



Scrutiny Review of Disabled Facilities Grants

People Select Committee, February 2025

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Acknowledgements

The Select Committee thank the following contributors to this review:

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Forward

Following the People Select Committee’s review of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), we are pleased to present the Committee’s final report.

DFG’s are a means tested grant to make an individual’s home suitable to their needs, enabling them to live independently and preventing pressure on other council and health services. The review examined how Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council delivers the service, which supports some of the most vulnerable residents with disabilities. In doing so, the review considered the current policy and processes, along with the guidance from Foundations, the national body for Home Improvement Agencies and Disabled Facilities Grants. Other models of delivery were also presented to the Committee as well as feedback from the Stockton Parent Carers Forum on their members experience of the service.

During the course of the review extra funding for DFG’s was announced by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government. The Royal British Legion also launched their Credit their Service campaign, which asks local authorities to use their existing discretionary powers to ensure that military compensation is never included in means tests for locally administered benefits, including DFG.

Our recommendations seek to both improve communications with those applying for DFG’s as well as streamline current processes. They also support closer working with Registered Providers, and reviewing the impact of extra funding announced in January 2025.

We would like to extend our thanks to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Officers, Foundations, and other stakeholders that have contributed to the review. We would also like to thank Stockton Parent & Carer Forum for providing vital input from a client viewpoint.

Cllr Marilyn Surtees, Chair

	<p>Councillor Marilyn Surtees</p> <p>Chair – People Select Committee</p>		<p>Councillor Paul Weston</p> <p>Vice-Chair – People Select Committee</p>
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Original Brief

Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?

Disabled Facilities Grant directly supports the following Council plan priority: "To support people to remain safely and independently in their homes for as long as possible" (Council Plan Objective - 'A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm').

What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?

A Disabled Facilities Grant is a means tested grant provided by the Council to make an individual's home suitable to their needs. Works may include:

- widening doors and installing ramps or grab rails
- improve access to room and facilities via stairlifts or level access showers
- building extensions to accommodate a downstairs bedroom/bathing facilities
- adapt heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use

Monies to fund DFG's is provided to Councils via the Better Care Fund.

An individual must occupy the property the grant is applied for as their main residence and intend to occupy the property for the full grant period of 5 years. An individual can also apply if they are a landlord and have a disabled tenant. The Local Authority needs to be satisfied that the work is necessary and appropriate to meet the disabled person's needs and that the work is reasonable and can be done, depending on the age and condition of the property.

Demand for DFGs continue to rise at a time when building costs have significantly increased. The result of this is an increasing number of DFG applications costed above the maximum grant threshold (£30k) and a growing waiting list (in terms of numbers of those waiting for a DFG and time taken from the point of application to DFG works commencing). This impacts on the health and wellbeing of individuals and potentially their ability to remain living independently in their home

The significant rise in building costs has resulted in an increasing number of residents needing to make greater financial contribution to the cost of their DFG, specifically in instances where the value of DFG works is above the maximum £30,000 threshold. SBC has adopted measures to support individuals who do not have the financial means available to contribute to a DFG in the form of discretionary loans with the aim of preventing residents 'falling out' of the system.

This review will explore both current and potential alternative options to ensure the service is delivered in an efficient, effective and customer focused way.

The Committee will undertake the following key lines of enquiry:

- What is the customer journey when applying for DFG?
 - How do residents find out about DFG?
 - How is the Occupational Therapist (OT) assessment carried out and how long does this take?
 - What is the process once a referral is made by an OT and passed to the Housing Investment (HI) team?
 - What is current the current waiting list with HI?
 - How long does it take from application to receiving DFG?
 - What is the current waiting list with HVE and external contractors?
 - How are residents kept informed throughout the process?
 - What checks take place to ensure quality of the work once DFG has been received?

- Is Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's current approach to delivering DFG providing enough support to vulnerable residents?
- How does SBC's approach compare with other Local Authorities?
- Should SBC implement any of the Good Practice Guidance issued by Central Government in 2018.
- How many residents are needing to access discretionary funding (financial loan assistance) to make financial contribution to the cost of their DFG?
- Are there any other measures that can be taken to assist residents who do not have the financial means available to contribute to their DFG?
- How many residents applying don't meet the criteria and what advice/support is provided to those not eligible for any funding for DFG?
 - Are there any Voluntary, Community & Social Enterprise (VCSE) organization that provide assistance that is/can be signposted to?

Provide an initial view as to how this review could lead to efficiencies, improvements and/or transformation:

DFG's helps the most vulnerable residents with disabilities in the Borough live independently in their own homes for longer, preventing pressures on other council and health services and supporting hospital discharge. The review will consider how SBC can deliver this crucial service in the most effective and efficient way whilst still meeting vulnerable resident's needs. It will also explore whether SBC is offering sufficient support to enable residents secure a DFG in the face of rising building costs.

1.0 Executive Summary

- 1.1. This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the People Select Committee's scrutiny review of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).
- 1.2. DFG's are means tested grants of a maximum £30,000 provided by the Council via the Improved Better Care Fund (IBCF) programme to make an individual's home suitable to their needs, and may include widening doors, installing ramps, improving access to facilities via stair lifts or level access showers, or building extensions to accommodate downstairs bedroom/bathing facilities. DFG's are means tested for applicants over 18 and based on the income and savings of both applicant and any partners, although the first £6,000 household savings is exempt from the means test. There are passported benefits where the means test does not apply, such as Universal Credit, Income Support, Income-based Employment and Support Allowance, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Guarantee Pension Credit, Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit, and Housing Benefit. In January 2025 members were made aware of a request made to Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) from the Royal British Legion, as part of their Credit their Service campaign, to use existing discretionary powers to ensure that military compensation is never treated as income in means tests for locally administered benefits, which includes DFG.
- 1.3. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide the grant to eligible residents and legislation governing DFG's sets out the following duties:
 - [make residents aware of options available to meet their needs](#)
 - [give reasons if DFG is not granted](#)
 - [make residents aware of how to complain or appeal](#)
- 1.4. Legislation contained within the Housing Grants Construction & Regeneration Act 1996 (HGRA) states that an application must contain a detailed schedule of works and 2 estimates from different contractors (unless the case is fast-tracked or where the works are part of an approved single contractor scheme). In addition, adaptations must be necessary and appropriate.
- 1.5. The Care Act 2014 states that LA's have a legal duty to carry out assessment of need to anyone who "appears to have a care and support need" and a general duty to arrange provision of preventative services
- 1.6. There are also statutory timescales for the time it takes from DFG application to approved (6 months) and certification of works (12 months)
- 1.7. DFG's helps some of the most vulnerable residents with disabilities in the Borough live independently in their own homes for longer, preventing pressure on other council and health services and supporting hospital discharge. The review has therefore focused on how Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) delivers this crucial service, to ensure it is done so in the most effective and efficient way whilst still meeting vulnerable resident's needs.
- 1.8. While SBC will only fund the minimum specification required to meet the applicants need, the Committee was assured that the applicant can fund adaptations above the basic offer themselves. The Committee also noted the conditions contained within SBC's DFG policy are fully explained when the applicant is notified that their DFG application has been successful. These include eligible works only being carried out by the contractors whose estimates accompany the formal

application and in accordance with the specification in the grant approval document, works must be carried out within 12 months of date of approval, payment/part payment of the grant is conditional upon works being completed to the satisfaction of SBC, the applicant must intend to live in the property as their only or main residence for 5 years, and SBC may require any specialist or portable equipment to be returned when no longer needed

1.9. There are five stages of a DFG as outlined below:

Stage 0	First Contact	Public information and advice Contact Centre
Stage 1	Assessment	Triage to identify appropriate response Assessment of needs
Stage 2	Compile the Application	Application form and eligibility information Design and costing of adaptations
Stage 3	Approval	Check application is correct Issue approval letter
Stage 4	Carry out the works	Arrange and carry out the works Ensure all is satisfactory and make payment

1.10. Assessments are carried out by the Occupational Therapy (OT) service who receive referrals for assessments via First Contact or SBC internal Social Care Team. Referrals can also come from the Nomination and Letting Team and Registered Providers (RP's) such as Thirteen. Once the assessment has taken place and a referral for a DFG is made to the Housing Investment & Migration Support Team (HI&MS), the person joins the waiting list to apply for a DFG, and this ensures a fair and transparent process is adhered to. They will receive written confirmation of the referral. SBC's in-house Home Improvement Agency (HIA) provides lower-level adaptations and support (under £1,000), and any immediate measures that can be put in place. The OT can decide if the application should be "fast tracked" to the top of the list due to their need.

1.11. When the person reaches the top of the waiting list an appointment is made to commence the formal grant process. The HI&MS Team offers an Agency Service to all applicants to help them in compiling their application and provide help, advice and support through the whole of the DFG process. As stated above the application must contain a detailed schedule of works and two estimates from different contractors, along with proof of future occupation. Application forms are completed by the technical officer (TO) at the initial visit. Draft plans are drawn up by a TO during a home visit, on return to the office the TO produces a CAD drawing and provides a schedule of works to accompany the drawing. These are sent to the referring OT for review, with a two week deadline for approval. Very few schedules of works are amended, and this may be causing unnecessary delays for straightforward cases. The application is approved or refused within 6 months of applying. If it is refused then reasons for this will be provided.

1.12. The TO provides initial design and schedule of works to the relevant building contractor. Building Services (the Councils internal building team) carry out Level Entry Showers which make up the majority of the DFG adaptations works, as well as door widening if capacity allows. Other adaptations are carried out via one of four builders that have a Minor Works Contract with SBC. Applicants can organise for their own contractor to carry out the work, but work can not start until the DFG has been approved. All work carried out for DFG is inspected by the TO whether this is carried out by Building Services, one of the four SBC contractors, or the applicants own contractor.

Applicants are asked to sign a letter to confirm their satisfaction with the work. If the applicant has any issues with the works within the first 12 months, they can contact the team to rectify the issue. After 12 months it is the responsibility of the applicant to maintain their adaptations.

