

TONBRIDGE & MALLING BOROUGH COUNCIL
COMMUNITIES and HOUSING ADVISORY BOARD

14 November 2016

Report of the Director of Planning, Housing and Environmental Health

Part 1- Public

Matters for Information

1 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS UPDATE

Summary

This report updates Members on Disabled Facilities Grants including a number of new work streams that are being progressed to promote greater integration of housing, health and social care service delivery.

1.1 Current position

1.1.1 Members will recall that a report to the last meeting of this Board detailed the latest position with regards to government funding of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) via the Better Care Fund. By way of a reminder the Council received an 87 per cent increase in its DFG grant allocation and the Department of Health advised that this is to encourage areas to think strategically about the use of home aids/adaptations, use of technologies to support people in their own homes and to take a joined-up approach to improving outcomes across health, social care and housing.

1.1.2 At the meeting Members were advised of initiatives that the Council was intending to pursue in order to make best use of the increased allocation. Members raised concern around the promotion of DFGs and in particular the low number of referrals for DFGs for children. The following paragraphs provide the updated position in relation to this area of work

1.2 Promotional Activity

1.2.1 To ensure maximum take up of the grant, we have recently stepped up our media campaign to promote awareness and the benefits of DFGs both amongst residents and other non-housing professionals. Officers have taken the opportunity to provide information on DFGs (as well as our wider Housing Assistance work) at events such as Tonbridge & Malling Seniors Older Persons Day in Tonbridge, West Kent Clinical Commissioning Group Annual General Meeting, Falls Prevention classes, exercise classes for older persons and a county-wide strategic meetings. The West Kent CCG has invited District &

Boroughs to speak at its Town Hall event on 10 November providing a forum to show case how the services we deliver positively impact on people's health.

- 1.2.2 Further work on promoting DFGs includes a press release and use of social media such as twitter and Facebook. We are also exploring the potential of placing articles in local publications and specifically target the availability of help for disabled children.

1.3 West Kent Hospital Discharge Scheme

- 1.3.1 Three West Kent local authorities, Sevenoaks District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council and ourselves have been working collaboratively to develop a Rapid Hospital Discharge Scheme in partnership with the West Kent CCG and Hospital Discharge Team Manager, on a nine month pilot.
- 1.3.2 The purpose of this initiative is to speed up hospital discharges in order to avoid unnecessary stays in hospital that are not only costly to the public purse but may also have an adversely impact on the health of patients. It is well documented that many vulnerable people are discharged into unsafe home environments which exacerbate their frailties and lead to large numbers of re-admissions to hospital. Following discussions with Health colleagues it has become apparent that some of the reasons for "bed blocking" in West Kent are related to housing conditions. For example, a patient being unable to return home because their bed is situated upstairs and they cannot manage the stairs and have no means to relocate the bed or due to the patient being homeless and having nowhere to go.
- 1.3.3 The pilot will involve the creation of a Health & Housing Co-ordinator role being located in Pembury Hospital, Tunbridge Wells. The post holder will play an active role in discharge meetings and prevention of admission into Accident & Emergency (A&E) in order to facilitate and enable a speedy discharge and return home to a safe, warm home. As part of this the coordinator will undertake home visits pre and post discharge to identify both short and long term improvement works that may be required at the property. They will link directly into a Handyperson Service that will enable the completion of minor adaptations/repairs in order to achieve a rapid discharge.
- 1.3.4 Family Mosaic, Home Improvement Agency, will deliver the service on behalf of the three West Kent Authorities including the provision of a Handy Person service. Family Mosaic has experience of operating in a similar environment in East Kent and has a well-established and successful Handy Person service. For expediency in getting the pilot started given the short time frames they are considered best placed to undertake the initiative.
- 1.3.5 The initiative will be jointly funded by the three Districts from the increased DFG allocation and meets the government's objective of better integration of housing, health and social care.

