

Personalising home adaptations: Innovations in DFG funding to create safe and accessible, forever homes

THE ROLE OF HOUSING ASSOCIATIONS

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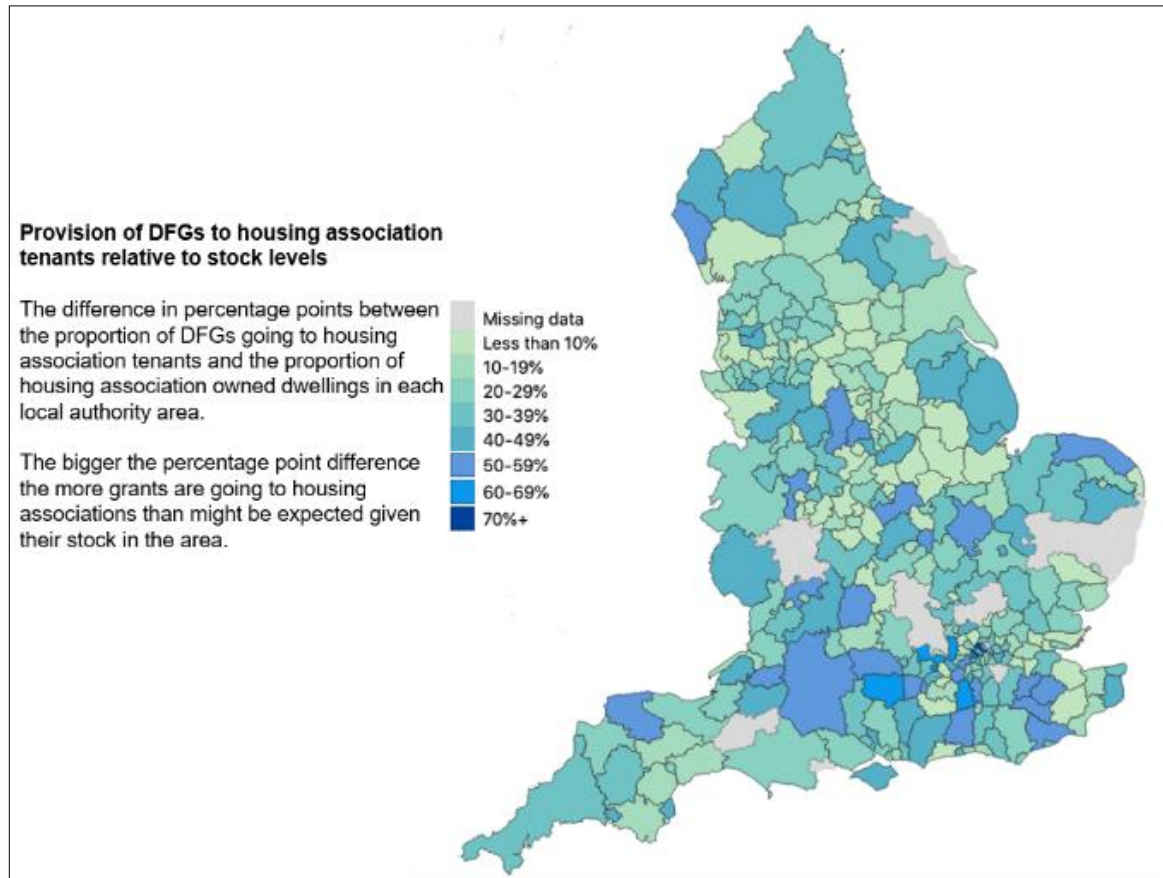
Background

- 2018 Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Review – England
- Social Care White Paper published - DFG Guidance imminent
- Further work 2020/21 to look at housing associations and home adaptations in England. Supported by Habinteg, Anchor Hanover, and Foundations. Publication 2022:
 - Policy report and summary
 - Design guide – online resource

Housing associations and home adaptations

Uneven housing association use of the DFG

54% of tenants on average are disabled or have a long term illness – 36% DFGs go to HA tenants on average



Source: Foundations – from MHCLG annual DELTA data return relating to the DFG 2019/20
MHCLG Live tables on dwelling stock - Table 100: number of dwellings by tenure and district, England.

DFG delivery also uneven

- Some LAs have surplus funds, others cannot meet demand.
- Some LAs no longer means test but criteria vary
- Some LAs offer discretionary grants, but type varies.
- Staffing levels have not kept pace with increases in DFG resources – long waiting lists in some areas.