- 1.13. When comparing SBC's performance in delivering DFG's with the regional and national data, SBC delivered significantly more DFG's for 0-17 year old age group and fewer DFG's to the 66+ age group. The data also shows that SBC's delivery times for the overall process are average nationally, and faster than most Local Authorities at approval stage, Stage 3. However, SBC took longer to compile the application (stage 2, which has no statutory time limit) when compared both regionally and nationally. Members were informed that this has been affected by both reduced staff levels, which were being addressed, and discussions with clients to manage expectations. SBC also took longer at stage 4 – carrying out the works, which has a statutory timeframe of being completed within 12 months of approval. This had been affected by the number of extensions that had been carried out in the year data was reported, which take longer to complete.
- 1.14. The Committee notes that the waiting list for those wishing to apply for a DFG is growing, standing at 322 in December 2024 with a two-year timeframe from referral to installation of the adaptation. This has been attributed to several factors including a greater awareness of the OT service and lockdowns/COVID's impact on older residents remaining active. It is further noted that although fast track applications ensures that those who have critical or time-sensitive needs receive timely adaptations, it has an impact on the remaining people on the waiting list. In addition to the growing waiting lists, the average amount of grant approved is also rising, due to inflation and rising building costs, creating budget pressures.
- 1.15. The Committee were particularly concerned that the waiting lists includes a rising number of people who live in RP rented properties While there is no legal obligation for RP's to fund all adaptations to their properties for their tenants, there is an expectation that they will do so within their own resources. Thirteen are the exception to this as they have a commitment within the Stock Transfer Agreement to spend £1m per year for 30 years on adaptations to properties within the Borough. Details confirming the properties Thirteen have adapted to meet their commitment and type of adaptations carried out have been requested but still outstanding in December 2024. In addition, the Committee found that not only are applications for a DFG from RP tenants increasing but there is an absence of information on all RP properties i.e., a register of adapted properties which details the number of properties and type of adaptations completed.
- 1.16. The Committee found that communication with DFG applicants is an area that needs to be addressed. This includes the information available on SBC website, communication with applicants during the waiting periods to ensure the processes are fully understood and manage expectations, and information for those who do not qualify for a DFG such as next steps and advice on where to go for further assistance which appeared to be missing. In addition, customer feedback is important, and this has historically been collected via different services involved: OT's, Building and Housing Services. Members heard how this is now being streamlined into one survey and are keen that it captures feedback on all stages of the process.
- 1.17. Members believe that further exploration is required of the streamlining of processes to fully understand the impact and whether they would reduce delays and allow for quicker processing. These include reviewing referral forms used by OT to ensure it captures all relevant information, removing the requirement for OT to approve the scheme of works for straight forward cases, allowing electronic forms to be uploaded, and attaching only two quotes for the works to the application as per the statutory requirement.

- 1.18. Improvement to processes and communication will not, however, address the growing pressure as demand continues to outstrip funding. Previously this shortfall in funding has been met from other budgets. While bespoke meetings have been put in place to monitor the DFG budget and ensure there is no further overspend, the implications of this will be that the waiting list will continue to grow. In January 2025 the MHCLG announced a further £86m additional funding for 2024/25, and SBC's share of this will be £270,856, taking the total government funding for 2024/25 to £2,239,284. Confirmation on 2025/26 allocation for DFG was also received in January 2025, and this was also £2,239,284. This would allow 49 extra Level Entry Showers, Ramps or Stairlifts, the most required adaptations, to take place and reduce the waiting list by approximately 100. However, Members noted that it is not possible to predict how many new referrals will be received.
- 1.19. SBC's in-house HIA provides lower-level adaptations and support, and the Committee believes this could potentially be utilized to further provide early help and prevention to ease budgetary pressures for DFG. Further consideration and investigation of this should be taken.
- 1.20. The Committee acknowledges that the long-term implications of delays in provision of a DFG adaptations could have a negative impact on an individual's quality of life and health outcomes, along with a need for re-housing or admission to long term residential care. The recommendations include exploring ways to manage expectations and improve processes, however without finding alternative means to provide adaptations or further funding there will be a limit on the number of DFG's that SBC is able to approve each year. Therefore, closer working with RP's and reviewing the impact of the recent announcement of extra funding for DFG's on our Borough is also being suggested within the recommendations.

Recommendations

The Committee recommends that:

1. In relation to the recent announcement from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government regarding extra funding for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), officers be requested to monitor the impact of this extra funding on the Council's waiting list; updates to be provided to the Select Committee as part of the monitoring of the review recommendation.
2. Officers explore the potential to engage with Teesside University to produce a study on the impact of DFG's on people lives in the Borough and how long this potentially allows them to remain living in their own home.
3. Housing Investment & Migration Support team work with Planning to explore building upon the requirements for accessibility/adaptability in new build properties when the Local Plan is next updated and, prior to this, lobby government to make the relevant Building Regulations mandatory.
4. The Leader and Chief Executive support officers in their ongoing discussions with Registered Provider's to explore their current and future plans for adaptations and also explore joint working to support Registered Providers to take up their responsibility, to ease pressure on the waiting list.
5. Officers explore with Registered Providers a register of adapted properties within the Borough which details the type of adaptations, to assist the Nomination and Lettings Team in advertising and matching individuals with appropriate properties.
6. Communication to residents and applicants be improved by:

- reviewing and updating information on SBC website and explore whether the Foundations template and link to adaptmyhome.com will give residents sufficient information to decide whether to apply for an assessment/DFG.
 - exploring introducing a system to ensure clear and consistent communications to keep applicants informed of their position in the process at regular intervals to reduce misunderstandings and manage expectations.
 - Sharing key information of DFG scheme available with external stakeholders to ensure potential applicants are aware of support available.
 - ensuring an appropriate route for residents to communicate with the Housing Investment & Migration Support team is in place.
 - a singular customer feedback survey covering all processes and services involved in a DFG is developed, to ensure this is only collected once.
7. Officers explore streamlining processes to understand their impact and benefit of implementing:
- referral form used by the Occupational Therapy Team be reviewed to ensure it captures all relevant information to enabled to make a decision on eligible works.
 - removing the requirement for Occupational Therapist to approve the scheme of works for straightforward cases.
 - allowing electronic forms to be uploaded.
 - requiring only two quotes rather than three for the application.
8. Further examination of if/how the Home Improvement Agency can be utilised to provide early help and prevention, to ease budgetary pressure for DFG
9. Use of flat pack extensions is explored in more detail to see if they would provide a viable and cost-effective option.
10. Following correspondence from the Royal British Legion to the Council, officers review whether it is possible for military compensation to be exempt from the means test for DFG's and report back to the Committee.

2.0 Introduction

- 2.1. This report outlines the findings and recommendations following the People Select Committee's scrutiny review of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).
- 2.2. Disabled Facilities Grants are means tested grants provided by the Council to make an individual's home suitable to their needs. This may include widening doors, installing ramps or grab rails, improve access to facilities via stair lifts or level access showers, building extensions to accommodate downstairs bedroom/bathing facilities or adapting heating/lighting controls. The main aim of this review was to explore both the current and potential alternative options for delivering this crucial service to ensure it is done so in the most effective and efficient way whilst still meeting vulnerable resident's needs. It also sought to explore whether sufficient support is offered to enable residents to secure a DFG in the face of rising building costs.
- 2.3. The Committee undertook several key lines of enquiry:
- [What is the customer journey when applying for DFG?](#)
 - [Is Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council's current approach to delivering DFG providing enough support to vulnerable residents?](#)
 - [How does SBC's approach compare with other Local Authorities?](#)
 - [Should SBC implement any of the Good Practice Guidance issued by Central Government in 2018?](#)
 - [How many residents are needing to access discretionary funding \(financial loan assistance\) to make financial contribution to the cost of their DFG?](#)
 - [Are there any other measures that can be taken to assist residents who do not have the financial means available to contribute to their DFG?](#)
 - [How many residents applying don't meet the criteria and what advice/support is provided to those not eligible for any funding for DFG?](#)
- 2.4. Contributions were sought and subsequently received from several Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council (SBC) departments including Housing Regeneration and Investment (HRI), Occupational Therapy, and Building Services Teams. The Committee also considered evidence from Foundations, the national body for Home Improvement Agencies and Disabled Facilities Grants. Stockton Parent Carer Forum provided vital input from a client viewpoint, along with Stockton & District Advice & Information Service, Middlesbrough Council, and Teesside & District Society for the Blind.

3.0 Background

- 3.1 Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a capital grant governed by the Housing Grants and Construction Act 1996, funded as part of the Improved Better Care Fund (IBCF) programme. This is a pooled budget between the NHS and Local Authorities (LA) and passed to the LA's to administer. They enable people to continue living safely and independently in their own home.
- 3.2 Local Authorities therefore have had a statutory duty to provide grant aid for a range of adaptations individuals may require in their home. Legislations governing DFG's sets out the following duties:
- [Residents have the right to receive an Assessment of Need carried out by an Occupational Therapist \(OT\)](#)

- Councils have a duty to make residents aware of options available to meet their needs
- Councils must give reasons if DFG is not granted
- Councils must make residents aware of how to complain or appeal

3.3 Legislation contained within the Housing Grants Construction & Regeneration Act (HGRA) states that an application for grant must contain:

- A detailed schedule of works
- Two estimates from different contractors (unless the case is fast-tracked or where the works are part of an approved single contractor scheme.).

The legislation also states that adaptations must be necessary and appropriate.

3.4 In addition, the Care Act 2014 states that LA's have:

- A legal duty to carry out assessment of need to anyone who "appears to have a care and support need"
- A general duty to arrange provision of preventative services

3.5 The maximum grant under the DFG is currently set at £30,000, this figure has not changed since 2008 and is currently under government review. The DFG is means tested for applicants over 18 and based on the income and savings of both the applicant and any partners, although the first £6,000 household savings is exempt from the means test. There are passported benefits where the means test does not apply, such as:

- Universal Credit
- Income Support
- Income-based (NOT contribution-based) Employment and Support Allowance (ESA)
- Income-based (NOT contribution-based) Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA)
- Guarantee Pension Credit (not Savings Pension Credit alone)
- Working Tax Credit and/or Child Tax Credit (where your annual income for the purposes of the tax credits assessment was below £15,050)
- Housing Benefit

3.6 In January 2025 members were made aware of the Royal British Legion Credit their Service campaign, which aims to address the unjust treatment of military compensation as income across welfare benefit means test by Local Authorities. They argue that compensation is unjustly regarded as income by many welfare benefit means test while civil awards, such as personal injury or medical negligence compensation, are typically exempt. They are urging Local Authorities, including SBC, to ensure that compensation awarded for injury or bereavement in His Majesty Armed Forces is never treated as income across benefits means tests, by using their existing discretionary powers. Further investigation on the implications of this needs to be carried out for all means tested benefits, including DFG, before a decision can be made.

3.7 There are statutory timescales for time it takes from DFG application to approved (6 months) and certification of works (12 months).

3.8 In addition, the Regulatory Reform Order (2002) gives local authorities a general power to introduce policies for assisting individuals by providing grants, loans and advice for the purpose of repairing, improving, extending, converting, or adapting housing. This is used for those who need to top up their grant to carry out works and is detailed in the published Housing Assistance Policy.

3.9 The Age UK Disabled Facilities Grant report ([The Age UK Disabled Facilities report](#)) reviews the administering of DFG's and outcomes for people across the country. It includes several case

studies of clients seeking support in the DFG process and notes that the population is aging therefore the need for accessible homes and adaptations will also increase. The report makes suggestions for improvements in the DFG process, which include ensuring that the information about DFG is easy to find, clear and comprehensive. They would also like the Government to allocate funds specifically to improve awareness of the grant, consult on the role of housing associations, make building regulations regarding accessibility mandatory for all new builds, include adaptations along with guidance in Decent Homes Standards, and use measures to ensure that accessibility of existing stock is improved.

