

Bath & North East Somerset Council

MEETING:	Housing & Major Projects Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel
MEETING DATE:	18 September 2012
TITLE:	Housing Adaptations Update (Home adaptations to assist independent living)
WARD:	ALL

AN OPEN PUBLIC ITEM

List of attachments to this report:

Appendix A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) benchmarking information for 2010/11

Appendix B DFG Project milestones and action plan

1 THE ISSUE

1.1 B&NES Housing Services and Sirona jointly deliver the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) service. The DFG service provides financial assistance for home adaptations to assist independent living for eligible applicants. In 2011, a project was undertaken to cut the waiting times for a DFG adaptation to be completed. The aim is to reduce waiting times by improving the processes, staff capacity and resources associated with the delivery of this service. Specifically, the objective of the project was to reduce the waiting time for the majority of adaptations (80th percentile) significantly.

1.2 This report provides an update on the project to date.

2 RECOMMENDATION

The Housing & Major Projects Policy Development and Scrutiny Panel is asked to:

2.1 Note and comment on the report.

3 FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

3.1 There are no financial implications arising from this report.

4 THE REPORT

4.1 The service. Disabled Facility Grants are means tested grants to fund or part fund building works and/or equipment which will allow access to the applicant's home and improve independent living within it. The need and type of adaptation, is assessed by the Councils Occupational Therapy Service. The means test, practicality assessment and administration of the grant process is carried out by Housing Services.

4.2 Case for change. Recent national benchmarking on Disabled Facilities Grant performance produced at Appendix 1 shows B&NES as performing well compared with other authorities in relation to customer waiting times and value for money. However, two neighbouring West of England Authorities are now reporting faster total process times as measured from the point of initial enquiry. Further, during 2010/11 the B&NES service delivered 80% of all DFG completions within 52 weeks of the initial enquiry compared to around 30 weeks achieved by at some other high performing Local Authorities. From a customer service perspective, when a client is assessed by an Occupational Therapist as being eligible for a DFG funded home adaptation at the start of the process, the need is already present.

4.3 Process review. The use of LEAN improvement principles to improve DFG process times was discussed with the Councils Business Improvement Team and subsequently applied to parts of the DFG service. This was carried out through discussion at project meetings and at a joint OT/Housing process review workshop and involved all staff who deliver and manage the service. The quality standard agreed for improvement was the time taken from initial enquiry to practical completion of work.

4.4 An action plan was agreed following the process review which is currently being implemented. A summary of the plan is attached at Appendix 2.

4.5 The Adaptation protocol has been agreed with Curo which includes joint working to improve process times and cost sharing on DFG adaptation costs.

4.6 Performance. The time taken for the fastest 80% of the cases completed during the year has improved from 52 weeks during 2010/11 to 43 weeks for the year to July during 2012/13. The average time has also improved from 36 weeks to 30 weeks over the same time period.

Initial enquiry to completion of DFG funded works	80 th percentile in weeks (time for 80% of cases)	Average in weeks
2010/11	52	36
2011/12	51	35
2012/13 to July 2012	43	30

4.7 Next steps. There is still a lot of work to do to implement fully the changed process. However the 2012/13 results to date are encouraging. The initial enquiries about Disabled Facilities Grants made after the 1st of April 2012 which resulted in a grant being approved are now being converted into complete equipment installations or adaptations. The time taken for the various stages of the process is being monitored and the information used to identify the reasons why target timescales for specific process stages are not met. This analysis will inform continuous improvement. There is also further work to be carried out with Curo to improve the customer journey their tenants who make up a large proportion of the Disabled Facilities Grant cases.

5 RISK MANAGEMENT

5.1 A risk assessment related to the issue and recommendations has been undertaken, in compliance with the Council's decision making risk management guidance.

6 EQUALITIES

a) An Equality Impact Assessment (EqIA) has been completed. The adverse impact identified was a lack of awareness of the Disabled Facilities Grant service. This has been mitigated by promotion through the Blue Badge parking service and improving the paper and website information available to prospective DFG applicants.

