letter made reference to the discontinuation of the Social Care Capital Grant and that some areas may agree to invest some the DFG into broader strategic capital projects. Although the use of DFG for wider capital projects must be considered as part of housing authorities continuation to meet their statutory duty.
- 2.5 The funding allocation for 2017/2018 has increased by a further £0.591m, from £5.7m in 16/17 to £6.3m in 17/18. This was shown as a budget increase in the Capital Programme – Proposed Increase Report to the 28th June Executive meeting.
- 2.6 In addition, even though the 2016/2017 expenditure on adaptations has increased by £1.1m, compared to the previous year, there was still an under-spend of £1.2m DFG, from the 2016/17 allocation. This has currently been forecast to be spent in 2018/19, however, ideally it needs to be delivered in 2017/18. This, together with contributions from the Registered Providers, would give a target spend for 2017/18 of circa £8m.

- 2.7 The measures outlined in paragraph 2.1 have clearly suppressed demand for adaptations. However the proportion of older people and families requiring adaptations to their properties is steadily increasing, hence the Government's increased budget allocation. In addition, due to age and medical advances, many of our adaptation requests are now far more complex. We are also seeing a reduction in care home and nursing home provision with a move to rehouse people in their own homes. Many of these cases require adaptation. Continuing pressure on hospital beds is also adding to pressure.
- 2.8 This hugely challenging position is only deliverable on the basis of a more proactive approach to traditional disabled adaptation interventions; along with a more flexible approach to the use of the capital grant, made permissible by the merging of Social Care and Disabled Facilities Capital Grants. This report sets out a number of proposals to ensure the best use of the Government resource to support disabled individuals to live independently in their own homes.
- 2.9 Some of the proposals would require changes to the Council's Regulatory Reform Order Policy. The report recommends final approval to be delegated to the Director of Housing and Residential Growth, Deputy City Treasurer and Strategic Director for Adult Social Care in consultation with the Executive Member for Homelessness, Refugees and Asylum Seekers.
- 3. Increased take up of disabled adaptations by publicising the service**
- 3.1 In order to facilitate a more proactive and preventative approach, one of the simplest ways of increasing the take up of the Disabled Facilities Grant allocation is by publicising the service. During shortage of resource we have not promoted the service at all. The intention is to produce publicity material, in the form of leaflets and flyers, to be distributed to GP surgeries and other health and social care support services. The benefit of this approach is to encourage individuals to access the service before their need becomes acute or critical, thereby impacting on other health and social care resources. The cost of this will need to be met by Better Care Fund or Housing Revenue Account resources.
- 4. Review the existing means test for smaller value major adaptations**
- 4.1 The contribution determined from a means test is what the government states that the citizen is able to raise in a loan from a commercial high street bank. This can cause problems as the majority of grant applications are done for elderly people who are not eligible for that type of financial assistance.
- 4.2 A large contribution does not automatically always mean that the citizen is "well off". It is just the comparison of the amount of money they have coming in compared with the amount of money the government states that a person (or family) in their circumstances can live on. This is loosely based on the housing benefit means test which were last updated in 2008.

- 4.3 No consideration is made in the means test for outgoings which means that people with large mortgages or high private rents can be hugely affected by the means test.
- 4.4 The means test for working age citizens is very tight and can mean very large contributions without being able to raise the loans as usually one person will be working in the family unit.
- 4.5 Early (or earlier) intervention can prevent citizens from requiring the input of carers by between 5 and 10 years.
- 4.6 Due to the changes in how benefits and pensions are paid over the last few years it can be very difficult for people to provide proof of their incomes as they can be paid into a number of accounts. This can all go to delaying their grant application and in 97% of cases there are no contributions anyway.
- 4.7 Disabled Facilities Grants are being paid as part of the Better Care Fund which is administered by the NHS. All services through the NHS are free of charge at the point of entry – abolishing this means test for certain categories will go towards making this more equal.
- 4.8 Removal of the means test will speed up the Disabled Facilities Grant application which will greatly assist with early intervention to prevent admission to hospital and/or residential care and also facilitate earlier discharge from hospital.

5. Review the upper limit for grants

- 5.1 The existing upper limit for major disabled adaptations is £30,000. This has not increased since the grant was included in Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. Since then there has been an increase in the complexity of needs for disabled applicants, particularly for children and war veterans, which are accommodated by property extensions. In addition, there have been significant building cost increases over the last 20 years, which are not supported by the grant threshold. It is proposed to increase the upper limit to £50,000.

6. Recruitment of additional technical support

- 6.1 A key component of the delivery of disabled adaptations is the support offered to the Occupational Therapy assessors by building technical officers. The technical officers will interpret the OT's assessment of need and will carry out a feasibility study to determine whether the proposed adaptation can be accommodated within the client's home. The technical design of the adaptation can sometimes be quite complex and requires specialist knowledge. Additional technical expertise within the service will ensure that adaptations are delivered quickly and appropriately, and will reduce a current bottleneck in this area. An increase of 2% to technical fees could provide additional technical expertise to facilitate delivery of 3-4 ftes.