- 3.10 Demand for DFGs is rising at a time when building costs have significantly increased. As a result of this there is an increasing number of DFG applications costed above the maximum threshold of £30k. There is also a growing waiting list of both residents waiting for a DFG and the time taken from the point of application to DFG works commencing. This impacts on the health and wellbeing of individuals and potentially their ability to remain living independently in their own home.
- 3.11 Further background information in relation to this scrutiny topic includes:

Good practice guidance issued by Central Government (produced on their behalf by 'Foundations').
[Foundations Guide](#)

Government Guidance [DFG Government Guidance for Local Authorities](#)

4.0 Evidence

Stockton-on-Tees Disabled Facilities Grant Policy

- 4.1. SBC's DFG Policy outlines the eligibility for DFG's, works that are eligible, processes, conditions, and completion of works. It also notes local discretion and flexibilities available, which are contained in the separate Financial Assistance Policy. The Committee was informed that these policies have not been updated since 2020.

Eligibility

- 4.2. Owner-occupiers, tenants and landlords can apply for a DFG. Tenants must obtain their landlord permission. Applications will only be processed on receipt of a referral and assessment from the Occupational Therapy (OT) team. Successive applications for the same property are permitted if/when circumstances and needs change.
- 4.3. Only SBC residents can apply for a DFG from the authority. SBC will, however, pay the costs of adaptations to a property for a child placed in care outside of the Borough. This system is reciprocated, and the Committee were informed that there has been a case where Durham Council has paid for adaptations to a property in the Borough where a child under their care was living.
- 4.4. The Policy makes clear that applicants may have to contribute towards the cost of works depending on the means test, as well as any costs over £30,000, and these must be paid in advance of works commencing.
- 4.5. Eligible works include:

- Facilitating access or making a dwelling or building safe e.g. ramped access or wheelchair accessibility indoors
- Access to a room usable for sleeping or access to a bathroom e.g., ground floor bathroom & toilet facilities, stair lift or through floor lift, wash and dry toilet facility
- Facilitating preparation and cooking food
- Heating, lighting, and power
- Adaptations for dependent residents
- Common parts e.g., where a resident is living in a block of flats
- Bespoke adaptations for an individual's specific circumstances

4.6. The above can include extensions if necessary. SBC will only fund the minimum specification required to meet the applicants need. The Committee were assured, however, that the applicant can fund adaptations above the basic offer themselves.

Enquiry, Application, and Approval Process

4.7. The Policy outlines the process for applying and these are outlined in paragraphs 4.22 – 4.34 below.

Grant Conditions

4.8. There are several conditions to receiving a DFG. The eligible works should only be carried out by the contractors whose estimates accompany the formal application and in accordance with the specification in the grant approval document. For those using their own contractors rather than the services of SBC's approved contractors, the specifications will be produced by SBC, upon consideration of a surveyor's report submitted by the applicant. Works must be carried out within 12 months of date of approval; however, SBC may consider extending this period where unforeseen circumstances have prevented the works being out.

4.9. Payment or part payment of the grant is conditional upon works being completed to the satisfaction of SBC. The payment is made direct to the contractor. Any interim grant must be repaid if the conditions have been breached, for example using a different contractor to the one specified, or because the works were not completed in 12 months due to the applicant's actions.

4.10. The applicant must intend to live in the property as their only or main residence for 5 years starting from the date SBC confirms the eligible works have been completed satisfactory, the grant condition period. SBC may agree to a shorter grant condition period depending on the applicant's health or other relevant circumstances. SBC may require any specialist or portable equipment to be returned when no longer needed and SBC must be contacted as soon as it is no longer needed.

4.11. If a DFG exceeds £10,000, and depending on the work carried out, SBC will seek to place a land charge of up to a maximum of £10,000 against the property which lasts a maximum of 10 years. If

the owner of the property decides to sell or otherwise dispose of the property within that period, SBC will demand payment of the charge. Applicants are advised of the exact amount they will be expected to pay at approval stage.

- 4.12. These conditions of the DFG are fully explained when the applicant is notified that their DFG application has been successful.

Undertaking Works

- 4.13. For those making their own applications, work in progress visits are made at regular intervals to check the progression and quality of works. To ensure value for money two estimates are needed by those making their own applications or if Building Services team cannot carry out the works, unless the works are classed as urgent, or part of a contractual agreement where the schedule of works is added to the ProContract system to receive quotes.
- 4.14. Pre-start meetings between the technical officer, contractor, and client take place for larger works such as extensions or conversion to determine start/completion dates and responsibilities. The DFG team will assess the quality of the work on completion and sign it off. Applicants are asked to sign a letter to confirm their satisfaction with the work. If the client has any issues with the works within the first 12 months, they can contact the team to rectify the issue. After 12 months it is up to the applicant to maintain their adaptations.

Local Discretion and Flexibilities

- 4.15. SBC's Housing Service Financial Assistance Policy outlines the following assistance available:
- [Homeowner Top up Loan for adaptations above £30k](#)
 - [Homeowner DFG Loan which, dependent on the clients' circumstances, can be either a Capital or Interest Repayment loan, an Equity Loan, or an Interest Free Loan](#)
 - [Tenant DFG Loan for those who are living in private rent or Registered Provider. These loans are considered by the Director of Finance, Development & Business Services along with the Director of Adults & Health, are limited to an interest or interest free loans and the loan will continue to be their responsibility should they vacate the rented property.](#)
- 4.16. If an applicant who is required to contribute to works being carried out advises they are unable to do so they are referred to the Local Administrator, Five Lamps. Five Lamps check whether they can secure a mainstream loan on the open market, and signpost to these if possible. If it is confirmed they cannot obtain a loan on the open market then they offer them one of the above products. This prevents people from dropping out and cancelling their application for the adaptations that they need. The Committee was informed that the policy for these local discretions has not been reviewed since 2017.

Government Recommendations for DFG Service Delivery & Policy

- 4.17. In 2018 Foundations issued guidance on how to deliver a DFG service on behalf of the Government

which includes recommendations that go beyond the statutory requirements. Further guidance was issued in 2022 which brought together existing policy frameworks, legislative duties and powers, and replicated the 2018 recommendations. The Committee received a breakdown of how these recommendations can be implemented by SBC, which is attached at **appendix 1**. The first recommendation highlighted is regarding good working relationships with Registered Providers (RP's) and the Committee were informed that RP's can apply for funding and carry out works on behalf of their tenants with their own contractors. In addition, Thirteen made a commitment in the Stock Transfer Agreement to spend £1 million per year for 30 year on adaptations for their tenants (see paragraph 4.62). While this may not reduce the impact on the budget it will reduce the number of in-depth cases technical staff deal with and thereby the waiting list, therefore further promotion of landlord applications with RP's will be useful. It will also be helpful to have a database of all RP's properties in SBC that have adaptations already fitted, either by SBC or RP's. This will assist residents who wish to move to adapted homes be matched with suitable properties when they become vacant. However, members recognised that there is currently a high demand for social/affordable housing, and they may face a lengthy wait to be rehoused.

- 4.18. Another recommendation highlighted is fast-tracking with no means testing applications up to £5,000 for those with highly debilitating conditions. This will enable people to get their adaptations while still working, and work as long as they are able, rather than having to rely on benefits before they qualify for a DFG. However, it may not speed up the process for the individual as they will still be added to the waiting list for works, and impact on the rest of the people on the waiting lists as well as budgets.
- 4.19. The recommendation regarding information on SBC website was considered and also highlighted as an area for development when Foundations gave evidence at the Committee, as well as within the feedback from their workshop with the team (see paragraphs 4.93 – 4.99 below). Foundations gave Plymouth and Coventry as examples of best practice for the DFG information on their website, who display their full policy. Foundations are developing a template for websites, and this can be duplicated. Foundations also currently provide a simple toolkit online, adaptmyhome.com, which advises those looking to apply for a DFG if they are likely to qualify. It was suggested that signposting to this toolkit on SBC website may positively impact the waiting list, as those who are advised that they are less likely to qualify if applied may not join the local waiting list for an assessment. While Members were initially concerned that people may need assistance to complete this assessment or be put off from applying when they might be successful, they feel assured that it is simple to complete and does not prohibit people from applying for the DFG locally regardless of the advice given.
- 4.20. The final government recommendation highlighted by the Committee was the use of flat pack extensions. This will need to be explored in more detail to see if it is viable in SBC, but if so could speed up the extension process as well as reduce costs.

Stages of Disabled Facilities Grant

4.21. There are five stages of a DFG as outlined below:

Stage 0	First Contact	Public information and advice Contact Centre
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Stage 1	Assessment	Triage to identify appropriate response Assessment of needs
Stage 2	Compile the Application	Application form and eligibility information Design and costing of adaptations
Stage 3	Approval	Check application is correct Issue approval letter
Stage 4	Carry out the works	Arrange and carry out the works Ensure all is satisfactory and make payment

Enquiry Stage (stage 0 First Contact – stage 1 Assessment)

- 4.22. Assessments are carried out by the OT service, which aims to help people live in their own homes independently and reduce, prevent and delay escalation in care and support needs, thereby reducing the likelihood of admission to hospital and/or long-term residential care settings. People are referred to the OT service via First Contact or SBC internal Social Care Team. Referrals can also come from the Nomination and Letting Team and RP's such as Thirteen.
- 4.23. There has been an increase in demand for OT services over a five-year period, with 4,152 referrals in 2023/24 compared to 2,072 referrals in 2018/19. When members questioned the reason for the increase, this was attributed to improved promotion of the service, improved accessibility, and building good working relationships with Nomination and Letting Teams, Thirteen and care services, and other local health and social care teams.
- 4.24. The OT team triage processing time can take 3-5 days, while the initial contact and background established within 7 days. OT Assessments mainly take place in a person's home, although they can also take place in residential care settings, day care settings and the local prison too. The assessment and planning will consider:
- [The person – their own perception of their needs, personal circumstances, strengths and challenges etc.](#)
 - [The environment – barriers to participation in day to day living at home](#)
 - [Analysis of/conversation around how people carry out activities](#)
- 4.25. As part of this the OT will have discussions with the person about suitable alternative housing e.g., if they would be willing to move to flat or bungalow if they are unable to access the upstairs of their current property. The OT service works with Tees Valley Home Finder and RP's to ensure those on the housing register are applying for housing that meet their needs. Foundations has highlighted this proactive housing options approach during the OT assessment as a positive. However, and as stated above, it must be noted that there is a high demand for affordable/social rented housing and difficulty in finding suitable properties to meet a persons need which means moving is not always a viable option.
- 4.26. The OT will then co-produce and agree solutions with the person to maximise their independence in day-to-day living at home. A referral to apply for a DFG is just one of the measures that the OT may put in place, and they can also refer to SBC's in-house Home Improvement Agency which provides lower-cost essential adaptations, as well as other services. Referrals for a DFG will

depend on a person's long term needs e.g., for the next five years, and adaptations recommended must be reasonable and practical. Any short-term measures that can be put in place are done so immediately to support while the person is waiting to apply for a DFG to look at more suitable adaptations. A person may be reassessed should their needs change. In such cases they are able to apply again for a DFG. In most cases the OT Assessment and planning stage can take 7 – 10 days.