7 CONSULTATION

7.1 Staff; Other B&NES Services; Service Users.

7.2 Consultation was carried out with Housing Services staff and Sirona staff at a joint teams review meeting. All those present shared the project aims made constructive comments and suggestions to inform the action plan. Service users were consulted through customer satisfaction surveys and in general were happy with the service overall although less satisfied with the time taken to approve their application for financial assistance.

8 ISSUES TO CONSIDER IN REACHING THE DECISION

8.1 Customer Focus; the anticipated reduction in waiting times for DFG funded adaptations will greatly improve the independence and quality of life of the applicants more quickly. The provision of a suitable adaptation within a reasonable timescale is very important.

8.2 Health & Safety; the adaptations often greatly improve the safety with which applicants use their homes and reduce the likelihood of accidents and associated health and wellbeing issues.

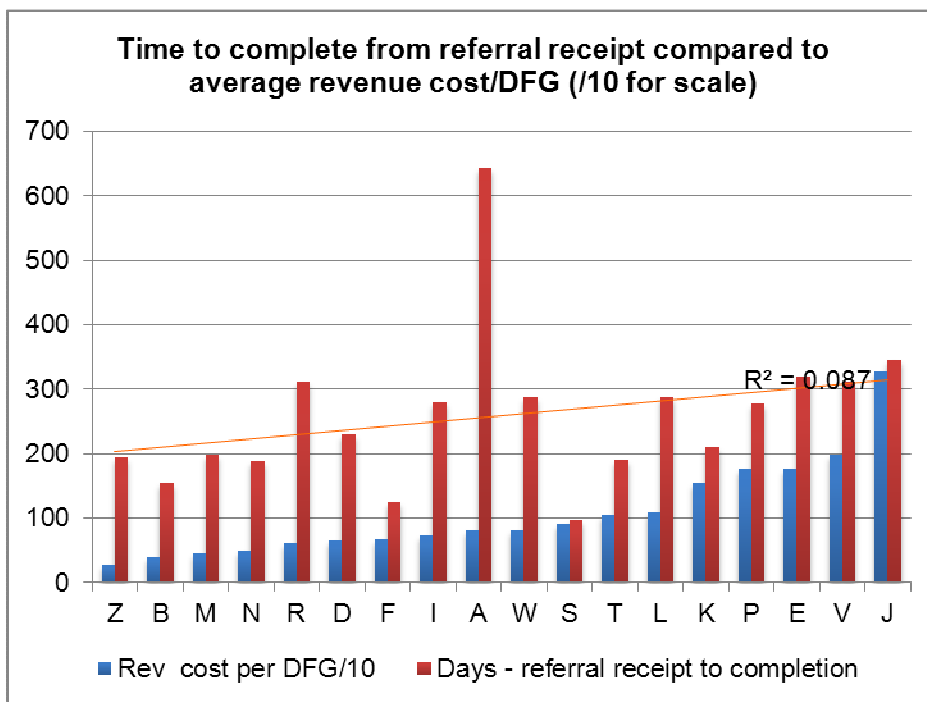
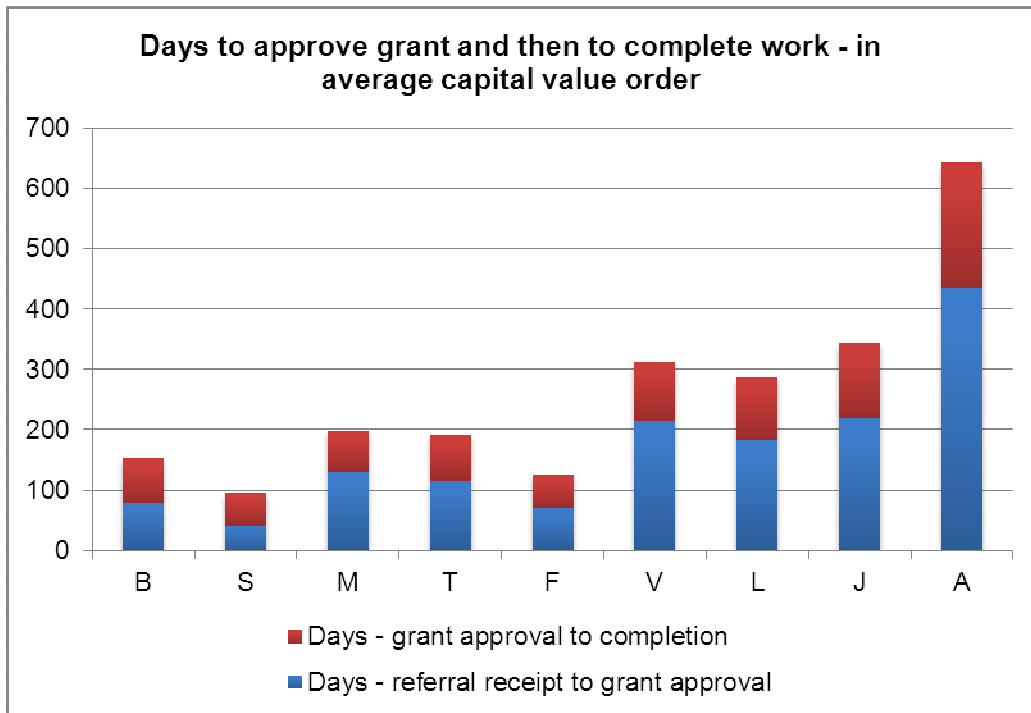
9 ADVICE SOUGHT