1.4 Funding an Occupational Therapist

- 1.4.1 In order to improve the customer journey and processing times on DFGs we have agreed with Kent County Council to fund the secondment of a part time Occupational Therapist (OT) into the Private Sector Housing Team, initially for a period of twelve months. The OT will work directly with Officers on DFGs (adult cases) as well as having input into other areas of housing work, for example, housing needs assessments for Housing Register applicants.
- 1.4.2 It is anticipated that this integration will allow for a more streamlined and responsive customer service, as communication and liaison between officers improves. Once the post becomes embedded we are keen for referrals to be made directly to “our” OT rather than through the current KCC assessment team, which involves a further handover onto an OT waiting list, before the referral even reaches the Housing Service. This will also allow more robust monitoring on demand for DFGs
- 1.4.3 The funding of this post will be from the increased DFG funding through the Better Care Fund and as well as being utilised to clear current caseloads will help us challenge traditional methods of delivering DFGs. The outcomes will feed into the county-wide Integration of Housing, Health and Social Care project detailed below.
- 1.4.4 **Current Demand**
- 1.4.5 We are aware of some recent Member concerns about the low number of referrals for DFGs for children. We have undertaken some benchmarking over the last few months and have concluded that the level of referral rate is very similar across the whole of West and North Kent. In fact Tonbridge & Malling receives slightly more referrals per month into the Children’s OT Service than other neighbouring local authorities. Notwithstanding this we have and will continue to promote the benefits of the DFG to ensure that our residents are aware of the services that we can provide for both children and adults.
- 1.4.6 We have been advised by KCC at the time of writing, that there may be up to thirty adult cases awaiting a full Occupational Therapy assessment which may translate into DFG cases. We understand that there are no significant delays with regard to Occupational Therapy assessments being carried out for children and all cases are being assessed within 28 days. The aforementioned funding of an OT will go some way to ensuring that these cases are assessed within this financial year and thereby maximising expenditure against the allocated budget.
- 1.4.7 In the first six months of 2016/17 the Private Sector Housing Team received 38 applications for a Disabled Facilities Grant and completed a total of 32 Disabled Facilities Grants (grants may run over from year to year so it may not be the same grants being received and completed in any given time period). The team have a statutory timeframe of six months to determine an application. On average we

were able to approve a completed application within nineteen working days of receipt. Types of adaptations so far in 2016/17 include:

- Provision of 20 level access showers;
- Provision of 15 stair lifts/through floor lifts;
- Improving access to 4 properties e.g. ramping;
- Providing 5 other types of adaptations e.g. wash/dry toilet, kitchen alterations, door entry system; and

1.4.8 In certain circumstances the Council can place a charge on the property for works completed under a Disabled Facilities Grant and recover this charge if the property is sold. So far in 2016/17 £11,000 of repayable grants have been recovered.

1.5 Integration of Housing, Health and Social Care Project

1.5.1 Members may recall that this county wide project was referred to at the last meeting. The project has now commenced with the purpose to review and consider best practice for the delivery of aids, adaptations and equipment across Kent and to consider the impact of recent changes in the funding arrangements through the Better Care Fund to ensure greater integration between all partners, Housing, Health and Social Care to enable people to live independently in their own homes.

1.5.2 Tonbridge & Malling Borough Council is represented on both the Project Board and the Operational Group which supports the Board in terms of expertise and information gathering.

1.5.3 Initial work has included considering best practice nationally, collating statistics for the DFG programme over the last five years across the county and engaging all partners involved to establish current working practices and ambitions for future models of delivery. Further updates will be provided to this Board as the project progresses.

1.6 Legal Implications

1.6.1 The proposed secondment of an OT into the private sector housing team would be the subject of a secondment agreement between Kent County Council and the Borough Council.

1.7 Financial and Value for Money Considerations

1.7.1 All the projects referred to within this report will be funded from the increased Disabled Facilities Grant allocation through the Better Care Fund for 2016/17.

- OT post – circa £30,000
- Housing & Health Co-ordinator - £15,000
- Handy Person Service - £21,000

1.8 Risk Assessment

1.8.1 No issues arising from this report.

Background papers:

Nil

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