- 4.27. The total lead time for this process is up to 28 days depending on priority. Once the referral is made the person joins the waiting list to apply for a DFG, and this ensures a fair and transparent process is adhered to. They will receive written confirmation of the referral. The OT can decide if the application should be “fast tracked” to the top of the list due to their need. When the person reaches the top of the waiting list an appointment is made with them to commence the formal grant process.
- 4.28. Comparisons from before and after the person come to the OT service are made to measure the impact of OT interventions/provisions on personalised outcomes, including functional independence measure e.g. measuring people's level of independence and safety following provisions of adaptations, and quality of life measures. The long-term Implications of non-provision, or delays in provision, of adaptations recommended by the OT, which may or may not include a DFG application, can include:
- a need for re-housing
 - admission to long term residential care which can cost approximately £766 - £834 per week
 - a delay in hospital discharge until adaptations are in place if the person is currently in hospital, which can cost approximately £250-£483 per day
 - if remaining in their current accommodation then poorer health outcomes and quality of life

Application and Approval Stage (stage 2 – 3)

- 4.29. The DFG Team offers an Agency Service to all applicants to help them in compiling their application, funded through a 'top slicing' of 15% from the allocated budget per year. Foundations highlighted this as a positive, not only as SBC offer assistance to those applying, ensuring the best possible outcome for the application, but by top slicing the funding for the agency service the applicant benefits from being able to access the full DFG they are granted.
- 4.30. As noted in paragraph 3.3, the application requires a detailed schedule of works and two estimates from different contractors, unless the case is fast-tracked, or part of the single contractual arrangement used by the SBC agency service. There are four contractors that have a Minor Works Contract with SBC and jobs are put through the ProContract platform. The four contractors are then invited to bid for the works.
- 4.31. Application forms and draft plans are completed by a technical officer (TO) during a home visit. On return to the office, the TO produces a CAD drawing and provides a schedule of works to accompany the drawing, these are then sent to the referring OT for review with a two week deadline for approval. Members were informed that very few schedules of works are amended and believe

it may be worth exploring whether all cases require OT sign-off, so to prevent unnecessary delays, as suggested by Foundations. Preliminary or ancillary services and charges can be included in the application. They must also include proof of future occupation which can be a Land Registry certificate/copy of the deeds that the DFG team will obtain (for owner-occupiers), written consent from a landlord (for a rented property), or occupiers certificate (for houseboats and park homes).

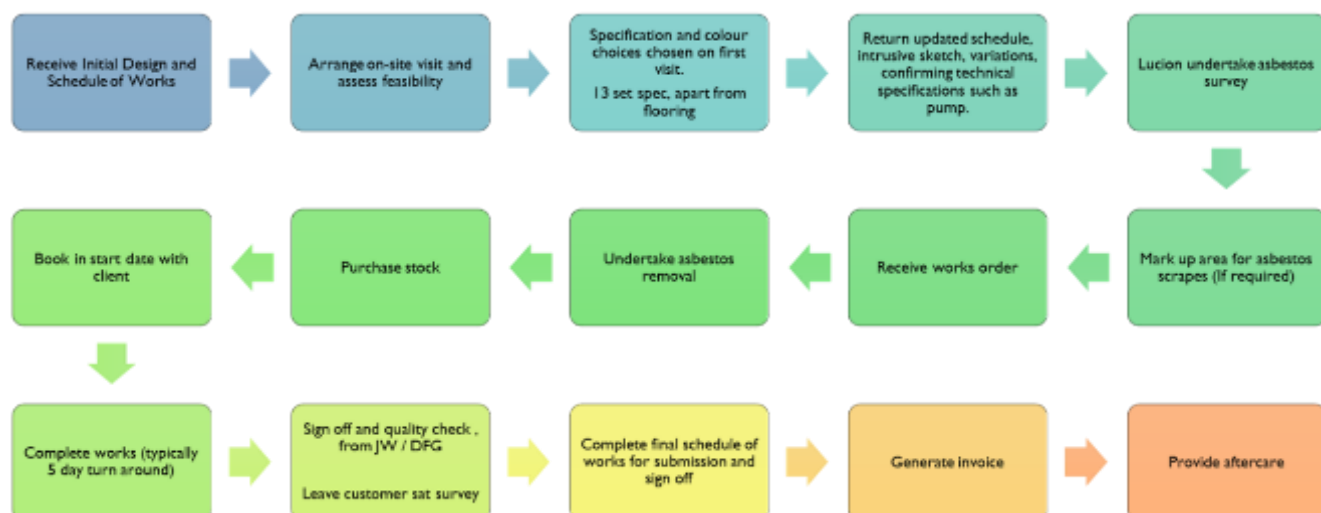
- 4.32. The application is approved or refused within 6 months of applying. If approved, and as noted in in paragraph 4.12, SBC will specify in writing details of any specialist equipment and/or portable accommodation that may be recovered when no longer needed so that it can be reused, along with information on any warranties and that equipment becomes their responsibility once these have expired. They will be informed of the conditions of the grant and any land charges that apply.
- 4.33. If an application is refused, reasons for refusal will be provided.
- 4.34. This stage uses paper forms which are sent and returned via post, and the Committee felt the process could be improved and simplified by using electronic forms to prevent any delays. Papers versions of the forms will still need to be available for those who are unable to access online forms.

Carrying out works (stage 4)

- 4.35. The DFG Officer provides initial design and schedule of works to the relevant building contractor. Building Services carry out Level Entry Shower which make up the majority of the DFG adaptations works, as well as wash/dry toilets and door widening, if capacity allows. Other adaptations are carried out via four builders that have a Minor Works Contract with SBC, and tender for the works via the ProContract system. As noted above, applicants can organise for their own contractor to carry out the work but must provide two quotes with the application and work can not start until the DFG has been approved.
- 4.36. All work carried out for DFG is inspected by the Technical Officers whether this is carried out by Building Services, one of the four SBC contractors, or the clients own contractor.

Building Services

- 4.37. The Building Services DFG Team compromises of a Building Supervisor, Tennant Liaison Officer (TLO), 3 Multiskilled Operatives and 1 apprentice. Members were informed that as the operatives are multi skilled, with a base trade in plumbing but also trained in several other trades, operatives from other teams are unable to cover for staff sickness/holiday.
- 4.38. If using Building Services, their process is fully explained to the applicant prior to starting works by TLO / Supervisor, as outlined in the diagram below, and they are given contact details for the TLO on the first site visit.



- 4.39. If they are carrying out intrusive work on a home built prior to 1999 the team will check for asbestos. This will delay the start date for works, as they will need to wait for the contractor to carry out the asbestos report. Scrapes are carried out as part of the pre-work checking where wiring and pipes are needed etc., ready for the asbestos report. Thirteen carry out their own asbestos reports for adaptations to their properties but Building Services do not experience any issues with additional waiting time for these surveys.
- 4.40. The client can choose colour and specification of equipment that meet their needs. They are also given plenty of notice for when the works will start so that they can arrange alternative washing facilities or accommodation while the work is being carried out. No works are carried out for a three week period over Christmas, as they found that clients do not want them in their homes over the Christmas period and this give staff the opportunity for a break.
- 4.41. Challenges for the team can occur when the client has different expectations and requirements to what the team has been given to carry out. There may also be changes in requirements due to the wait they have had since starting the process, and the design/specification may not be appropriate. The team has experienced frustration from the client when they first visit due to the time it has taken and the team can become a mediator between issues.
- 4.42. When they start the work, operatives will explain to the client what will happen each day along with what will happen the next day. The applicant will also receive information regarding any additional contractors that are needed etc. along with a demonstration of the equipment/adaptation during a handover once the works have been completed. The team also provide necessary documentation to the DFG team via email and have quarterly meetings with the team.
- 4.43. The Building Services team install three wet rooms a week, which take five days each. The time frames for carrying out works from first receiving the proposed works pack until submitting pricing back to the DFG officer and receiving authorisation to proceed are outlined below:

Aspect	Days Between (Av)
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Referral and 1 st onsite visit	12
Onsite visit and return schedule	5
Asbestos Report	26
Asbestos scrapes and removal	6.5
Approval to proceed and start date	136
Total	185.5

- 4.44. There is a 1 year warranty on all works carried out and clients are provided with key contact details if they experience future issues, which is the TLO. However, all three services (OT, DFG and Building Service) can receive aftercare requests which can be escalated to Building Services.
- 4.45. There has been a 16.5% increase in the total number of completed adaptations by Building Services from 2021 – 2024. Overall cost has increased by 26.16% from 2021- 2024 and average cost has increase by 8.2% from 2021 to 2024. There have been more wet rooms installed with less staff, and between April - September 2024 the team had carried out 63 wet rooms.
- 4.46. If a client is fast tracked by the OT team, there is a 28-day turnaround for carrying out the work, dependent on the information the team have available e.g. specification, asbestos reports etc. Fast tracking clients impacts on the wider team, services and clients, delaying the current waiting list and putting pressure on stock storage/acquisition. There were 14 fast tracks between April - September 2024
- 4.47. Building Services carry out contractor reviews every three months to ensure a good service is provided, and it was noted that the flooring contractor had recently changed due to performance. The team engage regularly with suppliers, building good professional relationships which help to secure discounted rates and thereby drive down costs. The team also bulk purchase commonly used items which reduces prices and ensures that stock is always available from the stores. However, some items are bought in smaller numbers rather than in bulk as the need for them is dependent on the client requirements. There is storage for 4 weeks' worth of stock.

Overall Process

- 4.48. Foundations highlighted that the strategic alignment of SBC's delivery and processes with the Better Care Fund and Council Strategic plan is a strength of SBC's delivery. It ensures there is a

strong vision of what the DFG's are achieving and keeping people safe and healthy while living independently in their own home.

2023/24 Annual Report

4.49. The 2023/24 DFG end of Year Annual report stated that the Council spent £2,252,770.05 on 400 adaptations for 376 people. The budget was overspent by £116,918.25 and had to be met from the overall Housing & Fairer Stockton On Tees budget (end of year position). This was a decrease in the numbers for the previous year, 2022/23, with 47 less adaptations delivered for 63 less people. Spend in 2022/2023 was £2,311,172.84, £58,402.19 more than 23/24.

