

**2<sup>nd</sup> September 2010**

**Title of the Report                      Major Adaptations and Disabled Facilities Grant**

**Ward(s)                                      All**

**Portfolios:**    Councillor McCracken

**Executive Summary:**

At April 2008 there were 861 people on the waiting list for a Disabled Facilities Grant to fund a major adaptation as an outcome of an assessment of need by an Occupational Therapist from the Social Care and Inclusion Directorate. A programme of work was instigated to reduce the waiting list which is now currently under 230 people. In the same period the length of time from enquiry to work starting has reduced from 91 weeks to 70 weeks.

This report describes this programme of work, and sets out the next steps for a further reduction in the waiting list to 184 by October 2011, and the time from enquiry to works starting from 70 weeks to 42 weeks.

**Reason for scrutiny:**

To follow up member concerns raised about the length of the waiting list.

**Recommendations:**

**That:**

Proposed actions for further reducing the waiting list are implemented.

**Background papers:**

Disabled Facilities Grants – Delivery (Appendix A attached).

## **Resource and legal considerations:**

**Resources:** Much of the work has been implemented via improved and more effective partnership working. Financial initiatives have included:

- maximising capital available on top of Government Grant – Council Capital £1.5M and £0.5M Regional Housing Pot secured.
- Appointing a Specialist Occupational Therapist – located in the DFG team
- Exceptional Top-up grants available where cost exceeds statutory maximum

**Legal:** There are no direct legal implications from this programme of work. The reduced waiting times and reduced time from enquiry to work starting has reduced the risk of a challenge to the Council.

## **Citizen impact:**

Fewer people are waiting for major adaptations, and the wait period is significantly reduced.

## **Environmental impact:**

There is no environmental impact.

## **Performance management:**

Walsall's performance as at April 2008 was within the bottom 10 per cent of local authorities. By April 2010 Walsall compares with the average performance within the West Midlands, and the intended further improvements will take Walsall in to the top 25%.

## **Equality Implications:**


An Equality Impact Assessment has not yet been carried out.

## **Consultation:**

Limited consultation to date.


## **Contact Officers:**

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## Appendix A

### **Disabled Facility Grants – Delivery**

Since April 2008 a programme of work has been instigated between the Housing Department of the Regeneration Directorate and Social Care and Inclusion Directorate resulting in a waiting list reduction from 861 (April 2008) to under 230 through:

- More frequent review of cases
- More regular contact with enquirers to confirm there is still a need for a DFG
- Full range of options mentioned to customers at outset –
  - Walsall Adapted Housing Service (WAHS)
  - Relocation assistance for owner occupiers
  - Equipment
  - Customers supported through information to adapt their own
  - Help to access charitable assistance
  - Minor works and then
  - DFGs
- More minor works assistance; 300% increase in funds; 150% increase in maximum limit for each minor works scheme from Council and Housing Associations
- Some Housing Associations agreeing to undertake adaptations themselves Nil capital cost to council and we support through helping them identify / design and prioritise works Discretionary Agency Service available for highest priority – helps 200+ a year.
- Maximising Capital available on top of Government Grant – Council Capital £1.5M and £0.5M Regional Housing Pot secured.
- Specialist Occupational Therapists – located in the DFG team
- Robust and transparent new Adaptations Criteria adopted in June 2009
- Use of regional / national procurement partnerships (Eastern Shires / Central Buying Consortium) for lifts -currently Stannah - a 'household name'.
- Re-tendering of other DFG works – contractors to be chosen in September 2010 for next 3 years.
- Use of property charge for DFGs for private sector schemes
- Re-location grants available where cost savings can be secured
- Exceptional Top-up grants available where cost exceeds statutory maximum
- Leasing for palliative care cases

- Closer liaison with Planning and Building Control – more schemes now need planning permission s a result of national planning policy
- Regular Assessment panels and specialist review panels – ensure consistency of decisions and extra support for most complex cases

There has also been a reduced time from enquiry to start of work from 91 weeks (April 2008) to 70 (April 2010), and a reduction in staffing by 33% in 2009/10. Fees charged to customers for Agency Service reduced from 15% to 7% in the last year.

## **Aims**

The aim during the next 18 months is to reduce;

- Waiting list from 230 to 184 (20% reduction)
- Time from enquiry to works starting from 70 weeks to 42 weeks (40% reduction)

This will be achieved by continuing the approach adopted since 2008 and adding the following initiatives:

- Leasing of lifts to include 10 year warranty for similar cost to purchase and a 2 year warranty
- Review of lift maintenance scheme – currently circa £350K pa.
- Negotiating with contractors to reduce lead in times for our DFGs
- Streamlining the grant process for approx 40% of schemes (those costing under £12K ) by allowing officer time to be focused more on complex cases – in turn reducing time from referral to start of works, and by fast tracking palliative care cases
- Liaison with Adult Social Care and Children’s Services to provide focussed DFGs to secure reductions in residential care placements, home care costs; respite care costs and emergency support costs
- Improve / review the OT provision to DFGs – potential to reduce staff cost for higher output
- Negotiating with major Housing Associations (e.g. WHG etc) to ensure strategic agreement to a corporate programme for support for vulnerable people is delivered through new developments tailored to the needs of vulnerable groups, access to new specialist housing for those currently in residential care, and increasing their own adaptations budgets for minor and major works