Local authority perspective

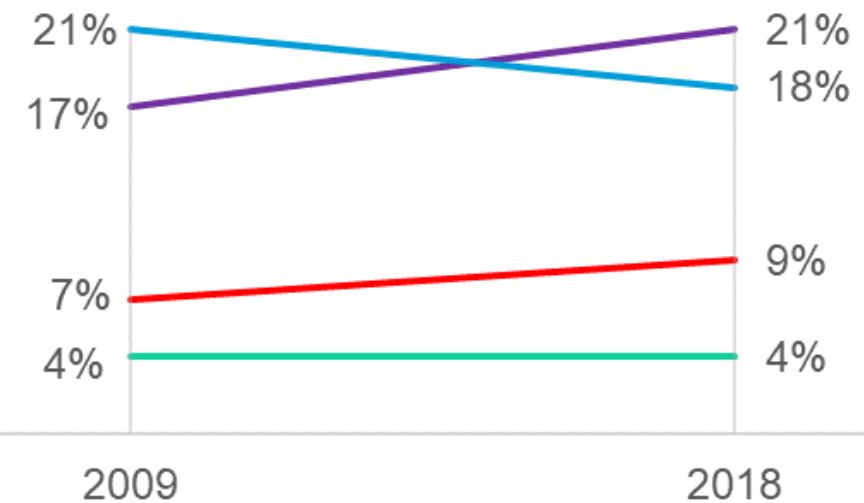
- Some very good HA practice – but varies
- Most HAs do minor adaptations themselves but some only have £500 upper limit - leads to long waiting times for people from all tenures
- Used to be more sharing of DFG costs but fewer HAs make contributions.
- Applications for the DFG are made by tenants – delays in getting landlord's consent.
- Communication a major issue – close relationship with some HAs but unclear who to contact in others
- Concern about adaptations being refused - especially in general needs properties
- Concern about adaptations being removed at change of tenancy.

Almost two thirds of OTs/DFG staff said that delays in getting landlords' consent for work happens 'a lot'

DFG investment up, but the proportion of adapted homes has gone down in HA sector

- DFG allocation has doubled since 2015 to £573 million 2021/22
- 36% of DFGs go to HA tenants on average
- **Decline in number of adapted homes in HA sector 21% - 18%**