Financial Breakdown

4.50. The adaptations delivered in 2023/24 are broken down into DFG's and Equipment Loans (which are recycled when no longer needed)

	Completions	Cost	% of Budget
DFG	161	£1,041,188.58	46%
Stairlift Loans	141	£548,246.12	24%
Ramp Loans	74	£229,085.39	10%
Total Cost of Adaptations in 2023/2024	376	£1,818,520.09	81%
Team Costs & Abortive Cost		£226,000.00	10%
Other costs incurred within year*		£208,249.96	9%
TOTAL SPEND 2023/2024		£2,252,770.05	100%
Over Spend		£116,918.25	

*part payments on adaptations

DFG Information

4.51. 185 Adaptations were installed to 161 homes, with 69% of adaptations being level entry showers (127 installed), 5% being wash/dry toilets (10), 4% being stairlifts (8), and extension (7). The remainder of adaptations included ramps, door entry systems, and garden safety measures amongst other adaptations. Fast-tracks, urgent cases that are dealt with immediately, made up 28 of the 161.

DFG Breakdown	Amount	%
Level Entry Showers	127	69%
Stairlifts	8	4%
Ramps	5	3%
Wash / Dry Toilets	10	5%
Extension	7	4%
Through Floor Lift	5	3%
Fencing	4	2%
Dropped Kerb	4	2%
Door Entry System	4	2%
Door Widening	3	2%
Shower Over Bath	2	1%
Step Lift	1	1%

Shower Pod	1	1%
Bath	1	1%
Safe Space/Wall Padding	1	1%
Garden Safety	1	1%
Safety Gates	1	1%
	185	100%

- 4.52. DFG's were granted to 86 people (53% of the 161 people) who owned their own home, 57 people (35%) who lived in an RP property and 18 people (11%) who lived in a privately rented property.
- 4.53. The average time taken for DFG's to be processed from first enquiry to completion of works was 137 Days an increase of 14 days from 22/23.
- 4.54. The average DFG grant was £6,911.33, an increase of £334.94 from 22/23. Six residents received the maximum grant available of £30,000, and all six were approved for extensions. 18 residents had to contribute towards their DFG ranging from £281.81 to £41,626.80 and of these, three residents accessed SBC's loan schemes to enable them to receive their DFG adaptation.
- 4.55. The number of people on the waiting list at the end of March 2024 was 181 people, the person at the top joined the list in June 2023 (9 months).

Equipment Loan Scheme

- 4.56. Stair Lift Loans: Of the 141 stairlifts loaned, 108 were to those that own their own home (77%), 19 to those living in a privately rented home (13%), and 14 to those living in a RP home (10%). The average time taken for Stair Lift Loans to be processed from first enquiry to completion of works was 44 days, 11 days less than 22/23. The average Stair Lift Loan was £3,888.27, £773.10 more than 22/23's average.
- 4.57. Ramp Loans: Of the 74 ramps loaned, 56 were to those that own their own home (76%), 12 to those living in a privately rented home (16%), and 6 to those living in a RP home (8%). The average time taken for Ramp Loans to be processed from first enquiry to completion of works was 53 days, 3 days more than 22/23. The average Ramp Loan was £3,095.75 which is £260.72 more than 22/23.
- 4.58. The Committee were informed that in December 2024 the number of people on the waiting list to apply for a DFG after being assessed and referred by the OT service had increased to 322, and the overall timescale from referral to installation date was two years. There were 42 people who had received approval and were waiting for installation of a level entry shower and 13 waiting for other works following approval. The reasons given for the increase included funding issues as well as a rising number of people who live in RP rented properties applying. In addition to the growing waiting list, the average amount of grant approved is also rising, and this is attributed to inflation and rising building costs.
- 4.59. In January 2025 the MHCLG announced a further £86m additional funding for 2024/25, and SBC's share of this will be £270,856, taking the total government funding for 2024/25 to £2,239,284.

Confirmation on 2025/26 allocation for DFG was also received in January 2025, and this was also £2,239,284. This would allow 49 extra Level Entry Showers, Ramps or Stairlifts, the most required adaptations, to take place and reduce the waiting list by approximately 100. However, Members noted that it is not possible to predict how many new referrals will be received.

Registered Housing Providers

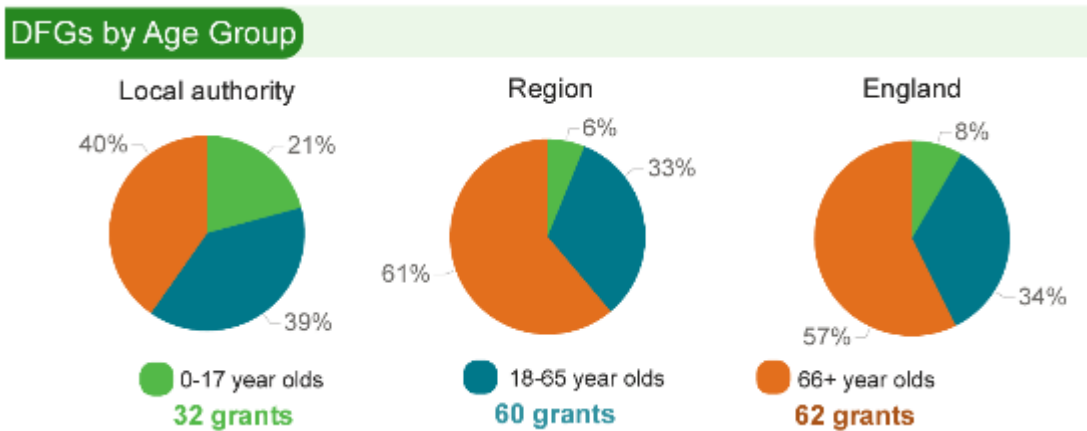
4.60. There has been an increase in applications from RP tenants for a DFG and as noted above, 35% of DFG's were granted to people living in RP properties in 2023/24. Approximately 50% of the properties the Building Services team carried out works on are RP properties and the number of Building Services clients living in RP homes has increased from 8 in 2020/2021 to 45 in April - September 2024, as indicated in the table below:

2020 – 2021	8
2021 – 2022	31
2022 – 2023	35
2023 – 2024	47
2024 – to date (September)	45

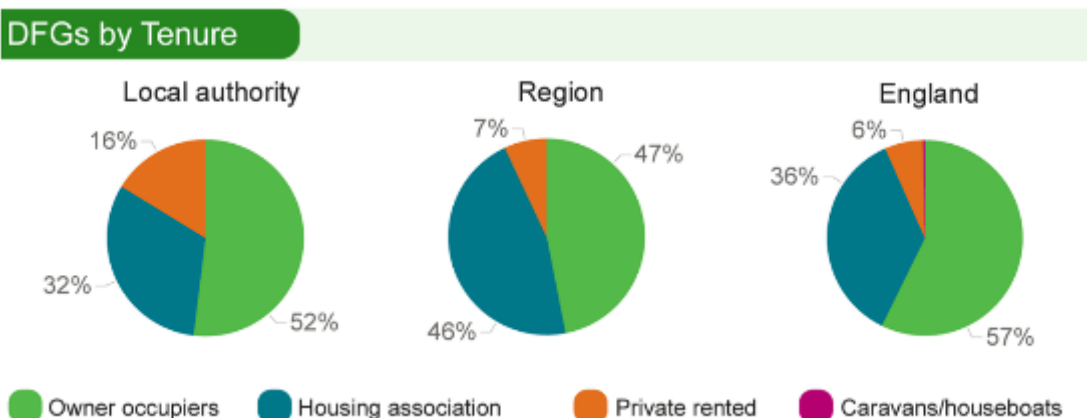
- 4.61. While there is no legal obligation for all RP's to fund all adaptations to their properties for their tenants, and their tenants have the same rights to access DFG funding as those living in private rented or owner occupied homes, there is an expectation that they will do so within their own resources.
- 4.62. As noted in paragraph 4.17, Thirteen are the exception as they have a requirement within their 2010 stock transfer agreement to commit £1m per year for adaptations to properties for 30 years. During the review officers from the Senior Management Team met with Thirteen to discuss their role in carrying out adaptations on their properties and the outcome of these discussions were fed back to the Committee by the Assistant Director of Housing & A Fairer Stockton-on-Tees. Thirteen had stated that they have spent more than the £1m commitment for the past four years on adaptations and asked to provide a list of adaptations made to properties, which properties these had been made to, and the number of tenants on their waiting list. This information is still outstanding. It was also found that Thirteen are not carrying out all adaptations, such as installing level entry showers to single storey properties but will grant permission for these adaptations to be carried out to the property via a DFG.
- 4.63. The increase of RP tenants applying for a DFG rather than receiving adaptations from their landlord adds pressure to SBC's waiting list and resources. In addition, as DFG's are means tested there may be a possibility that the application is refused, whereas if they apply direct to their landlord the adaptation may be approved. Officers are explaining this at the application stage.
- 4.64. The Committee were assured that currently properties are being advertised on Tees Valley Home Finder with adaptations, and these are only being removed from RP properties if they are no longer viable. The reasons for adaptations no longer being viable include coming to the end of their lifespan or no longer being under warranty. A database of all RP properties in SBC that have adaptations already fitted, either by SBC or RP's does not currently exist, however would be useful.

Regional and National Comparison

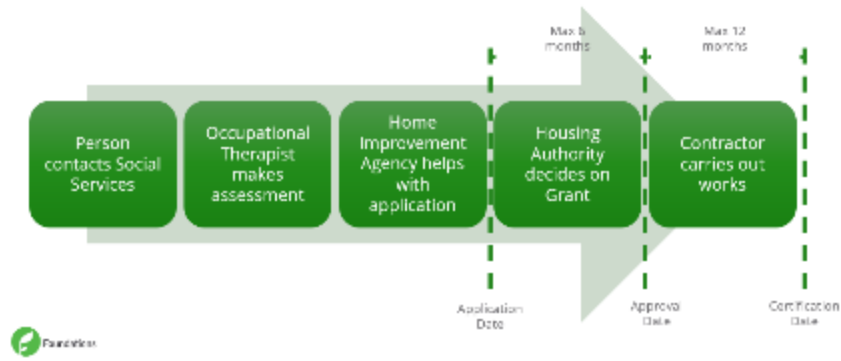
- 4.65. As part of Foundations work they collate the delta data on performance. The data is collected annually via a survey completed by local authorities. The information is not audited and therefore the Committee were advised that caution is needed when comparing regional and national data.
- 4.66. When compared against the regional and England averages, SBC delivered significantly more DFG's for 0-17 year old age group, 21% of all DFG's, compared to 6% regionally and 8% nationally). In addition, SBC delivered fewer DFG's to the 66+ age group (40%) than the regional (61%) and national average (57%). The Committee were informed that, due to their circumstances, those in younger age groups may have had more of an urgent need for adaptations in their home. This can, however, have an impact on the needs of older people which may change while waiting for adaptations and subsequently require more social care interventions.