7. Extend access to home improvement assistance

- 7.1 Historically, disabled facilities grants have only addressed direct needs of residents in terms of their disability. The relaxation of the capital grant now means that additional works can also be funded, by DFG, to address health and safety, or disrepair issues within the property. The policy will be amended to enable owner occupiers who are eligible for DFG to access to the current portfolio of grant and loan products, within the Manchester Home Improvement and Relocation Assistance Policy, (RRO). This could ensure that support can be offered beyond the traditional adaptation. Works could include essential re-wiring, where old and unsafe; heating, to replace defective or non-existent systems; and other defects, such as dry rot infestation. The benefit of this holistic approach would reduce dependency by ensuring that individuals can live comfortably and safely within their own homes.

8. Additional financial support to assist households to relocate to more suitable accommodation to support their care needs.

- 8.1 Lack of financial support poses a significant obstacle to vulnerable individuals moving to a home that better suits their needs. It is proposed that Registered Providers are allowed to retain a proportion of their contribution towards to the cost of major adaptation work, as a fund to assist people to move home, such as packing and removal costs. This would be managed by the Housing for Older People team in accordance with an agreed policy framework. The overall administration and level of funding that can be applied to be finalised by Director of Housing and Residential Growth, Deputy City Treasurer and Strategic Director for Adult Social Care in consultation with the Executive Member for Homelessness, Refugees and Asylum Seekers.

9. Housing support for Older People

- 9.1 Northwards Housing have piloted a Housing Options for Older People (HOOP) service part funded by the North Manchester CCG. It is proposed to expand this service across the whole city, to support both social rented tenants and privately owned occupants. The HOOP workers roles are to work closely with health and social care professionals who have clients aged over 50 and with a housing need. The aim is to find the best solution to their housing need and aspiration by enabling the individual to make informed choices based on options in the local area that meet their needs. This may include moving to somewhere more suitable or staying put in their current home, often with support and adaptations.
- 9.2 This would bring extra capacity to health and social care professionals who have the single point of contact of a housing advisor who will bring expertise in their knowledge of housing options (across tenure) in the local area.
- 9.3 The advisors would work with older people who are looking to plan for the future to ensure that they can access information about what housing options may be available to them in years to come. This would help people make an informed housing decision before a point of health and social care crisis.

Ideally we would seek funding from CCG's and a bid was made through the transformation fund. However there are many competing demands and an alternative means of funding the posts has been developed.

- 9.4 A funding proposal is in development whereby Registered Providers (RP) use part of their agreed voluntary 40% contribution towards the cost of major adaptations. As the 40% contribution is derived from RP revenue income, there is no reason why a proportion of this could not be used to fund the posts with the shortfall in capital being made up from the increased DFG budget. The agreement to fund the posts could be included in a revised Service Level Agreement.

10. Adapting Homelessness Accommodation to support disabled homeless individuals

- 10.1 An increasing number of individuals, who present as homeless, have significant disability. This is primarily as a consequence of prolonged alcohol and drug misuse. The manifestation of which is severe mobility issues, sometimes associated with single or double amputees. Whether DFG funding can be used to adapt homelessness accommodation owned by MCC is to be confirmed, however there is scope for privately owned properties to be assessed and appropriate adaptations delivered.

11. Contributing to the Manchester Strategy

(a) A thriving and sustainable city

- 11.1 Vulnerable and disabled residents who are assisted to live in housing that is in good repair and appropriate for their needs, will be more able to thrive and live independently.

(b) A highly skilled city

- 11.2 Residents living in adequate housing that is in good repair and appropriate for their needs are more able to enjoy improved health. They are also more likely to be able to access employment and have opportunities to develop new skills, interests and talents.

(c) A progressive and equitable city

- 11.3 Vulnerable and disabled residents who are assisted to live independently in their homes will have an opportunity to remain in and contribute to their local community. They will also have an increased potential to become economically active and to make a positive contribution to the City's growth and success.

(d) A liveable and low carbon city

- 11.4 Housing that is kept in good repair and kept up to modern standards in terms of decency and thermal efficiency will improve the quality and choice of

housing in the City and contribute to creating neighbourhoods of choice where people want to live, bring up their children and work.

(e) A connected city

- 11.5 Residents who have improved health and greater opportunities to become economically active will be more likely to support the regional economy and drive growth.

12. Key Policies and Considerations

(a) Equal Opportunities

- 12.1 Previous reports regarding amendments to the Policy have outlined the implications for Equal Opportunities that arise generally from the Manchester Home Improvement and Relocation Assistance Policy. With respect to Home Improvement Assistance and Relocation Assistance, there are no new implications for Equal Opportunities arising directly from this report. The previous inclusion of Disabled Facilities Grants within the Policy enables the Council to develop innovative solutions to assist disabled residents and their families to overcome barriers to independent living.

(b) Risk Management

- 12.2 The Manchester Home Improvement and Relocation Assistance Policy needs to be continually monitored and reviewed to try and ensure that its provisions meet the needs and aspirations of its intended recipients. However, it is made clear within the Policy that the amount of assistance available is dictated by financial resources. Officers operating the Policy regularly review their capital allocations, to ensure that the assistance given is within agreed budgets.

(c) Legal Considerations

- 12.3 Article 3 of the Regulatory Reform (Housing assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 gives a local housing authority power to provide financial assistance for the purpose of improving living conditions in their area. Such assistance may not be given unless the local housing authority has adopted a policy for the provision of such assistance and they have given the public notice of such adoption. The said Policy was adopted by the City Council on 19th February 2003, came into force on 18th July 2003 and has been subject to eight revisions.
- 12.4 The legislative provisions governing disabled facilities grants (DFGs) are contained in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended) (HGCRA 1996).