

# Health And Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel

<b>DATE</b>	30 <sup>th</sup> November 2022
<b>REPORT OF</b>	Sharon Wroot - Executive Director for Environment, Economy and Resources
<b>SUBJECT</b>	Disabled Facilities Grants
<b>STATUS</b>	Open

## CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The Council has two clear strategic priorities – Stronger Economy and Stronger Communities. Within that second priority, it is important to adapt older and disabled people’s homes to help them live independently and safely. The proposed changes to the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) policy and processes outlined in this report will help to speed up delivery and expand the reach and effectiveness of the DFG funds and thereby help more individuals, more quickly.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report seeks to update Members on the current position with regard to managing DFGs. Funds from the DFG budget have been used to employ new, temporary staff for the Occupational Therapy Service and Equans to increase capacity to reduce the waiting lists. This has not had the intended impact due to staffing recruitment and retention issues. A change of approach is therefore being adopted using clinical guidance and best practice from Foundations (the National Body for Disabled Facilities Grants and Home Improvement Agencies in England) and other councils.

This approach requires change to the existing Housing Assistance Policy and legal framework with contractors and suppliers. The Council’s current Housing Assistance and Disabled Adaptations Policy was approved by Cabinet in 2018 and has been updated alongside Equans and the Occupational Therapy service to deliver increased capacity, speed up the DFG process, remove waste/duplication and expand the parameters of DFG expenditure.

## MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

It is requested that the Panel considers the new approach to managing DFGs and provides any comments on the new Housing Assistance Policy, after which it will be subject to public consultation.

### 1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

1.1 At the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel meeting on 30<sup>th</sup> March 2022, Members received a briefing paper on the DFG spend for 2021/21 and future activities to improve the service. Following a debate, Members asked to continue to monitor DFG overall spend and operational progress to reduce the waiting time from referral to completion of the adaptation, with an update requested at this meeting.

#### **Funding for Disabled Facilities Grants**

1.2 North East Lincolnshire Council is allocated a £3.2m capital grant annually from the Government to adapt older and disabled people's homes to help them live independently and safely. In addition, there is an ear-marked reserve of £3.7m for DFGs. Whilst some of this ear-marked reserve was caused by an underspend on DFGs during Covid, the remaining money was intended to be used to enable other opportunities to be realised. The level of grant received and expenditure on DFGs for the past few years is:

Year	Grant Received	Actual Spend
2019/20	£2.839m	£2,263m
2020/21	£3.221m	£2.258m
2021/22	£3.221m	£2.959m
2021/23	£3.221m	£3.935m (forecast spend)

1.3 This annual budget and ear-marked reserve money will be used over the next few years to fund various initiatives to reduce waiting times and improve performance as outlined in this report.

### **Key Performance Information**

1.4 A deep dive investigation to map the DFG process (see appendix 1) and identify blockages has highlighted high volumes of people on waiting lists for both Occupational Therapy (OT) assessments and property inspections, in particular non-urgent cases.

1.5 Government guidance (published March 2022) recommends the following best practice timelines should be met in 95% of all DFG cases:

Type	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

Key:

- **Stage 0:** first contact with services
- **Stage 1:** first contact to assessment and identification of the relevant works;
- **Stage 2:** identification of the relevant works to submission of the formal grant application
- **Stage 3:** grant application to grant approval
- **Stage 4:** approval of grant to completion of works.

1.6 For the remaining 5% of DFG cases, these are larger and complex schemes that will take longer to complete.

### **Occupational Therapy Assessments**

1.7 The key performance measures for the Occupational Therapy service are:-

Measure	Current Performance	Historical Performance
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Number of referrals for DFG forwarded to Community therapy team	469 (end of October 2022)	901 in 21/22 and 874 in 19/20
Number of residents actively seen or on caseload	592 (end of October 2022)	Information not measured in 21/22
Number of residents waiting for first OT assessment	291 (end of October 2022)	Information not measured in 21/22
Average waiting time from first OT visit	88 (housing team) and 54 (other) working days (end of October 2022)	Information not measured in 21/22
Average time to get to Panel	104 (housing team) and 71 (other) working days (end of October 2022)	Housing team – 82 in 21/22 and 92 in 19/20

1.8 The performance of the Occupational Therapy team has been impacted by a shortage of OTs, which is a concern both nationally and locally. Two additional temporary level 6 OT posts have been funded through the DFG budget, albeit one remains vacant due to no applicants for the post. Furthermore, the core team has been affected by staffing shortages this year, only recently returning to full establishment. When a person leaves, it has an impact on the rest of the team as their caseload then has to be reallocated to the remaining staff. In consequence, the team then cannot pick up new cases, which has a detrimental effect on the waiting list. To improve performance, the Team has provided training to other professionals to help them assess patients.

1.9 Occupational Therapy highlight that many children are referred to community therapy at a very young age and it only whilst working with them, monitoring their developmental needs, that the need for a DFG becomes apparent. The same applies to people receiving rehabilitation for neuro conditions. The first plan is always rehabilitation but there may come a point where progress has stalled and there might be a need for adaptations for longer need. The team uses off the shelf equipment in the first instance before progressing to DFG. In such cases, the use of the referral date negatively skews the performance data. Anecdotally, the OT Service confirms that they attend regional meetings, and our performance levels are comparable with neighbouring authorities.

### Equans

1.10 The key performance measures for Equans are:-

Measure	Current Performance	Historical Performance
Minor adaptations passed from OT to Equans to install	590 (April to October 2022)	1,123 in 21/22
Average time taken for Minors from OT decision to commence works	10 working days (April to October 2022)	14 working days in 21/22
Major Adaptation - Number of residents waiting for urgent referrals to commence work on site	32 (April to October 2022)	32 in 21/22
Major Adaptation - Average time to complete paperwork for urgent referrals	Average 131 working days (April to October 2022)	Information not measured in 21/22
Major Adaptation - Number of residents waiting for non-urgent referrals to commence work on site	284 (April to October 2022)	107 in 21/22

Major Adaptation - Average time to complete paperwork for non-urgent referrals	Average 345 working days (April to October 2022)	Information not measured in 21/22
Major Adaptation - Average time to complete pre-construction phase from approval from Panel (All cases)	247 working days (end of October 2022)	Information not measured in 21/22
Major Adaptation – Average time from Panel approving works to completion (All cases)	265 working days	260 working days in 21/22
Major Adaptation - Number of DFGs in progress and physically on site	23 (end of October 2022)	Information not measured in 21/22
Major Adaptation - Number of DFGs completed	78 (end of October 2022)	202 in 21/22

1.11 Foundations advises that the maximum time to complete the works from the OT decision should be one year (260 working days), albeit in 95% of cases, these works should be completed within a maximum period of 80 working days. The average installation time in North East Lincolnshire is 265 working days. In order to improve performance levels, funding was authorised to recruit four additional Building Surveyors on a temporary basis on two-year contracts from the DFG budget. This doubled the current establishment within the team. Unfortunately, on-going recruitment and retention issues within Equans have proved problematic, and a number of vacancies remain within the team. This has had an adverse effect on performance.