- 4.67. There was an unusual trend for SBC with regards to tenure in that SBC had a higher than average Private Landlord uptake (16%). There was no significant difference both regionally and nationally for other tenures i.e. owner occupiers and registered providers. It is suggested by Foundations that private rented landlords may be reluctant to apply for adaptations to their properties due to negative perceptions however SBC are bucking this trend.



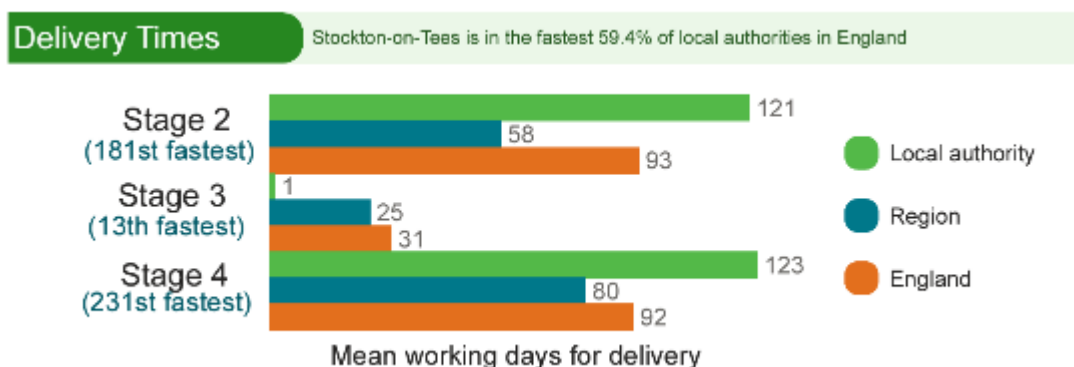
- 4.68. Statutory maximum timescales apply to stages three and four of a DFG only, with 6 month maximum timescale from applying for the DFG to approval (stage 3) and 12 months maximum from approval date to certification of the works (stage 4).



4.69. While there are no statutory timescales for the first stages of a DFG, from the person contacting the LA for adaptations receiving an OT assessment and then moving to the application stage, there was best practice guidance on these. The target timescales for each stage are outlined below.

Type	Target timescales (working days)				
	Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Total
Urgent & Simple	5	25	5	20	55
Non-urgent & Simple	20	50	20	40	130
Urgent & Complex	20	45	5	60	130
Non-urgent & Complex	35	55	20	80	180

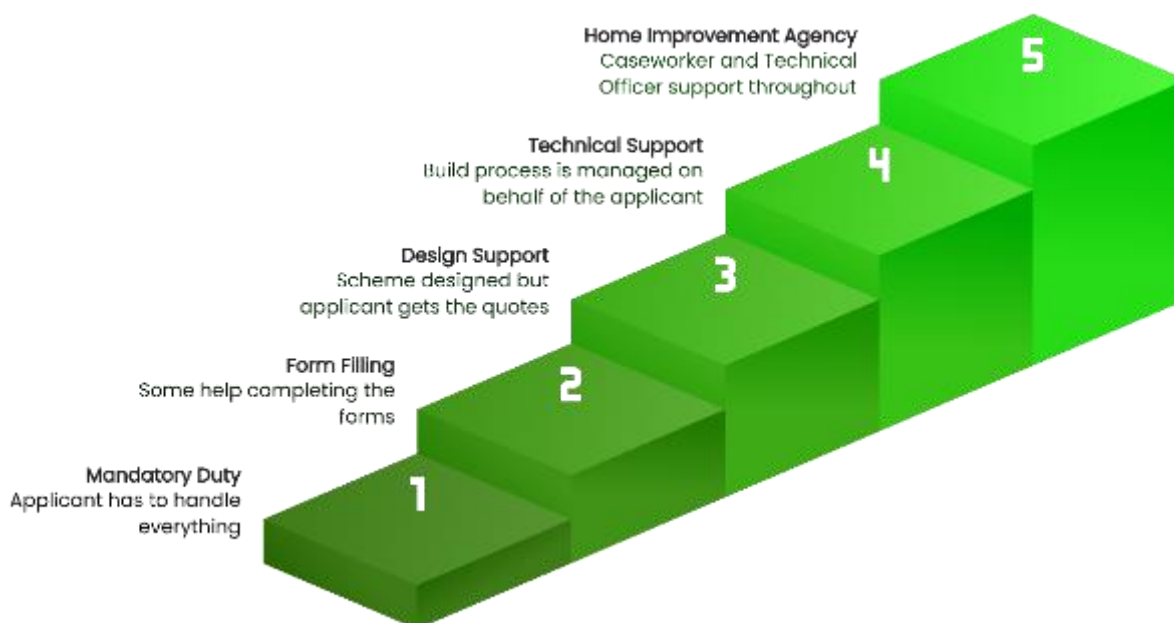
4.70. Delta Data on delivery times showed SBC was average nationally for the overall process, and faster than most local authorities at the approval stage, Stage 3 – checking the application is correct and issuing an approval letter. However, SBC took longer both regionally and nationally at stage 2, compiling the application, and stage 4 carrying out the works. Stage 2 timescales had been affected by staffing issues and discussions required to manage expectations, while the reasons for delays at stage 4 was accredited to there being several DFG’s for extensions which took longer to complete. The Committee questioned whether stock and procurement processes could be a reason for this, and informed that SBC had recently gone through a procurement process for suppliers of adaptations and therefore should not impact.



4.71. The current delivery time is approximately 150 days.

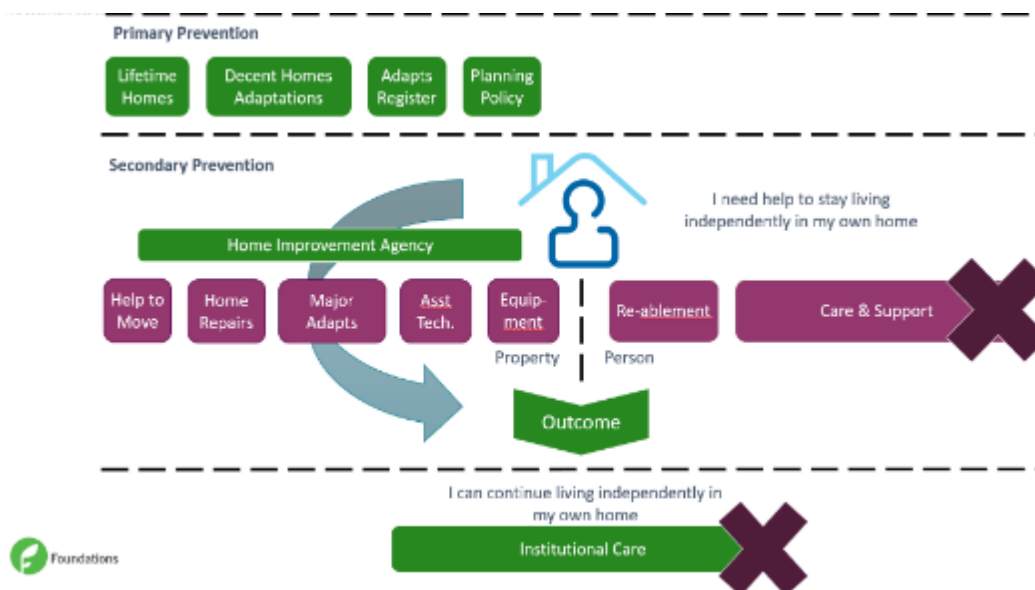
Delivery model - Maturity of DFG Delivery

4.72. Foundations outlined the different levels of delivery models that LA's implement, with level one only carrying out the mandatory duty and the applicant having to handle everything themselves. Other models include assisting to fill in forms only, designing the scheme but applicant gets quotes, and managing the build process. The different delivery models are outlined in the diagram below.



4.73. SBC's delivery of DFG's is assessed by Foundation as level 4/5, as caseworker and technical officer support is provided throughout the process. The Committee heard how providing this level of support benefits the applicants, and they are less likely to drop out of their application before receiving the adaptations they need. As shown on the diagram, Foundation name the top level model of delivering DFG's a Home Improvement Agency (HIA), and they considered the service provided by SBC's HIA, carrying out adaptations which cost up to £1,000 and sits separately to the DFG team, a handy person service. For SBC's model to be considered a level 5 the DFG and HIA would need to come together and offer further assistance to residents such as moving, repairs, and assistant technology/equipment.

4.74. Foundations explained how they believed that implementing HIA's at a secondary prevention level were the best way to assist individuals to continue living independently in their own home, and this is illustrated in the diagram below.



4.75. Middlesbrough were highlighted by Foundations as an example of best practice. Their DFG service is part of their Staying Put Agency which also includes preventative measures for social isolation, improving digital inclusion, a handy person service, and a hoarding service, amongst other things. Like SBC, Middlesbrough top slice the fee for the service. They spend approximately half the DFG budget on major adaptations and the top up fund comes from other council funding, not DFG funding. They do not have a loans system in place to cover Top Up payments like SBC does. Another difference to their service is that they use contractors for all adaptations, unlike SBC who use Building Services to carry out Level Entry Showers, that make up the majority of the adaptations, and contractors for other works.

National trends

- 4.76. Foundations informed that despite increases in DFG allocation from the government since 2015, there have been several national trends that are impacting on SBC's delivery. A major impact is the increasing demand for DFG's and the Committee heard that reasons for this include: the changes in government policy focus on ensuring people can live in their own homes for longer; the impact of COVID and lockdown on older people's ability to stay active therefore their increasing frailty and need for adaptations; and the higher number of children and people with complex needs applying for DFG's.
- 4.77. Other national trends highlighted are the rising cost of materials, prioritisation of statutory duties over discretionary power which LA's struggle to offer due to funding constraints, and relationships with the RP's who own some of the properties that those applying for DFG's live in. In addition, the funding for Housing Revenue Accounts and Stock Transfer Agreements has not mirrored DFG allocation from the Department of Level Up, Housing and Communities.
- 4.78. As highlighted by the Age Concern report (paragraph 3.9) Members observed that the design of new housing should be built to meet the needs of the aging population, which would ensure they did not require as many adaptations in future. The National Planning Policy Framework promotes safe, inclusive and accessible places and encourages the planning polices for housing to make use of the Governments optional technical standards associated with this. SBC currently have a

requirement for optional standards under policy H4 of the Local Plan. This states:

To ensure the homes provide quality living environments for residents both now and in the future and to help deliver sustainable communities, from 1st April 2019 the following Optional Standard will apply, subject to consideration of site suitability, the feasibility of meeting the standards (taking into account the size, location and type of dwelling proposed) and site viability:

A. 50% of new homes to meet Building Regulation M4(2) “Category 2 – accessible and adaptable dwellings”

8% of new dwellings to meet Building Regulation M4(3) “Category 3 – Wheelchair User Dwellings”. Where the local authority is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in that dwelling, homes should meet building regulation M4 (3) (2) (b). When providing for wheelchair user housing, early discussion with the Council is required to obtain the most up-to-date information on specific need in the local area.”