Trends in adapted homes 2009-2018



— Local authority — Housing association
— Owner occupied — Private rented

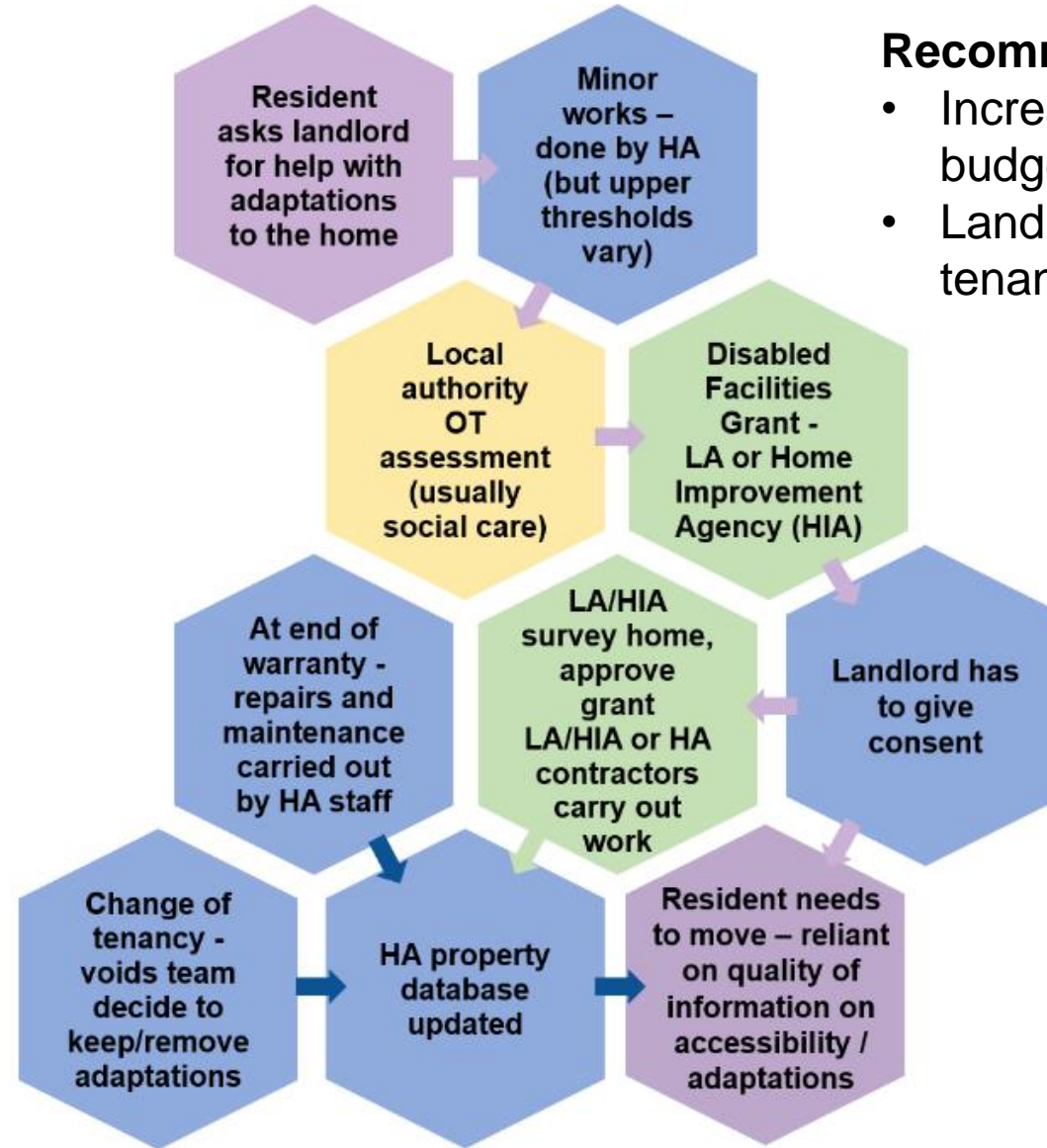
Housing association perspective

- Lost their own direct funding
 - Restricted adaptation budgets
 - Often a single member of staff
 - Dealing with numerous LAs:
 - Different funding contributions
 - Different paperwork
 - Full agency service not always available
 - Different arrangements re contractors
 - Warranties/maintenance arrangements vary
 - Complex spreadsheets to monitor arrangements over numerous LAs
- Landlord and home adaptations roles often in conflict
 - High demand for homes – long waiting lists, ‘best use of stock’ policies
 - Adaptations not always allowed
 - Major concern about water penetration - high and rising insurance costs
 - Not always much support for tenants who need/want to move home

HAs want more consistency in the way the DFG operates, and some want more control over the construction process.

Complex customer pathways

- Staff in HAs and LAs are doing their best to deliver good services
- Handovers and complex pathways make the process slower than it needs to be
- Hard to put the resident at the centre
- Not enough focus on prevention/early intervention.



Recommendations:

- Increased HA minor works budgets
- Landlord (rather than tenant) DFG applications

The need for good design

Reasons why good design is important

- Protect investment - a longer term, more strategic approach - more adaptations approved / fewer removed
- Remove the stigma - encourage people to seek help earlier
- Create a more circular economy – less waste / more recycling

“Design is an investment, not a cost”

“Design is too often seen as a final touch, added at the end of the process”.

Centre for Ageing Better and UKRI (2021)
Using design to innovate more effectively in the healthy ageing sector.

<https://cop.ageing-better.org.uk/sites/default/files/2021-10/using-design-innovate-effectively-healthy-ageing.pdf>

“Design is often delegated by time-poor leaders to inexperienced team members”

“Design requires an investment of leadership time”

To conclude

Further changes to the DFG

- Stability in DFG resources - £570 million per year 2022–23 to 2024–25
- Consultation on further DFG changes in 2022 – upper limit, means test
- Welcome consultation on the way DFG funding is allocated to authorities – *“help ensure better alignment with local demand”*. Include DFG use by HAs.
- More integrated teams to improve decision-making – staff training/new roles
- Training and support for contractors crucial – ageing workforce
- IT/data/technology - better ways to communicate with customers and contractors – move from 2-D plans to 3-D design, video, and in the future VR.
- Better procurement partnerships - volume discounts to offset rising prices.

Opportunities for change

Impact of Covid – more awareness of disabled and older residents.

Social Housing Charter – closer working with tenants

Regulation of consumer standards – inspection of landlords with > 1,000 homes every four years

New complaints process – Make Things Right
<https://socialhousingcomplaints.campaign.gov.uk/>.
Expert panel to help vulnerable residents.

Ombusman services - power to investigate systemic service failure.

Social Care White Paper – better integration, more specialised housing

Changes to building regulations – opportunity to make Part M Cat 2 the mandatory baseline for all new homes.

New decent homes standard – the previous standard did not mention adaptations despite high proportion of disabled tenants. New standard needs to ensure that inclusive designs used in all homes.

Common parts – Equality Act Section 36 to be introduced. Responsibility for funding/maintenance needs to be clarified - landlord/DFG/ tenant

Building safety bill – evacuation of disabled people in emergencies. Also issues around fire prevention – fire doors heavy / difficult to open.

National Disability Strategy – Social Model of Disability needs to underpin all decision-making.

Q & A