### Case Studies

1.12 Three case studies have been compiled within Appendix 3 to demonstrate the work that has been undertaken across the DFG pathway, including the complex nature of some cases. The case studies illustrate the types of unforeseen delays that can occur when sourcing solutions to people's intricate lives, but also helps to provide some narrative behind performance figures as to the outcomes achieved for individuals across North East Lincolnshire. A further case study (appendix 4) has also been provided around the work that has been undertaken to work much more closely with housing providers. A process was mapped and trialled within the supported living provision with an individual who would have likely had to move out of area without swift intervention to source and adapt a property to meet a bespoke and high level of need. This case study will help to shape part of the new approach to devise faster protocols with housing providers in the future.

### **New Approach to Managing Disabled Facilities Grants**

1.13 Given the concerns highlighted above regarding recruitment/retention of OT and Equans staff and the size of the waiting lists, a change of approach to managing DFGs is being instigated using Government and clinical guidance and learning/best practice from Foundations and other councils. It should be noted that many councils nationally struggle to recruit OTs and thereby have issues with their waiting lists as a result. The situation is not unique to North East Lincolnshire.

1.14 This approach requires a change to the existing Housing Assistance Policy, which will be supported by a new trial legal framework with contractors. The current framework, managed by Equans, is not being used to full capacity, with some

contractors no longer interested in delivering works and the allocation of jobs within the existing framework does not reward successful contractors (those who deliver works to required standards, and quickly, all from a schedule of rates). The new trial will also allow existing DFG contractors to deliver technical inspection work and design, thereby reducing the demands on Equans building surveyors to do this work, albeit with appropriate checks/audits put in place to safeguard quality and costs.

1.15 The Housing Assistance Policy (see Appendix 2) has been updated to deliver increased capacity, speed up the DFG process, remove waste/duplication and expand the parameters of DFG expenditure. In order to speed up the process, a new category Fast Track Adaptations will be implemented alongside the existing minor works and major adaptations (urgent and non-urgent) processes:

- Minor Works – For simple adaptations including grab rails, stair banister rails and ramps - value up to £2,500
- Fast Track Adaptations – For adaptations where the applicant requires simple adaptations (e.g., a stair lift, ramps, and access to bathing facilities) - value up to £15,000
- Major Adaptations (Urgent and Non-Urgent) – For adaptations that are more complex, or where the client's condition is likely to change due to their condition and any assessment will need to include future planning – value up to £30,000, noting a discretionary top-up grant of £20,000 is available for anyone eligible for a mandatory DFG.

1.16 The revised policy introduces a number of new grants and increases the financial limits of other grants, which is necessary given rising costs. A triage system will be introduced, with SPA (Single Point of Access), to allocate cases quicker to registered providers and contractors. In addition, more minor works will be allocated to contractors from the initial customer call.

1.17 Trusted Assessors (trained by Foundations at Level 4) will be employed to conduct DFG assessments for the simple cases. North East Lincolnshire Council will recruit and employ these individuals direct, with exact numbers to be determined based on need/demand and existing backlog and budget. The more complex assessments will continue to be conducted by the OT service.

1.18 The Assisted Living Centre, located at Diana Princess of Wales hospital, will be used by the Trusted Assessors. Transport will be available through the Dial-a-ride service for anyone who has difficulties accessing the venue, which will reduce the strain on OT waiting lists. This will be funded through the DFG budget.

1.19 In addition, residents will be reminded that they can deliver their own DFGs with appropriate guidance being provided on how they can do this.

1.20 Furthermore, positive discussions have been held with some Registered Providers about them undertaking all DFGs on their own properties/assets, which they are keen to do, still funded via DFG.

1.21 The financial limit for minor adaptations has been increased from £1,000 to £2,500.

Minor adaptations are funded through the Care Act 2014. The legislation sets a limit of £1,000 and some Registered Providers self-fund this service for their tenants. Unfortunately, with the limit set so low and construction costs increasing, many minor works cannot be delivered within budget and are signposted to the main DFG waiting list. Increasing the limit means that many minor adaptations can be completed without seeing an Occupational Therapist.

1.22 The other changes that will be implemented through the revised policy are:-

- Whole house approach to property surveys, addressing hazards and thermal comfort e.g., single glazed doors, windows, loft insulation (safe, warm and dry assessment)
- Embrace smart technology to assist independent living and contribute to reducing adult social services costs.
- Purchase empty homes and adapt for use as temporary homelessness accommodation, supporting those with mental health/serious addiction needs.
- Purchase empty homes to provide adapted homes for households unable to move to suitable accommodation that can be adapted.

1.23 With regard to performance, the priorities will be:

- To manage and scrutinise performance, via new governance arrangements, with fortnightly performance meetings held and directed by NELC, with the OT service and Equans.
- To challenge/manage performance ensuring works can be assigned and actioned with pace from the waiting lists i.e. issuing orders for equipment suppliers rather than officers working down the list in chronological order.

## **Summary**

1.24 By employing Trusted Assessors to conduct the easier assessments, it will build capacity and relieve the pressure on the OT service and help them to reduce their waiting lists.

1.25 The revised Housing Assistance Policy will speed up the DFG process and allow existing DFG contractors and housing associations to do more DFG work, which will reduce the pressures on Equans.

1.26 Given the size of the waiting lists, the aim is to clear the backlog of OT assessments and DFG installations within 12 to 18 months, and then move towards delivering Foundations performance targets in future. This will be monitored/challenged through regular performance meetings with the OT service and Equans as outlined above.