The opportunity for SBC to review and build upon this would come through any future local plan.

Customer Feedback

4.79. Members were interested in the experiences of residents who had applied for a DFG, and therefore sought to collect feedback in several ways. This included reviewing the service’s customer satisfaction survey, asking Stockton Parent Carer Forum to carry out a survey of their members, and approaching different forums to ask their members for their experiences.

Customer Satisfaction Survey Results

4.80. Members were informed that the three services involved, the OT team, DFG team, and Building services, had been carrying out separate customer satisfaction surveys. However, during the course of the review the services were working together to provide a singular survey to gain feedback on the whole client experience and reduce the number of times a person accessing a DFG is asked to complete feedback. The April – September 2024 results from the joint DFG/Building Services survey were shared with the Committee.

4.81. The survey asked respondents to rate the following aspects of service on a scale of 1 – 10, with 1 being poor and 10 being excellent:

- Standard of information & communication prior to works commencing
- Standard of communication & updates received throughout the works
- Appearance and conduct of staff
- Quality of works on completion
- Service overall

4.82. Most respondents rated all aspects as 10, with only two respondent rating slightly lower (8/9) on two aspects: information and communication prior to and throughout the works. One other respondent also rated lower (7/8/9) on all aspects. All comments received were very positive,

praising the professionalism of the workers and quality of their work. Two further comments that were received via other methods were shared with the survey results, and these were also positive noting the impact that the adaptations had on their lives.

- 4.83. The questions asked in the survey have a strong focus on the works being carried out, with only the first question focussing on the experience prior to works being carried out, and members believe that it would be useful in future to ask further questions regarding the application process and waiting period to better capture this feedback.

Stockton Parent Carer Forum

- 4.84. The Stockton Parent Carer Forum was approached to give their views on the service as several of their members have experience of applying for DFG's. They carried out a survey of their members and presented the results to the Committee. There were 19 responses to the survey, and a case study was also circulated.

- 4.85. Questions in the survey were:

- Have you applied for a grant and was the application successful?
- If successful how was your experience from starting the application to the finished works?
- If you were unsuccessful, were you given advice and information as to other options?
- Are you happy with the work that was completed?
- What could be done to improve the DFG based on your personal experience?

- 4.86. Of those that responded, six people were unsuccessful in their application, and one person stated that were not given the opportunity to apply. Only one stated that they received advice and information on other options, and that was "to avoid making same mistakes in future".

- 4.87. For those who had received a DFG, the responses were mixed, with some finding the process easy and being happy with the works, while others found it stressful, too long a process, and were unhappy with the work carried out. One respondent called the process "horrific", while another respondent felt dismissed, and one respondent stated they were made to feel bad for asking for help. The suggestions put forward for improving the service were listening to those applying to find out what they need, make the process quicker, give more options for families, and use better builders.

- 4.88. The case study came from a respondent who had received a DFG five years previously for a new garden fence and was happy with the process as well as the work that was carried out. It enabled the family to have full use of their outdoor space, without fear of injury, and gave them more privacy.

- 4.89. Overall, the survey highlighted that both consistency and communication need to be addressed in the delivery of DFG's.

Further Engagement

4.90. The Committee approached Teesside & District Society for the Blind to ask if any of their members in the Borough had experience of applying for a DFG. They responded that one person had, and they were happy with the adaptations received. The Community Partnership members were asked to provide feedback if they have experience of applying for/receiving a DFG's, as well as if they are aware of any organisations other than the Council giving advice/information on adaptations. Unfortunately, no feedback was received. Similarly, the Committee approached the Eastern Raven Trust to gain an insight of the DFG process from their perspective, but no response was received.

Stockton & District Advice & Information Service

4.91. Contact was made with Stockton & District Advice & Information Service (SDAIS) to learn whether residents are contacting their services for advice on adaptations. They informed that their data recording system has the category Housing Q AIC (Adaptations for Disabled People), and the number of people requesting this type of advice is relatively low: 22 people requesting advice under this category in 2021/22, 7 in 2022/23 and 10 in 2023/24. This information is broken down by housing type with Owner Occupier property being the biggest in 2021/22 (9) and 2022/23 (3), while Housing Association property being the biggest in 2023/24 (5).

4.92. SDAIS advise their clients of their ability to request an Occupational Therapy Assessment to address any aids and adaptations that they may require. They also advise on the eligibility criteria and an overview of the process involved. This will include advice on DFG's where applicable. Clients are referred to the OT team and the majority are happy to progress this themselves by contacting First Contact. For those who require additional support with the referral SDAIS will either provide that support or refer them onto an advocacy service such as People First. SDAIS were not aware of issues or problems with DFG.

Foundations Workshop

4.93. Foundations carried out a one day workshop with SBC's DFG team and their findings were reported back to the Committee. They highlighted the teams commitment to supporting residents, their strong collaboration with social care, and an effective fast-track process for stairlifts and ramps. The areas identified for improvement focus on enhancing communication with applicants during the waiting period and ensuring detailed information is provided for complex cases, as well as streamlining processes to improve efficiency, as outlined below.

4.94. Before Application and on First Contact

- There is a need to ensure that potential applicants receive comprehensive information, particularly regarding the test of resources and the overall process, to support informed decision-making on applying. This includes updating and expanding information on SBC website to give residents a clearer understanding of the DFG and process involved, help set expectations and provide essential details upfront.

- Consider increasing outreach efforts to make more residents aware of DFGs, thereby engaging those who may benefit from adaptations but are currently unaware of the available support. This suggestion for wider advertisement of DFG's may increase the number of people on the waiting list.

4.95. Assessment

- At the assessment stage, consistent information regarding necessary and appropriate adaptations and realistic waiting times should be provided. Transparency about these factors will help manage customer expectations and reduce confusion or frustration later in the process.
- The OT and DFG team should consider reviewing together the referral forms used by the occupational therapy team to ensure it captures all relevant information to be able to decide on eligible works.
- A tracking system to keep applicants informed of their position on the waiting list and check if their circumstances have changed during the wait should be introduced, helping to manage expectations and mitigate delays.

4.96. Compile the Application

- An enhanced offer be provided to support residents with the application process. This could include more hands-on guidance and assistance to ensure that applications are completed accurately and efficiently. This was already in place.
- To streamline the process, applicants should be allowed to upload required documents electronically. This would help reduce paperwork delays and allow for quicker processing.
- To speed up the process, it was suggested that the means test for adaptations below £5,000 be removed. While this would simplify the approval process for smaller projects and ensure quicker delivery of adaptations, it would not decrease the waiting list.
- As noted in paragraph 4.31 the scheme of works developed by the technical officer is sent for approval to the occupational therapist. It was suggested, to streamline the process, to review with the occupational therapy team whether all cases need to be signed off, particularly for straightforward adaptations that are unlikely to be changed.
- Tasks such as financial assessments and asbestos checks could be re-evaluated to ensure the technical officer's time is used more effectively, given their significant workload.
- The requirement for three quotes rather than two required by legislation could be reconsidered to reduce delays, which currently add up to a month to the process.

4.97. Approval

- Applicants should be informed of the waiting time after grant approval for installation of adaptations upfront to avoid any misunderstanding and a follow-up call should be made to explain the next steps in the process. This would ensure that the applicant is fully informed and comfortable with the timeline and expectations.

4.98. Carrying Out Works

- Consider introducing a client liaison officer who can keep applicants informed about the start dates of their works and any changes to the schedule. This role would help maintain clear communication throughout the installation process. This role was in place for when Building Services carry out level entry showers, however, would be the contractor for other works.

4.99. Overall, the challenges to the team at the time of the workshop due to staff retirement, sickness and recruitment issues were recognised. Foundations noted that this limits the volume of work that can be processed and suggested increasing capacity would improve service efficiency and reduce delays. Members were informed that staffing levels were increasing with the appointments of an experienced DFG Manager, an apprentice, and further recruitment of technical officers.

5.0 Conclusion

- 5.1. DFG's helps some of the most vulnerable residents with disabilities in the Borough live independently in their own homes for longer, preventing pressures on other council and health services and supporting hospital discharge. Local Authorities have a statutory duty to provide this grant aid for eligible households for installing a range of adaptations. The review has therefore focused on how SBC delivers this crucial service, to ensure it is done so in the most effective and efficient way whilst still meeting vulnerable resident's needs.
- 5.2. The £30k maximum amount of a DFG and means test system is set by the government and has not changed since 2008. The Adult Social Care Reform White Paper in 2021 had indicated consultations were needed on these and during the review a government review on the maximum limit was announced. SBC officers have met with the Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government (MHCLG) to take part in the review.
- 5.3. When comparing data both regionally and nationally, Members felt reassured that SBC has been faster than most local authorities at checking the application is correct and issuing an approval letter (stage 3). However, reduced staffing levels and managing expectations of clients has led to SBC taking longer to compile the application (stage 2, which has no statutory time limit). Members were confident that staff levels were being addressed, which will help to improve the time taken for this. SBC also took longer at stage 4 – carrying out the works, which has a statutory timeframe of being completed within 12 months of approval. This had been affected by the number of extensions that had been carried out in the year data was reported, which take longer to complete.
- 5.4. The Committee notes that the waiting list for those wishing to apply for a DFG is growing, standing at 322 in December 2024 with a two-year timeframe from referral to installation of the adaptation. This has been attributed to several factors including a greater awareness of the OT service and lockdowns/COVID's impact on older residents remaining active. It is further noted that although fast track applications, which automatically go to the top of the waiting list, ensures that those who have critical or time-sensitive needs receive timely adaptations, it has an impact on the remaining people on the waiting list.
- 5.5. The Committee is particularly concerned that the waiting lists includes a rising number of people who live in Registered Provider (RP) rented properties. While there is no legal obligation for RP's to carry out adaptations to properties for their tenants, there is an expectation that they will do so within their own resources. Thirteen are the exception to this as they have a commitment within the Stock Transfer Agreement, to spend £1m per year for 30 years. Details confirming the properties Thirteen have adapted to meet their commitment and type of adaptations carried out

have been requested. In addition, the Committee found that not only are applications for a DFG from RP tenants increasing but there is an absence of information on RP properties i.e. a register of adapted properties which details the number of properties and type of adaptations completed, which would assist when a resident is looking to move.

