



6 National Housing Strategy for an Ageing Society – Disabled Facilities Grants

The National Strategy on Housing for an Ageing Society, *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods*, is a cross-government strategy published jointly by Communities and Local Government (CLG), Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Department of Health (DH).

The Role of Disabled Facilities Grants

The strategy also includes an update on the 2004 cross-government review of disabled facilities grants, which are available to disabled home-owners and private and social rented tenants to help pay for adaptations.

The national budget increased to £146 million in 2008/09, to £156 million in 2009/10 and then to £166 million in 2010/11.

The main changes to the provision of DFGs are:

- DFGs remain mandatory grants, subject to needs assessment and a test of financial resources, administered by local housing authorities
- The grant limit was raised to £30,000 from April 2008
- There will be changes to the means test. From April 08 people in receipt of Council Tax Benefit, Housing Benefit and tax credits can be fast-tracked and are no longer required to provide additional financial information. Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit is no longer counted as income for the means test
- From April 2008 creating access to the garden became a specific grant criterion (where such access is reasonable and practicable)
- The ring-fence will be relaxed – from April 2008 the 60:40 split of national and local authority funding was abolished with local authorities no longer required to provide match funding
- From 2010/11 funding will be paid to local authorities as part of the Single Capital Pot
- The scope for the use of DFG monies has been widened, enabling local authorities to use DFG funding for adaptation-associated purposes eg. stair lift recycling, fast-track adaptation initiatives, and

- Where a DFG is over £5,000 local authorities have the discretion to put a charge on property of up to £10,000 (repayable if the property is sold within ten years) without seeking permission from the Secretary of State.

The Government wishes to see more accessible housing registers and to include accessible properties in Choice Based Lettings (CBL) schemes. The Housing LIN is working with CLG on developing good practice guidance relating to CBL for older and vulnerable adults.

What you can be thinking about now

Disabled Facilities Grants can play a key role in enabling older and disabled people to continue to live independently in their own homes. Adaptations and equipment can enable self-care and support from informal carers and paid care workers. They also make a potentially significant contribution to the wider prevention and personalisation agendas.

Delays in hospital discharge and problems with rehabilitation at home can result from a poorly adapted home. Access to DFG is therefore an important issue for service planners and commissioners.

With future DFG funding allocations being determined at a regional level it will be important for adaptations to have an increased priority at this level. Regional housing and planning strategies will need to include adaptations and set a strategic vision for their future provision.

One of the main themes from the Government is to offer timely housing related information, advice and support to older people. Advice and information about home adaptations and the potential providers of assistance in relation to

these (such as home improvement agencies) should be included in this provision.

It is very important that commissioners and providers take action locally to shape future adaptation provision. This strategy has far-reaching consequences for local planners and providers in terms of radical changes to funding and delivery of adaptations.

Other useful Housing LIN publications:

Commissioning housing support for health and wellbeing
http://www.networks.csip.org.uk/_library/Resources/ICN/HousingSupport.pdf

Healthy homes, healthier lives DVD/ CDRom
<http://networks.csip.org.uk/IndependentLivingChoices/Housing/Topics/type/resource/?cid=3989>

Disabled Facilities Grant – The Package of Changes to Modernise the Programme
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/dfgpackagechange.pdf>

Heywood F and Turner L (2007) Better outcomes, lower costs: Implications for health and social care budgets of investment in housing adaptations, improvements and equipment: a review of the evidence.
http://www.officefordisability.gov.uk/docs/better_outcomes_summary.pdf

Needs Analysis, Commissioning and Procurement for Housing-Related Support
<http://www.communities.gov.uk/documents/housing/pdf/housingneedsanalysis.pdf>

Useful links to other relevant organisations:

Communities and Local Government:
www.communities.gov.uk

Foundations: www.foundations.uk.com

Care and Repair England:
<http://www.careandrepair-england.org.uk/>

Other Sheets in this series:

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