1.27 The Director of Adult Services will lead the DFG process, supported by appropriate officers from Adults, Housing and NLAG. Performance will be managed via the performance and challenge meetings with commissioned services/contractors, RPs, all wrapped up within existing operational and strategic meetings.

## **2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES**

The change of approach to managing DFGs is essential in order to improve

performance, especially given the difficulties in recruitment and retention of staff by the OT service and Equans. If no action is taken to reduce the amount of work on OTs and Equans, performance levels will not improve, and this will continue to have an adverse impact on the wellbeing of individuals applying for DFGs.

### **3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS**

The new Housing Assistance Policy will be subject to public consultation. The views of stakeholders and public on the new policy and proposed changes to the DFG processes will be sought. It is expected the policy will be out for consultation in November 2022, ensuring we reach all stakeholders and feedback is reviewed and feedback into the process, as required. NELC Comms will assist in this process.

### **4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS**

The annual capital allocation to the Council is currently £3.2m (which is ring fenced to spend only on DFGs from the Better Care Fund), with a further ear-marked reserve of £3.7m. The proposed changes to the DFG policy and processes will be fully funded from within this provision.

### **5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS**

Applications for DFGs are received from children and young people. These applications are considered on their own merits, in accordance with the Housing Assistance Policy. The proposed new approach will speed up these applications and provide the adaptations more quickly to those individuals affected.

### **6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS**

There are no implications to climate change and the environment arising from this report.

### **7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

The proposal aims to use the external Disabled Grant funding available for these types of works and activity in a more effective manner.

### **8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS**

- 8.1 The above report reflects that engagement and consultation will be carried out at a formative stage which is in accordance with best practice and will permit responses to shape the overall solution.
- 8.2 The framework approach offers additional assurance, as by necessity, such frameworks are compliant with relevant procurement regulations and offer settled terms to parties.
- 8.3 Constitutionally, Scrutiny is able to offer recommendations to the ultimate decision-making forum and it is a matter for that forum as to what weight is attached to such recommendations. However, as this exercise is part of initial engagement any recommendations should be carefully considered.

## **9. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS**

There are no known human resources implications. As a result, no monitoring comments have been sought from the Council's Strategic Workforce Lead.

## **10. WARD IMPLICATIONS**

There will be applicants for DFGs from all Wards.

## **11. BACKGROUND PAPERS**

Meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel – 30 March 2022  
[Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel | Democracy \(nelincs.gov.uk\)](https://nelincs.gov.uk)

## **12. CONTACT OFFICERS**

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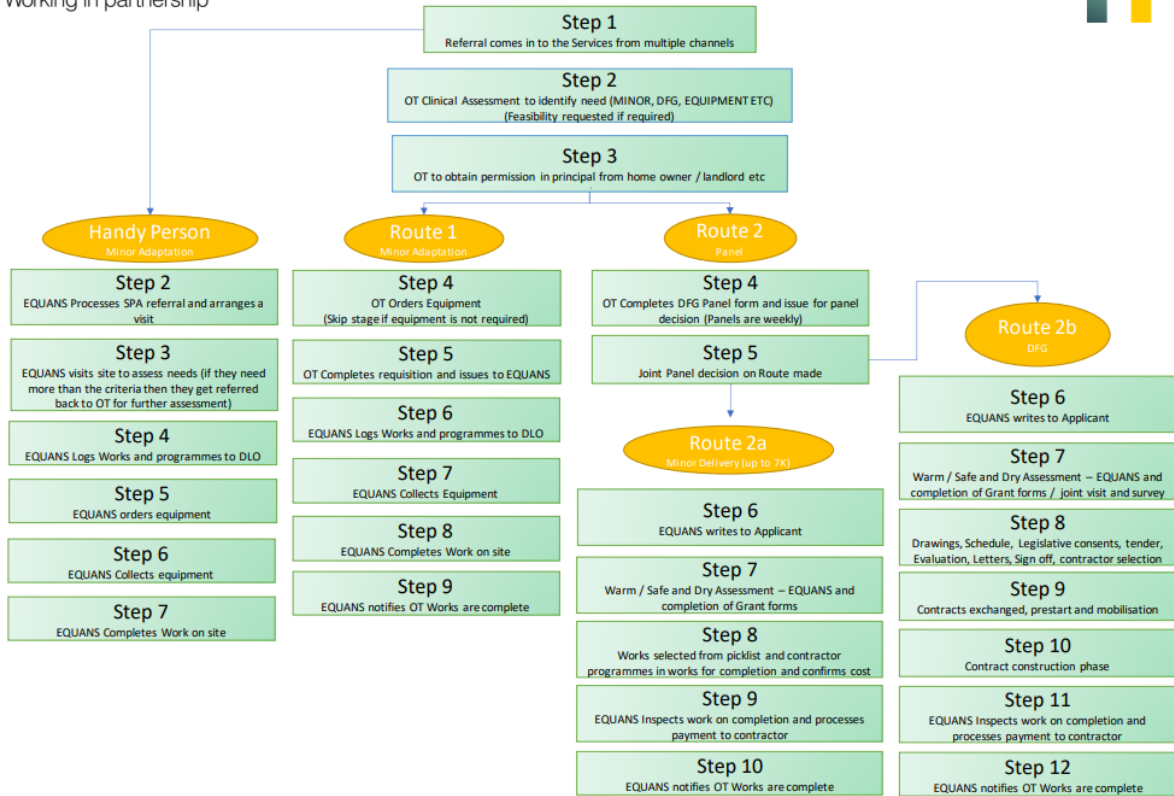


# Appendix 1 – Current Adaptation Process



## Adaptation Process

Working in partnership



## **Appendix 2 – Updated Housing Assistance Policy**

# HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY

## **NORTH EAST LINCOLNSHIRE COUNCIL**

### **INTRODUCTION**

North East Lincolnshire Council's Housing Assistance Policy sets out the financial assistance available for residents of North East Lincolnshire to enable people to remain living as independently as possible in safe and healthy homes by way of improvements, aids and adaptations to the home environment.

There are 2 main elements to this policy: Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants funding through the Better Care Fund and how the Council intends to implement their powers under the Regulatory Reform Order.