- 5.6. The Committee believes that communication with DFG applicants is an area that needs to be addressed. This includes the information available on SBC website which has been highlighted as an area to be developed by the national body, communication with applicants during the waiting periods to ensure the processes are fully understood and manage expectations, and information for those who do not qualify for a DFG such as next steps and advice on where to go for further assistance which appeared to be missing. In addition, customer feedback is important, and this has historically been collected via the different services involved, OT's, Building and Housing Services. Members heard how this is now being streamlined and are keen that it captures feedback on all stages of the process.
- 5.7. Members believed that further exploration is required of the streamlining of processes suggested by Foundations, to fully understand the impact and whether they would reduce delays and allow for quicker processing. These suggestions were:
- [referral forms used by Occupational Therapy Team be reviewed to ensure it captures all relevant information to enable to make a decision on eligible works](#)
 - [removing the requirement for Occupational Therapist to approve the scheme of works for straightforward cases](#)
 - [allowing electronic forms to be uploaded](#)
 - [requiring only two quotes rather than three in the procurement process, which can add up to a month of delay](#)
- 5.8. Improvement to processes and communication will not, however, address the growing budget pressure as demand continues to outstrip funding. Previously the shortfall in funding has been met from other budgets. While bespoke meetings have been put in place to monitor the DFG budget and ensure there is no further overspend, the implications of this will be that the waiting list will continue to grow. The Committee welcomes the MHCLG announcement in January 2025 for extra funding in both 2024/25 and 2025/26, which will allow approximately 49 extra Level Entry Showers, Ramps or Stairlifts, the most required adaptations, to take place, however, it is not possible to predict how many new referrals will be received.
- 5.9. The Council's in-house Home Improvement Agency provides lower-level adaptations and support, and the Committee believes that this could potentially be utilised to further provide early help and prevention to ease budgetary pressure for DFG. Further consideration and investigation of this should be taken.
- 5.10. The Committee acknowledges that the long-term implications of delays in provision of a DFG adaptations could have negative impact on an individual's quality of life and health outcomes, along with a need for re-housing or admission to long term residential care. The recommendations include exploring ways to manage expectations and improve processes, however without finding alternative means to provide adaptations or further funding there will be a limit on the number of DFG's that SBC is able to approve each year. Therefore, closer working with Registered Providers and reviewing the impact of the January 2025 announcement of extra funding for DFG's on our Borough is also being suggested within the recommendations.

Recommendations

5.11. The Committee recommends that:

1. In relation to the recent announcement from the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government regarding extra funding for Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG), officers be requested to monitor the impact of this extra funding on the Council's waiting list; updates to be provided to the Select Committee as part of the monitoring of the review recommendations.
2. Officers explore the potential to engage with Teesside University to produce a study on the impact of DFG's on people lives in the Borough and how long this potentially allows them to remain living in their own home.
3. Housing Investment & Migration Support team work with Planning to explore building upon the requirements for accessibility/adaptability in new build properties when the Local Plan is next updated and, prior to this, lobby government to make the relevant Building Regulations mandatory.
4. The Leader and Chief Executive support officers in their ongoing discussions with Registered Provider's to explore their current and future plans for adaptations and also explore joint working to support Registered Providers to take up their responsibility, to ease pressure on the waiting list.
5. Officers explore with Registered Providers a register of adapted properties within the Borough which details the type of adaptations, to assist the Nomination and Lettings Team in advertising and matching individuals with appropriate properties.
6. Communication to residents and applicants be improved by:
 - reviewing and updating information on SBC website and explore whether the Foundations template and link to adaptmyhome.com will give residents sufficient information to decide whether to apply for an assessment/DFG.
 - exploring introducing a system to ensure clear and consistent communications to keep applicants informed of their position in the process at regular intervals to reduce misunderstandings and manage expectations.
 - sharing key information of DFG scheme available with external stakeholders to ensure potential applicants are aware of support available.
 - ensuring an appropriate route for residents to communicate with the Housing Investment & Migration Support team is in place.
 - a singular customer feedback survey covering all processes and services involved in a DFG is developed, to ensure this is only collected once.
7. Officers explore streamlining processes to understand their impact and benefit of implementing:
 - referral form used by the Occupational Therapy Team be reviewed to ensure it captures all relevant information to enabled to make a decision on eligible works.
 - removing the requirement for Occupational Therapist to approve the scheme of works for straightforward cases
 - allowing electronic forms to be uploaded

- requiring only two quotes rather than three for the application
- 8. Further examination of if/how the Home Improvement Agency can be utilised to provide early help and prevention, to ease budgetary pressure for DFG
- 9. Use of flat pack extensions is explored in more detail to see if they would provide a viable and cost-effective option.
- 10. Following correspondence from the Royal British Legion to the Council, officers review whether it is possible for military compensation to be exempt from the means test for DFG's and report back

Appendix 1

Foundations – Suggested DFG Policy Improvements

Recommendation	SBC Current Practice	What would we need to do:	Pro's	Con's	Effect on Customer	Effect on Service
<p>1. Working well with Private Registered Providers (RP) and housing associations (HA). Have a database of adapted properties in LA area.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RP tenants refer themselves through First Contact for an Occupational Therapist assessment. - Once Assessed referral comes to DFG Team - DFG Team carry out Means Test - DFG assess whether adaptation can be provided and produce plans and Schedules of Works - Permission from Landlord is sought once adaptation plans are agreed 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SBC would have to meet with all RP's operating within our area to promote the use of landlord applications. - SBC would have to meet with all RP's operating within our area to promote the use of landlord applications. - Try to encourage them to manage the delivery of adaptations in their own stock. - Start collating a database of all properties that 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landlords would be able to access the DFG funding and carry out works on behalf of their tenants with their own contractors. - Would reduce the DFG waiting list if RP's dealt with their own adaptations - Having a database of adapted properties would hopefully reduce the number of adaptations that 'get ripped out' upon 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - There is no legal obligation for RP's to submit landlord applications - No legal obligation on RPs to provide information on their adapted properties 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They would have one point of contact i.e. their landlord, thus creating a streamline customer journey for them. - Landlord applications bypass the means test which means all who applied would qualify 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - This would not reduce the overall impact on the DFG budget - It would reduce the number of in-depth cases Technical staff would have to deal with (producing drawings and schedule of works etc) they would check to ensure works were carried out in line with plans etc - It would reduce the DFG waiting list because RP/HA tenants would not be sat waiting for

Recommendation	SBC Current Practice	What would we need to do:	Pro's	Con's	Effect on Customer	Effect on Service
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Asbestos removal if required is carried out by some RP's themselves - All other works are carried out by SBC Contractors, work in progress visits are carried out by the DFG Team, some RP's also attend these. - DFG Team sign off works and advise RP's that adaptation is complete. 	<p>are adapted in the Borough.</p>	<p>change of tenancy.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Better partnership working 			<p>SBC to deal with them</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - RP's/HA's could charge a fee for dealing with their own
<p>2. Highly debilitating conditions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nothing specific currently in SBC DFG Policy with regards to this. - Any applicants with these conditions would go through the above process 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Carry out research on how many cases we have had dealt with in the past to see what impact this may have - Report to Cabinet to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residents with these conditions would be able to carry on working longer - Residents would receive adaptations earlier which would enable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would have to assess the impact this may have on the waiting list 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - They would be able to continue to work as long as possible preventing them having to rely on benefits before they qualify for a DFG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would have to monitor how many cases we receive to know the exact impact on the Service/DFG Budget

Recommendation	SBC Current Practice	What would we need to do:	Pro's	Con's	Effect on Customer	Effect on Service
	detail above, they would be means tested, which would take into account all there income, which if working would generally mean they would not qualify for a DFG	agree to a Policy change to incorporate a fast-track process with no means testing for DFG works up to £5,000 or for larger scale works ignore the earnings of the person with MND in the means test when works are assessed as being necessary and appropriate.	them to live longer and have a better quality of life			
3. Working with private landlords	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landlords are able to apply under our current policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Update Information including website to promote 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Tenant would not be means tested 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landlords may be reluctant to apply 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Landlord applications bypass the means test which means all who applied would qualify 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Nil - we already allow Landlord Application
4. Dementia Grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not currently offered via DFG 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Often less than £1,000 – something for HIA to consider 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early intervention 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Impact on budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Early Interventions could help a resident live longer in their own home and prevent slips and falls 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not currently offered and HIA budget is under pressure just like DFG

Recommendation	SBC Current Practice	What would we need to do:	Pro's	Con's	Effect on Customer	Effect on Service
5. Local land charges for DFGs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Land Charges placed on all DFG's over £10,000 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Authorities are encouraged not to place local land charges where the application is being made for a child in a long-term foster placement. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would may only affect a few residents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - No money recycled back into DFG budget 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would not be able to sell their property without paying back charge. - Depending on type of adaptation this could increase the value of their home 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimal effect on service
6. Public information and self-assessment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - DFG is accessed through Adults Service page on SBC website - DFG Policy not on website 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Put policy on website - Have a link on SBC website to adaptmyhome.com so people can check if they maybe eligible before applying to First Contact 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Information fully available to all residents - Residents can check if they qualify before applying to prevent disappointment and waiting for a decision 12 months down the line 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - May generate more interest in DFG's and increase waiting list more 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Fully informed of SBC Policy - Able to check if they qualify before applying 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Minimal - Would maybe reduce waiting list if clients self-assess
7. Flat pack extensions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not currently used 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Explore these in more detail to see if they would be viable 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would save money - Would quicken up Extension process - Residents would receive adaptations quicker 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Not known whether these would be available locally 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Residents would receive adaptations quicker - Potentially if cost less than traditional extension then they would not have to 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Would need to explore in more detail and check with Planning and Building Regs - Could help spread budget further - Could reduce waiting list if

Recommendation	SBC Current Practice	What would we need to do:	Pro's	Con's	Effect on Customer	Effect on Service
					contribute at all or as much	quicker to install
8. Assistive technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not Currently included in DFG Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to Cabinet to change policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The world moves on at a pace with technology so residents could get most up to date equipment to help them live longer in their own homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some older residents not up to speed with Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> More available to help them remain in their homes for longer 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost of Equipment unknown so cannot comment on whether this would affect the budget
9. Children living in joint residency arrangements (previously 'custody')	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not currently included in DFG, only provide to main home i.e. the parent who gets Child Benefit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Report to cabinet to change policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Child can live with each parent equally. Child would have equally adapted homes 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This could impact on the budget available 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Parents can co-parent more easily when separated Child would be able to live equally with both parents 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This could effect the overall DFG budget
10. Successive applications and nil grants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Currently already in SBC Policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> N/A

AGE UK Report

What Age UK would like to see:

Part M4, Category 2 of the building regulations made mandatory for all new build

Glossary of Terms

DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant
IBCF	Improved Better Care Fund
HGRA	Housing Grants Construction & Regeneration Act
HIA	Home Improvement Agency
HIMS	Housing Investment & Migration Support
LA	Local Authority
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities and Local Government
OT	Occupational Therapist
RP	Registered Provider
SBC	Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council
SDAIS	Stockton & District Advice & Information Service
TLO	Tenant Liaison Officer
TO	Technical Officer