9.1 The Council's Monitoring Officer (Divisional Director – Legal and Democratic Services) and Section 151 Officer (Divisional Director - Finance) have had the opportunity to input to this report and have cleared it for publication.

Contact person	Chris Mordaunt 01225 396282
Background papers	None
Please contact the report author if you need to access this report in an alternative format	

Appendix 1 – DFG benchmarking information for 2010/11

Recent national benchmarking exercise carried out with the Housing Quality Network (Bath and North East Somerset labelled B).



Appendix 2 - DFG Project milestones and action plan

Action plan summary

	Process actions	Effect	Progress
1.	Agree measures with Curo to improve consent process for works and equipment the rented homes that they own	Reduce need for detailed response in consent process	Standard specification for adaptations to Curo homes agreed
2.	Streamline procedures for Occupational Therapists (OTs) to communicate applicant requirement for works and equipment	Reduce customer visits and reduce time required to obtain quotes	Complete
4.	Adjust timing of process steps to improve efficiency	Potential applicants can receive an early test of resources	Complete
5.	Email communication from OT direct to Housing	Timely communication to the DFG Team at Housing	New procedures in place and in use including dedicated email in box.
6.	Agree procurement method that meets Council, legal and applicant requirements	Good quality work carried out at a reasonable cost within acceptable timescales	Completed and to be kept under review
7.	Improved communication with applicants and their contractors	Similar process for all adaptations that is less confusing	Survey of contractors underway
	People actions	Effect	Progress
8.	Improve consistency within DFG service	Effective implementation of actions	Procedure manual complete
9.	Address any issues about staff competency to deliver the DFG service and work with partners to do the same	Speed up process times and avoid repeated visits to applicant	Housing and Occupational Therapy Teams have required skills and knowledge
10.	Contractor workshop to discuss DFG service requirements	Reduce time taken to start and complete building works without compromising quality or value for money	Preliminary survey of contractors underway
	Environment and resources actions	Effect	Progress
11.	Increase prioritise DFG work within Housing Standards and Improvement Team	Sufficient staff to assess and approve applications within a reasonable timescale	Resource is in place allowing applications to be processed faster

12.	Agree Adaptations Protocol with Curo	Set out agree principles for cost sharing and service improvement	Draft protocol agreed and formal sign off expected.
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DFG project milestones

1	Project launch meeting of Housing and Occupational Therapy Service	
2	Process workshop – Housing / OTs and agree action plan	
3	Implement and embed all agreed actions	
4	Process workshop – Housing / Curo and agree action plan	Not started
5	Implement and embed all agreed actions	Not complete