This policy aims to assist disabled people to live safely and independently in their own home and sets out how this will be done in line with legislation, good practice guidance, the Better Care fund plan and through offering excellent value for money.

North East Lincolnshire Council will work with the following key partners to deliver this policy:

- Integrated Care Partnership
- Children's Services
- Public Health
- Neighbouring Authorities
- Local Registered Providers
- Property Owners and Tenants

### **LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT**

Housing Assistance is offered in accordance with the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 with the underlying legislation governing the provision of mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) covered by the 1996 Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act. This enables the council to use its discretionary powers to make better use of its limited resources.

The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996: Part 1 as amended by the Disabled Facilities Grant Order 2008 states that the local authority has a statutory duty to provide adaptations to homes for disabled people. Funding for these adaptations is provided through DFG.

The Care Act 2014 states that local authorities must provide or arrange services, resources or facilities that maximise independence.

DFG Guidance 2022 states that where the social care authority determines that a need has been established it is their duty to assist, even where the housing authority is unable to approve or to fully fund an application. So, for example, where an applicant who is eligible for assistance) is assessed as needing an adaptation which is outside the scope of the statutory DFG duty, then the social care authority can provide it.

### **STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT WITH AIMS, OBJECTIVES & PRIORITIES**

This policy supports the integration of health, care and housing systems and processes; the development of preventative services to avoid more costly implications elsewhere; and the development of community services closer to or in people's own homes. It also seeks to address inequalities of health through the provision of appropriate adaptations.

This policy articulates the practical inventions committed to supporting delivery of the priorities in the:

- Corporate Plan
  - Stronger Economy
  - Stronger Communities

This policy supports the following priorities from our Outcomes Framework.

- Enjoy good health and wellbeing
- Live in a safe environment, can have their say about things that are important to them and participate fully in their communities.
- Strategic Housing Strategy

The Housing Strategy identifies four main aims;

- Build Enough Homes
- Build the right homes in the right places
- Improve and make best use of existing housing stock and assets
- Build Safe Communities

This strategy supports the ambition to improve and make best use of existing housing stock and assets. It also supports building safe communities.

- Health and Wellbeing Strategy
  - Sustainable Communities
    - North East Lincolnshire will be a place where people are supported to live independently and have access to the means to connect to other people and places.
  - Health and Wellbeing
    - People will be informed, capable of living independent lives, self-supporting and resilient in maintaining/improving their own health
  - Safe and Secure
    - Every child will be brought up by supportive and nurturing families live in good quality housing which is designed to meet a range of different needs, supporting people to be as independent as possible.
- Integrated Care plan

Aligns with the broader place objectives for North East Lincolnshire

- Enjoy and benefit from a strong economy
- Feel safe and are safe
- Enjoy good health and wellbeing
- Benefit from sustainable communities
- Fulfil their potential through skills and learning
- Better Care Fund Plan
- Overarching approach to supporting people to remain independent at home, including strengths-based approaches and person-centred care.

### **EVIDENCE OF NEED**

In North East Lincolnshire, there are identified needs which this policy addresses.

These may be found locally in the form of:

- Joint Strategic Needs assessment data 2021
- Housing Stock Modelling Survey 2020
- Housing Market Needs Assessment 2012 (soon to be updated)

Nationally in the form of:

- ONS Data
- Census Data
- National House Condition survey

### **THE POLICY PRIORITIES**

This policy aims to support the following priorities;

- Best use of DFG Funds in a fair and transparent manner
- Improved housing conditions
- Enable Independence, Safety and Comfort

### **FUNDING**

Until 2025, the budget for the assistance under this policy will be £3.2m as currently indicated by government which is the allocation from central government.

All discretionary elements under this policy will be subject to funding being available.

In order not to fetter discretion by creating an inflexible policy, all applications will be considered on their merits, and there is provision for flexibility in exceptional circumstances.

### **SUMMARY OF ASSISTANCE**

- Aids and Adaptations (Mandatory and Discretionary)
- Home Improvement Grants and Loans (Discretionary)
- Landlord Assistance (Discretionary)

### **DETAILS OF HOW TO APPLY FOR AIDS AND ADAPTATIONS**

#### **GETTING AN ASSESSMENT**

Applicants must call the Single Point of Access (SPA) on 01472 256256. The Service will forward your request to a triage service, who will direct you to the following;

- Minor Works – For simple adaptations including grab rails, stair banister rails and ramps (see Appendix A for eligible works).
- Fast Track Adaptations – For adaptations where the applicant requires simple adaptations for example, a stair lift, ramps and access to bathing facilities. The assessment will be carried out by a trusted assessor who is trained to understand when to refer a more complex case to an Occupational Therapist. Eligible works will include works to ensure the property is safe warm and dry.
- Major Adaptation – For adaptations that are more complex, or where the client’s condition is likely to change due to their condition and any assessment will need to include future planning. Eligible works will include works to ensure the property is safe warm and dry.

### **DETAILS OF HOW TO APPLY FOR HOME IMPROVEMENT/LANDLORD ASSISTANCE**

Eligible applicants must call the Home Improvement Service on 01472 324775, where they will be referred to the relevant department.

### FULL DETAILS OF ALL TYPES OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

#### **Aids and adaptations**

##### **Eligible Works**

All works must meet the following eligibility criteria;

- Necessary and Appropriate – To meet the disabled persons and is a recommendation of a trusted assessor or an Occupational Therapist.
- Reasonable and Practicable – Depending on the suitability of the property, its age and condition.

#### Timescales For Delivery

The applicant has up to 12 months for the works to be completed and can choose to delay the works if they require.

##### **Key Stages**

There are five key stages of delivering a home adaptation:

- **Stage 0:** Applicant contacts the Council through the 01472 256 256 single point of access.
- **Stage 1:** The applicant will be directed to the minor adaptations service, trusted assessor, or occupational therapist, dependent on the level of complexity and need. The assessment will identify the relevant works required.
- **Stage 2:** Identification of the relevant works and how the works will happen to submission of the formal grant application.
- **Stage 3:** Grant application to grant approval
- **Stage 4:** Approval of grant to completion of works.

The timescales through these stages will depend upon the urgency and complexity of the adaptations required. More urgent cases should be prioritised for action, but larger and

more complex schemes will take longer to complete. More urgent cases should be priorities for action, but larger and more complex schemes will take longer to complete. The following table sets out the best practice targets (Government Guide published March 2022), which should be met in 95% of the cases.

