



**SOUTH
KESTEVEN
DISTRICT
COUNCIL**



**Finance, Economic Development
and Corporate Services Overview
and Scrutiny Committee**


21 February 2023

Councillor Robert Reid
Cabinet Member for Housing and
Property

Disabled Facilities Grants 2022/23

Report Author

Anne-Marie Coulthard, Assistant Director of Operations and Public Protection

 a.coulthard@southkesteven.gov.uk

Purpose of Report

This report provides a summary of the activity relating to Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) during quarters 1 to 3 of 2022/23.

Recommendations

That the Committee

- 1. Notes the progress on the delivery of disabled facilities grants during 2022/23**

Decision Information

Does the report contain any exempt or confidential information not for publication? No

What are the relevant corporate priorities? Housing that meets the needs of all residents

Which wards are impacted? All

1. Implications

Taking into consideration implications relating to finance and procurement, legal and governance, risk and mitigation, health and safety, diversity and inclusion, safeguarding, staffing, community safety, mental health and wellbeing and the impact on the Council's declaration of a climate change emergency, the following implications have been identified:

Finance and Procurement

- 1.1 There are no direct financial considerations resulting from this report. Unspent budget from any year is carried forward for use in future years to enable demand to continue to be met. Government allocations are reviewed annually and at this time the allocations for 2023/24 have not been published.

Completed by: Richard Wyles, Chief Finance Officer

Legal and Governance

- 1.2 The principal legal provisions are contained in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and associated regulations. The maximum amount of DFG is currently set by statute at £30,000 and has been at this level since 2008.
- 1.3 The provision of discretionary assistance is detailed within the approved policy in accordance with The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002.

Completed by: Graham Watts, Assistant Director of Governance and Monitoring Officer

Diversity and Inclusion

- 1.4 A suitable home can help people with disabilities to build and sustain their independence and maintain connections in their community.

- 1.5 As this report is for information there are no direct implications. However, the approved policy which provides the framework for the award of DFGs was subject to an Equality Impact Assessment.

2. Background to the Report

- 2.1 The Council has a statutory duty to provide financial assistance to those who qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to contribute towards adaptations which help them to safely access their home and the facilities within it. Examples of adaptations include the installation of stair-lifts, ramps, through floor lifts, level access showers, wash and dry toilets and door widening. In some instances, funding can contribute towards extensions or conversions of existing dwellings. All applications are required to be supported by a Lincolnshire County Council (LCC) Occupational Therapist.
- 2.2 The funding is provided as a capital grant from government via the Better Care Fund and can fund adaptations for owner occupiers, private tenants, or tenants of private registered providers (housing associations). Adaptations for council tenants are required to be funded through the Housing Revenue Account.
- 2.3 Applications for adults are subject to a test of resources (“means test”), however, in 2017, the Council used its powers under the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 to approve a Housing Assistance Policy for Independent Living which extends the scope of assistance that can be provided beyond the mandatory DFG criteria. This includes a range of grants and removed the means test for applications for stairlifts and modular access ramps. The extended criteria aim to help more people maintain their independence safely at home, which also reduces pressures on health and social care services.
- 2.4 The eligibility and requirements for determining DFGs are laid down in legislation. Before approving a DFG a local housing authority must satisfy itself that the works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled person, and are reasonable and practicable depending on the age and condition of the property.
- 2.5 The service is provided within Public Protection, with installations procured using a Lincolnshire Framework used by all Lincolnshire district councils. The current framework provides the council with access to 18 contractors. Stairlifts and modular access ramps are procured under separate arrangements. Applicants may also choose to engage their own contractor and project manage the works themselves.
- 2.6 The government allocation for DFGs for 2022/23 was £975,298, actual and committed spend at the end of quarter 3 against budget was £597,453. A summary of the number of grants approved and adaptations completed in quarters 1 to 3 is shown in table 1. Note that some properties will have received more than

one adaption per grant approval and grants may be approved in one financial year and works completed in the following financial year.

Table 1: Summary of adaptations Quarter 1 to Quarter 3, 2022/23

Adaptation Type	Number Approved	Number Completed
Stairlift	15	22
Ramp	20	26
Level access shower/bathroom adaptation	16	12
Wash/dry toilet	2	2
Extension	1	0
Other e.g., door widening, stepped access, kitchen adaptations etc.	16	14

- 2.7 The demand for DFGs is dependent on recommendations for adaptations from the LCC Occupational Therapy service. During 2020/21 and 2021/22 the number of recommendations received reduced, this was largely due to the impacts of the Covid19 pandemic. Recommendations have increased during 2022/23 as LCC has focused additional resource in South Kesteven. The number of applications that are cancelled or withdrawn varies and is dependent on a range of factors. Reasons for this can include; the applicant has passed away or gone into permanent care, the applicant does not qualify due to their level of income/savings, a private rented landlord refuses permission or an applicant decides not to continue with their application. Table 2 provides a summary of the demand and outcomes over the last 4 years.

Table 2: Summary of demand and outcomes

	2019/20	2020/21	2021/22	2022/23 (Q1-3)
Number of OT recommendations received	188	146	140	168
Number cancelled/withdrawn	76 (40%)	38 (26%)	39 (28%)	24 (14%)
Number of grants approved	121	111	111	71
Number of adaptations completed	113	113	100	68

- 2.8 The maximum entitlement of a mandatory DFG is set in legislation at £30,000. The average value of individual grants awarded in 2022/23 is £4,818, however, in recent years increased building costs have led to some schemes such as extensions substantially exceeding the maximum limit. Whilst these form a small proportion of adaptations, the time taken to support these cases can be

considerable. To further assist, the Council's discretionary policy allows for up to a 'top up' of £10,000 to be awarded, subject to a means test.

- 2.9 Nearly 76% of applications approved in 2022/23 were made by owner-occupiers, with the average age being 66 years old. This is not surprising as many older people own their own homes.
- 2.10 To increase capacity within the team to meet demand, in Q3 the surveyor resource was increased, and the role is now fully embedded into the team (this was previously a shared post with Property and Improvements). An apprentice has also been appointed and will commence in February 2023.
- 2.11 As the Social Care Authority, LCC has powers and duties under the Care Act relating to the provision of aids and equipment. These include a duty to provide minor adaptations up to the value of £1,000 as well as other equipment to any value.

3. Key Considerations

- 3.1 Disabled facilities grants are "means" tested grants. To support more disabled people to access adaptations the Council has used its discretionary powers to approve a policy which removed the means test for stairlifts and modular access ramps, and provides for a 'top up' to the maximum grant amount, funding for adaptations that support hospital discharge and "moving on assistance" to help disabled people move to a more suitable home where their current home cannot reasonably be adapted to meet their needs.
- 3.2 DFGs fund essential adaptations to help disabled people to live in their home as independently as possible where this is appropriate.

4. Other Options Considered

- 4.1 This report is for information only. No decision is required to be taken.

5. Reasons for the Recommendations

- 5.1 To provide an update to the Finance, Economic Development and Corporate Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee on the DFG programme during 2022/23.

6. Background Papers

- 7.1 [South Kesteven District Council Private Sector Housing Assistance Policy - Independent Living](#)