

People Select Committee
Review of Disabled Facilities Grant
Outline Scope

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Which of our strategic corporate objectives does this topic address?	
<p>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 - <i>‘A place where people are healthy, safe and protected from harm’</i>).</p>	
What are the main issues and overall aim of this review?	
<p>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:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 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 <p>Monies to fund DFG’s is provided to Councils via the Better Care Fund.</p> <p>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.</p> <p>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</p> <p>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</p>	

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?

Who will the Committee be trying to influence as part of its work?

Council, Cabinet

Expected duration of review and key milestones:

10 months (report to Cabinet in March 2025)
Approve scope and project plan – May 2024
Receive evidence – May – December 2024
Draft recommendations – January 2025
Final Report – February 2025
Report to Cabinet – March 2025

<p>What information do we need?</p> <p>Existing information (background information, existing reports, legislation, central government documents, etc.):</p> <p>Good practice guidance issued by Central Government (produced on their behalf by produced by 'Foundations'). https://www-foundations-uk-com-guides/</p>	
<p>Who can provide us with further relevant evidence? (Cabinet Member, officer, service user, general public, expert witness, etc.)</p>	<p>What specific areas do we want them to cover when they give evidence?</p>
<p>Stockton-on-Tees Borough Council Officers</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Background information and evidence relating to key lines of enquiries from: • Housing • Integrated Early Intervention & Prevention • Building Services
<p>Representative from other Councils</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How do they provide DFG/Is there anything we could learn?
<p>Representatives from VCSE - for example Five Lamps, disability support groups?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Five Lamps experience as service provider • Disability Groups experience with access/using service • Age Concern UK
<p>Stockton & District Information & Advice Service</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What other support are residents being signposted to
<p>How will this information be gathered? (eg. financial baselining and analysis, benchmarking, site visits, face-to-face questioning, telephone survey, survey)</p> <p>Committee meetings, reports, desktop research, benchmarking, consultation with VCSE</p>	
<p>Communities powering our futures: How will key partners and the public be involved in the review?</p> <p>Engagement with groups that may have or may in the future access disabled facilities grant including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Previous applicants • Making it Real Board • Community Partnerships • Viewpoint • Parent/Carer Forum • Teesside & District Society for the Blind • BMBF 	

Engagement will include not only asking for their experience but also for solutions and, dependent on feedback received, may result in focus group sessions.

A detailed engagement plan will be developed to plan this work

How will the review help the Council meet the Public Sector Equality Duty?

The Equality Act 2010 protects everyone from discrimination on grounds of nine Protected Characteristics (including – but not limited to – age, gender, disability, ethnicity), and advance equality of opportunity for those with Protected Characteristics. Public bodies must have due regard to the need to encourage people from protected groups to participate in public life or in other activities where their participation is disproportionately low.

How will the review contribute towards the Joint Strategic Needs Assessment, or the implementation of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy?

Stockton Joint Strategic Needs Assessment (JSNA):

Vulnerable Groups - the review outcomes will support the JSNA key issue that people with physical disabilities should be supported to enable them to live as independently as possible and achieve their full potential.

Stockton-on-Tees Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2019-2023:

All people in Stockton-on-Tees live well and live longer.

All people in Stockton-on-Tees live in healthy places and sustainable communities.

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.

Project Plan

Key Task	Details/Activities	Date	Responsibility
Scoping of Review	Information gathering	March/April 2024	Scrutiny Officer Link Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss aims and objectives of review	10.04.24	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Agree Project Plan	Scope and Project Plan agreed by Committee	13.05.24	Select Committee
Publicity of Review	Determine whether Communications Plan needed	TBC	Link Officer, Scrutiny Officer
Obtaining Evidence	Integrated Early Intervention & Prevention Building Services	03.06.24	Select Committee
	Foundations	08.07.24	Select Committee
	Customer Feedback	02.09.24	Select Committee
		07.10.24	Select Committee
		04.11.24	Select Committee
		02.12.24	Select Committee
Members decide recommendations and findings	Review summary of findings and formulate draft recommendations	06.01.25	Select Committee
Circulate Draft Report to Stakeholders	Circulation of Report	TBC	Scrutiny Officer
Tri-Partite Meeting	Meeting to discuss findings of review and draft recommendations	TBC	Select Committee Chair and Vice Chair, Cabinet Member(s), Director(s), Scrutiny Officer, Link Officer
Final Agreement of Report	Approval of final report by Committee	03.02.25	Select Committee, Cabinet Member, Director
Consideration of Report by Executive Scrutiny Committee	Consideration of report	04.03.25	Executive Scrutiny Committee

Report to Cabinet / Approving Body	Presentation of final report with recommendations for approval to Cabinet	13.03.25	Cabinet / Approving Body
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