**Target timescales (working days)**

Type	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

The above targets are for guidance only. Where demand for the service is greater than the amount of resource available, waiting times for an adaptation may be affected.

Situations exist that are outside the control / influence of the service. For example:

- Sudden increase in demand and activity in the service
- Delays in documentation being returned
- Delays in the planning application process

In such circumstance, waiting times for the service will be unavoidably affected.

**MANDATORY DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT**

The applicant must be disabled and meet the definition of a disabled person (includes disabilities due to older age) and must be a resident in North East Lincolnshire.

The grant will fund works to an applicant’s home to enable independent living and accessing cooking, bathing and sleeping facilities.

The amount of grant is a maximum of £30,000 per individual applicant. Costs include services and charges, means test and exemptions.

Currently, the Council do not “means” test grants, however this is funding dependent, and the Council reserves the right to re-introduce means testing, should funding be restricted.

## **Approval of an application**

In approving a grant, the Council will need the following:

- Completed application form
- Certificate of occupation (including certificate of ownership)
- Where appropriate, a copy of the landlord’s permission to carry out works
- Referral from a Trusted Assessor or Occupational Therapist detailing the recommended works
- Schedule of works with estimated costs
- Where appropriate, a copy of a completed means test.

Once an application is approved, works to carry out the adaptation can start. On receipt of a valid grant application, works must be completed within twelve months.

The grant will be land charged on owner occupier applications for a 10-year period for costs over £5,000. For example, an adaptation costing £7,000 will mean £2,000 is held as a land charge.

## **DISCRETIONARY ASSISTANCE**

### **Minor Adaptations**

Minor adaptations will provide minor works up to the value of £2,500. Typical works are as follows; stair bannisters, ramps, half steps, replacement ergonomic taps, door widening, level threshold access. See Appendix A for further details.

These can be referred by the Single Point of Access, to a Council Approved provider, without the need to complete an Occupational Therapist Assessment.

Registered Provider self-fund minor adaptations up to £1,000 for tenants. Funding can be claimed to top-up the adaptation to £2,500 with prior approval, and upon receipt of costs.

Costs can include transport to the Assisted Living Centre to try out equipment, where there are no other suitable transport options available.

This grant will not be means tested.

### **Fast Track Adaptation Grants**

Where the applicants need is not progressive and can be met through a simple adaptation, the Council will carry out an assessment through an appointed Trusted Assessor.

The maximum grant is £15,000 and the applicant will require a means test. Applicants must be eligible for a mandatory DFG. Eligible works will include works to ensure the property is safe warm and dry, free from Category One hazards for homeowners and, in some cases, private sector landlords where works exceed

those identified within the Housing Act 2004.

Fast track Grants include existing adaptation replacement for example:

- Stairlifts
- Through floor lifts
- Step lifts
- Ceiling Track hoists
- Level access showers
- Ramps

Where required, costs can be recovered for transport through the Council's "Dial a Ride" service to the Assisted Living Centre to try out equipment, where there are no other suitable transport options available.

The grant will be land charged on owner occupier applications for a 10-year period for costs over £5,000. For example, an adaptation costing £7,000 will mean £2,000 is held as a land charge.

### **Relocation Grant**

A relocation grant is available up to a maximum of £5,000 to anyone who has an OT/Trusted Assessor referral recommending they relocate to a more suitable property that can be adapted to meet their need.

Applicants must be resident within North East Lincolnshire and move to a property within the borough.

Eligible costs include deposits, removal charges, solicitor fees, redecoration, and floor coverings.

The Grant is not means tested and will not be placed as a charge on the property.

### **Discretionary Top-Up Grant**

Discretionary top-up grants are available to applicants who are eligible for a mandatory DFG and the suitable scheme cannot be achieved within the £30,000 grant maximum.

The grant maximum of £20,000 will be fully land charged on owner occupier applications for a 10-year period.

### **Hospital Discharge Grant**

This is a non means tested grant to assist anyone who is unable to be discharged from hospital due to their home conditions, up to the value of £7,500. These grants are not intended to replace a mandatory DFG and will only provide support to release hospital beds for patients who have a condition that is likely to improve.

Referrals can be received through the Hospital Discharge Team and an assessment



made by the Trusted Assessor where appropriate.

An example of when this grant could be applied for is as follows: A resident who cannot be discharged until the property is free from clutter and cleansed, or the home can be adapted temporarily to allow for an applicant to go home early, where they have limited mobility, but are expected to improve over time.

The grant is not means tested and will not require a land charge.

### **Assistive Technology Grant**

According to the Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency (MHRA), the term 'assistive technology' refers to 'products or systems that support and assist individuals with disabilities, restricted mobility, or other impairments to perform functions that might otherwise be difficult or impossible.

Assistive technology can be included as part of a DFG to maximise the benefits of home adaptations. In some circumstances, assisted technology will be required as a stand-alone adaptation. This grant will support the appropriate smart technology up to the value of £1,000.

The grant can enhance the health, wellbeing and independence of groups including people with dementia or autistic people.

Assistive technology can include remote heating controls, remote lighting, and video doorbell technology.

The grant will not be means tested and will not require a land charge.

### **Children in Foster Care/Joint Residency**

Where a child has parents who are separated and the child lives for part of the time with each parent, a statutory DFG is only available at the address which is the main residence. However, where it is in the best interests of the child to provide adaptations at both locations, the Council will use their discretionary powers to consider applications to adapt the homes of both parents.

Children and young people who are placed in foster care and have a wide range of needs, will be able to access a DFG, where the foster carers are eligible for a DFG, but they will need to go through a means testing application.

Where appropriate, the grant can be used to support a child living in local authority care. Each case will be referred on merit and longevity of residence.

Grants for Children are not means tested and will not require a land charge.

### **Palliative Care Grant**

The grant will provide assistance up to the value of £7,500 for applicants who are

reaching end of life, providing temporary adaptations to support independence and provide dignity during end of life.

Eligible costs can include renting a stairlift, renting a shower cubicle, or modular ramping to allow the patient to have easy access in and out of their home.

The scheme provides a fast-track service, is not means tested and will not require a land charge.

### **Dementia Friendly Homes Grant**

The grant is not means tested and will provide assistance up to the value of £7,500.

Not all dementia sufferers have limited mobility. This grant supports people with dementia to manage their surroundings, retain independence and reduce feelings of confusion and anxiety. Works can include coloured flooring, signage and safety features within the kitchen and bathroom. It can also include adaptive technology, for example sensors and video doorbells that can be monitored by carers.

Eligible applicants must have a clinical diagnosis of dementia. An assessment will be completed by the Trusted Assessor and fellow clinicians who are caring for the applicant.

There will be no land charge.

### **Stay Warm Scheme**

Available to owner occupiers, to fund works to eligible applicants who have received a referral from a medical clinician, and who have a medical condition made worse by living in a cold home.

The grant maximum of £10,000 will be fully land charged on owner occupier applications for a 10-year period.

The grant is not means tested.

Eligible works can include heating repair/installation, condensation control, damp proofing, replacement windows, draft proofing, and repairs to prevent damp ingress.

## **GRANTS AND LOANS FOR HOMEOWNERS**

Assistance is provided to eligible households who improve living conditions and ensure they live safely in their own home.

### **Safe, Warm and Dry Emergency Repair Grant**

A grant of up to £10,000 for eligible homeowners, to carry out emergency repairs to their home that could be prejudicial to the health of the occupants.

Repairs can include heating repairs/replacement, replacement windows and doors, damp proofing, roofing repairs, bathroom and kitchen repairs/replacement where there are significant hazards.

Eligible applicants must be in receipt of:

- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Universal Credit
- Guaranteed Pension Credit
- Income-Based Job-Seekers Allowance
- Working Tax Credit with an annual income of less than £15,050
- Child Tax Credit with an annual income of less than £15,050; and
- Income Related Employment and Support Allowance.

The grant maximum of £10,000 will be fully land charged on owner occupier applications for a 10-year period, and they must have owned their home for a minimum of 2 years.

There is a limit of no more than 2 applications within 5 years.

### **Home Appreciation Loan**

The equity release loan is available to eligible homeowners to carry out essential repairs, removing Category 1 and 2 hazards.

A loan of up to £45,000 is available to fund works identified.

The loan can also be used to fund adaptations approved by an Occupational Therapist/Trusted Assessor, where the applicant is not eligible for a mandatory DFG.

The applicant must have owned the property for a minimum of 2 years, and.

- Intend to continue to live in the property
- Aged 60+ or disabled or in receipt of a means tested benefit, or otherwise vulnerable
- Ineligible for a DFG
- Unable to access mainstream lenders
- Have sufficient equity. The total amount of borrowing (secured loan/mortgage + home appreciation loan) must not exceed 70% of the value of the property

### **Energy Repayment Loan**

Loan funding can be used to finance energy efficiency improvements or top up other assistance for example Local Authority Delivery Schemes (LAD) or similar.

Available to owner occupiers who have owned their home for over 2 years, providing funding from £300 - £7,000.

Loans are subject to a satisfactory credit check and financial plan to demonstrate

they can repay the loan through monthly instalments, within a reasonable timeframe to be agreed (no more than 10 years).

A legal charge will be placed on the property until the loan is repaid in full.

## **FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR LANDLORDS**

### **Private Sector Leasing**

Funding is available to owners of empty homes, who are unable to finance repairs to bring the property back to a lettable standard.

Property owners will be required to lease the property to the Council for a between 5 and 7 years. Rental income (minus costs/service charges) will be used to repay the loan.

The Council will provide housing for homeless households during the lease term.

### **Landlord Energy Repayment Loan**

Loan funding can be used to finance energy efficiency improvements or top up other assistance for example Local Authority Delivery Schemes (LAD) or similar.

Available to owner's rental properties where the EPC is lower than a C. The amount of the loan will be between £300 - £7,000.

Loans are subject to a satisfactory credit check and financial plan to demonstrate the loan can be repaid through monthly instalments, within a reasonable timeframe to be agreed (no more than 10 years).

A legal charge will be placed on the property until the loan is repaid in full.

## **APPLICATIONS OUTSIDE THE POLICY**

Whilst it is legitimate for the council to refuse assistance outside of this policy, all applications will be considered on their merit. This means that in exceptional circumstances the council may use its discretion to provide assistance that meets the aims and objectives of this policy. Applications must prove beyond reasonable doubt that all other options have been considered prior to application.

North East Lincolnshire Council is committed to finding innovative ways of using its powers under the Regulatory Reform Order (2002) to ensure that the most vulnerable in North East Lincolnshire are supported to live independently, safely and in the best possible health. The council may explore options through this policy (where appropriate) to meet the needs of the client by investing in the client's home or through removal of barriers preventing a move to more appropriate housing. For more information/advice, please email [homeimprovementeam@nelincs.gov.uk](mailto:homeimprovementeam@nelincs.gov.uk), or call NEL council/Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) on **01472 326296 (option 4)**.

The Council will explore opportunities to acquire houses to use for homeless accommodation.

The Council will provide grants for Charities who have a proven track record of providing sustainable tenancies, in areas of low housing demand. Grants will be

assessed individually and on the strength of the business case presented by the charity. Grants can be used to fund gaps between a viable and non-viable business cases. A charge will be placed on the property as a land charge for a period of ten years and will be repayable if the property is sold during this term.

### **GENERAL TERMS AND CONDITIONS**

All grants and loans are subject to terms and conditions. They can be provided upon request. All properties must be insured, and evidence provided upon request.

### **HOW & WHEN WORKS WILL BE SUPERVISED**

The Council will arrange for works to be supervised and carry out certain obligations under legislation, for example Construction Design and Management Regulations 2015. They will also ensure that works are completed to a satisfactory standard.

### **HOW THE ASSISTANCE WILL BE PAID**

Assistance will be paid on completion satisfactory of works direct to the supplier. In the case of the Relocation Grant, this will be arranged direct with the applicant, to pay legal fees/deposits direct to the providers.

### **CIRCUMSTANCE WHERE ASSISTANCE WILL BE RESTRICTED**

Funding for Discretionary Grants is limited, and the Council may need to take a decision to prioritise cases where the need is greater. For example; a home without central heating may take priority over a home that requires new windows, as the risk of harm to the former is greater.

### **WHAT HAPPENS ON THE DEATH OF AN APPLICANT**

Where an applicant dies after works have been approved but before the works are complete and the Grant paid, and liability has been incurred for some or all of those works, then the Council may, if they think fit, pay the grant in respect of some or all of the works.

### **WHAT HAPPENS IF THE PROPERTY IS SOLD WITHIN 10 YEARS**

Most grants will have a land charge on the property for ten years. The recipient of the Grant must inform the Council of their intention to dispose (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) of the property within 10 years of the certified date of completion of the works, and to provide such information as the Council requests.

### **HOW TO REPAY A MANDATORY OR DISCRETIONARY GRANT**

The Council must be satisfied that it is reasonable in all the circumstances to require repayment, and will take into consideration:

1. The financial hardship which would be suffered by having to make the repayment;
2. Whether the sale/disposal is to allow the recipient of the grant to take up employment, or to change the location of his employment;
3. Whether the sale/disposal is connected with the physical or mental health or wellbeing of the recipient or disabled occupant;
4. Whether the sale/disposal is to enable the recipient of the grant to live with or near any person who is disabled, infirm and in need of care which the recipient of the grant will provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the recipient of the Grant is in need by reason of disability or infirmity.

This condition is a local land charge and will be binding on any person who is the owner of the property, at the time of the Grant or in the future (for example if property ownership is transferred). Funding can be transferred on sale or disposal of the property to the Council. Upon repayment, the Council will remove the local land charge.

### **FEES AND CHARGES**

North East Lincolnshire Council will provide a service to facilitate grants and loans. The Council will make a charge of 15% + VAT to cover works for example; inspections, drawings, managing contractors and dealing with any contractor disputes. Fees charged will be reviewed on an annual basis.

### **REQUEST A REVIEW OF THE COUNCILS DECISION**

In some circumstances, the Council may refuse an application for grant assistance. The applicant will have the opportunity to appeal the decision, at which point the case will be reviewed by the Assistant Director for Housing, Highways, Planning and Assets.

### **DESCRIBE THE IMPLEMENTATION PLAN**

The Policy will be reviewed by the Portfolio Holder for Health, Wellbeing and Adult Social Care and approved in January 2023. Once approved the Council will engage with relevant partners in preparation for the policy to be launched on the 1 April 2023 and will be in place until 2026. There will be a lead in time to allow the Council to train up new Trusted Assessors, and to put in place new frameworks and procedures to support the policy.

The Policy will be reviewed annually by the DFG Strategic Board, who will monitor performance and funding streams, to assess if the policy needs to be updated. The Board may take a decision to update the policy in certain circumstances, for example low take up of grants, or changes to the amount of funding received from central government.

### **COMPLIMENTS/COMPLAINTS ABOUT THE POLICY AND ITS IMPLEMENTATION**

Residents who have a compliment/complaint relating to the policy or about the level of service they have received will be able to use the council's corporate feedback system, to have their compliment/complaint dealt with. Details of how to make a compliment/complaint are available from either a through the councils Customer Access Points (01472) 313131 or through the council's website [www.nelincs.gov.uk](http://www.nelincs.gov.uk).

## **Appendix 3 – Case Studies**

### **Amber** [*Pseudonym used to protect patient confidentiality*]

Date of referral – 03/07/2020

Initial assessment – 17/09/2020

Initial decision to DFG , now known as DFG initiated – Not known as this wasn't collected at that time. Assessment to submission was 195 days (in this timeframe was included the assessment and trialling items or rehab as well as progressing any DFG work)

Panel submission date – 30/03/2021

Codes for delay , 4,5,9 – delay at start of process due to staff issues and awaiting HIS appointment , returned from panel for G and F which is need for further functional info and feasibility

Category of Adaptation – B – fabric changes

Approved – 05/05/2021

Initially seen at panel on 30/03/2022 – needed further information.

Allocated to officer – 5/5/2021

Approval date – 14/6/2021

Practical completion – 1/10/2021

Case completed 1/10/21

Delay code applied : legislative requirements.

### **Patient story/reason for hospital admission/ information**

Amber is a 9-year-old girl with a diagnosis of Autism. She lives with her family in a large house. A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) was completed the previous year to provide adaptations to keep Amber safe within the home. Amber has sensory processing issues, and she is intolerant of wearing clothes so frequently removes her clothing. Amber also likes to climb and is a risk of absconding. These two issues combined clearly makes her very vulnerable to exploitation. She likes to play in the garden and as the house is overlooked, the family were keen to allow her to play but also mindful of her climbing activity/ removing her clothing meant that she was not safe to do so.

A DFG panel was approved for the request to have a high fence installed around the garden and also a Sail shade which screened Amber from the overlooking houses were the fence did not afford full privacy.

### **What went well?**

A cost-effective solution to enable independent access to the garden.

### **What could have been done better?**

The sail shade could not be installed for technical reasons. The wooden pergola which was installed in place did serve the same purpose though will be dependent upon the planting reaching maturity to be fully effective.

### **If you could change one thing what would it be?**

The need for planting to reach maturity in order for the solution to be fully effective.

**Comments from patient/family about therapy intervention (physiotherapy and occupational therapy):**

Parents reported being very pleased with the work undertaken and the solution is proving to be very effective. Amber is now able to freely play in the garden.

**Pathway: Paediatrics**

**Outcome measure used: GAS Light**

**Assessment Outcome 40**

**Discharge Outcome: 50- therefore change of +10 on outcome measure.**

**Discharge Destination: Home address.**

**Patient Identification (NHS number):**



## **Mrs S**

Date of Referral – 18/05/2022

Initial Assessment date – 06/06/2022

DFG Assessment initiated 08/06/2022

Panel submission date – 01/07/2022

Codes for delay – 5 – staffing, A - no delay from submission to approval

Category of Adaptation – B – fabric changes

Approved – 06/07/2022

Allocated to officer – 29/7/22

Prestart – 5/10/22

Approved 18/10/22

First day on site – 18/10/22

Still currently ongoing.

### **Patient story/reason for hospital admission/ information**

Mrs S is cared for by her Husband. He has expressed genuine concern that she would be unable to be at home alone should he become unwell and admitted to hospital. She currently requires 24-hour supervision and has increasing care needs. She has a diagnosis of dementia which is advanced, and she is unable to complete tasks independently.

### **What went well?**

AP trialled a static shower chair which did not work in the design of the shower, so a DFG was completed for a wetroom and approved. Mr S is now able to shower Mrs S in a safe environment with no risks of falls or slips as she has a wheeled shower chair commode.

### **What could have been done better?**

AP trialled a static shower chair and following in depth conversations she should have realized that that this would not work for Mrs S or meet Mr S's approval therefore DFG for the wetroom should have been agreed on the first visit.

### **If you could change one thing what would it be?**

I would have gone straight for the wetroom and not wasted time trialling equipment.

### **Comments from patient/family about therapy intervention (physiotherapy and occupational therapy):**

On AP's last visit before discharge Mr S was very happy with the wetroom and most grateful to AP for taking the time out to make this happen for his wife. Mr S can now maintain her personal care in a safe environment and for that he is most grateful.

**Pathway: Palliative.**

**Outcome measure used: TOMS**

**Initial Outcome: Trial a static shower chair**

**Discharge Outcome: DFG completed and wetroom installed.**

**Discharge Destination: Home**

**Patient Identification (NHS number):**

**Tom** [*Pseudonym used to protect patient confidentiality*]

Date of Referral – 19/11/2019

Initial Assessment date – 20/11/2019

DFG Assessment initiated – Not known – we did not record this at the time

Panel Submission date – 17/02/2020

Codes for delay – 1,2,4 which were trialling equipment, client factors and awaiting HIS appointment and A – no delay from submission to approval

Category of Adaptation – A - equipment

Approved – 19/02/2020.

Allocated to officer – 30/4/2020

Works approved: 11/11/20

First day on site – 22/2/21

Completion 10/5/22

Delay code applied: Supply chain issue.

**Patient story/reason for hospital admission/ information**

Tom is a 32-year-old man who was referred to the Housing Team via Single Point of Access from an Occupational Therapist in a city in the East Midlands. Tom was in process of moving into NEL with his mum. He has a diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis and experiences fatigue, muscle spasms and generalized muscle weakness. Tom used a wheelchair for all his mobility needs and used a stand aid or full lift hoist for transfers depending upon his presentation at the time.

An access visit was carried out and feedback given to the referring OT. The property that Tom was moving to did not meet his needs- having no ramped access for the wheelchair and no washing facilities on the ground floor. A profiling bed, hoist, stand aid and wheeled commode were provided to enable Tom to move house. A review of the moving and handling equipment was carried out and advice given on procedure as mum was trying to use the mobile hoist on her own which was unsafe. Tom was found to not fit well in his chair having put weight on and also he did not sit safely in this due postural issues. He was provided with a tilt in space chair and advice was given on how to use this for rehabilitation of posture. A referral was also made for a tilt in space wheelchair.

Whilst the equipment was being organized, plans were put in place to provide the longer-term facilities which Tom required, and a feasibility visit was carried out with a technical officer at the Home Improvement Service/ Equans. Following this, plans were drawn up to provide a wetroom on the ground floor, ramped access at front and back doors (it was not feasible for Tom to gain access to the garden without a ramp at the back door) and ceiling track hoists as well as a wash-dry toilet. A panel request was submitted and approved by DFG panel for this work. A modification was subsequently added to this after Tom received a powered wheelchair and a door entry system was also requested to enable him to independently get in and out the house.

**What went well?**

Coordination of equipment needs with the major adaptation work. Inter-agency working (Home Improvement Service, equipment manufacturers, wheelchair services and the community equipment service) was effective and the OT was able to draw upon specialist advice from each.

**What could have been done better?**

Coordination between Housing OT service and Neuro Therapy service- there could have been better delineation of responsibilities with the equipment needed and therapy goals.

**If you could change one thing what would it be?**

The fact that Tom's medical condition deteriorated over the time that the referral

**Comments from patient/family about therapy intervention (physiotherapy and occupational therapy):**

**Pathway: Neuro**

**Outcome measure used: Treatment planning**

**Discharge Outcome: All goals achieved**

**Discharge Destination: Home address.**

**Patient Identification (NHS number):**

## **Appendix 4 – Case Studies for Innovative Project**

A process to streamline DFG works for single service supported living properties has been developed. The process aims to put more emphasis on the housing provider (Golden Lane Housing) to undertake the works outside of the DFG process. The rate for the works is to be compared against the existing NEL schedule of rates and approved at the DFG panel to ensure any decision on what is required and the amount of funding available is equitable and reasonable.

Current eligibility for this process is a single service requiring significant and/or bespoke/complex adaptations to meet the needs of a person with complex needs who is unable to be supported within the existing supported living voids available. The first case using the newly devised process has recently moved into his newly adapted property.

There were several constraints and barriers to this process which have impeded the delivery of this complex case including current housing market conditions that made it difficult for the housing provider to secure a property in a timely manner and at an affordable price. Works costs have increased over the last year.

The adaptations were bespoke and future proofed to enable the property to accommodate future level of need including larger items of equipment as the complexity of this persons needs increase.

Extensive works to the property to widen doorways/corridors, install a ramp, wet room and minor adaptations were required. The cost of the adaptations were split between eligible DFG under the NEL Schedule of Rates and a contribution from the housing provider to contribute towards the usual adaptations required within a property of this nature.

Not only has this process enabled a young person to remain in the Borough and to avoid an emergency situation following his informal carer breakdown or crisis, but it has proved an efficient and cost-effective way of delivering DFG to improve a person's life, independence and cost of package.

Without this property, it is highly likely the person with complex needs would move to an out of area placement at a cost of around £3,600 per week. This is a representative example of a single service, 24-hour care at a level felt the person with complex needs would require to meet their needs. The current proposal for support cost is £2856 per week. This represents a weekly cost avoidance of £744 - £38,688 per annum. This, offset with the funded shortfall of the works, represents a cost avoidance of £30,039.16 in the first year of service provision.

The outcomes for this individual as a result of the newly design process for single service supporting living properties has:

- Prevented an out of Borough placement and enabled this person to live close to family and networks, in a community that is familiar.
- Enabled an individual to move on from the family home, preventing carer breakdown and improved the lives of the individual and family
- Enabled easy egress around the home and allowed the individual to develop ordinary life skills further, creating improved independence.