

CWOP/46/11(updated)

Policy & Scrutiny Committee

Community and Older People

Date

9 November 2011

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Disabled Facilities Grants

In April 2011 the Committee concluded its review of the Occupational Therapy Service and made six recommendations to the Cabinet Member. Four of these recommendations were considered at the October 2011 meeting of the Committee as the implementation review date had been reached. The two other recommendations related to the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG):

RECOMMENDATION 5:

The Committee would like to revisit whether complaints and delays have been reduced. A rigorous analysis should be undertaken to report back to the Committee, on an area-by-area basis, on the numbers of complaints and delays on OT over a five-year period. The Committee would also wish to receive a report on the percentage of delays which are caused as a result of the DFG system.

RECOMMENDATION 6:

The Committee will undertake a separate scrutiny review of the DFG process, seeking evidence from selected District and Borough councils.

Under recommendation six the Committee agreed to undertake a separate review of the DFG and it is this recommendation that this paper relates to.

It is recommendation 6 that the Committee will concentrate on in this session.

A scoping document was received at the last Committee meeting

Introduction

A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a local authority grant which helps towards the cost of adaptations to homes to enable people to continue to live within their own homes. The grant is paid when the local authority considers that changes are reasonable and practical to meet the needs of those within the household, and that the work is reasonable and practical.

A DFG is available if someone living within a property is disabled and is the owner or tenant of the property; and that they can certify that they, or the person on whose behalf the application is made, intend to occupy the property as their main residence throughout the period of the grant (currently five years).

A DFG can be used for adaptations to allow better freedom of movement into and around a home and/or to provide essential facilities within it. Acceptable types of work include:

- widening doors and installing ramps
- providing or improving access to rooms and facilities (i.e. installation of a stair lift, downstairs bathroom etc.)
- improving or providing a heating system
- adapting heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use
- improving access to and movement around the home to enable care for a person who lives in the property

Occupational therapists look at the individual circumstances and can recommend the type of adaptation(s) that are necessary and appropriate.

Disabled Facilities Grants provide financial help for people who are registered disabled (or if not yet registered, registerable) and who require an adaptation to their home.

District/Borough Councils have to administer the DFGs but the County Council may assist with adaptations in complex cases if consulted. There are good local relationships between ECC and local authority Grants Officers. Essex prepared a Right to Control bid where funding streams will be combined including with the DFGs under the personalisation agenda.

A major adaptation (in excess of £1,000) requires an assessment to ascertain eligibility. This assessment will be undertaken by the Occupational Therapy Service and is required prior to application to the District or Borough Council. The OT service will refer the case to the District/Borough. The table on the next page shows the number of cases recommended by the OT service in Essex since 1 April 2011:

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT REFERRALS BY DISTRICT/ BOROUGH 2011						
District/Borough	No. of referred cases from OT services	Completed and closed cases	Approved and work-in- progress	Initial test of resources stage	Withdrawn	Delays
Basildon BC	143	49	91	0	3	0
Braintree DC	52	3	5	42	2	0
Brentwood BC	32	14	8	6	4	0
Castle Point BC	34	0	0	0	0	34*
Chelmsford BC	123	15	29	25	23	31
Colchester BC	56	1	45	0	10	0
Epping Forest DC	35	2	13	20	0	0
Harlow DC	78	3	43	32	0	0
Maldon DC	44	5	16	23	0	0
Rochford DC	21	0	1	17	3	0
Tendring DC	91	2	85	0	4	0
Uttlesford DC	13	1	9	3	0	0

* Castle Point BC state that 34 referrals have been received from the OT service. However, none of these have commenced as no funding is available over and above that already fully committed to historical applications.

Right to Control

Essex is currently a trailblazer for Right to Control. This is an Office of Disability Issues project being run across several sites across the country. It aims to bring together a number of funding streams which are used by Disabled People and enable them to have more choice and control about how they receive the support that these funding streams offer. Disabled Facilities Grants are one of the funding streams, and 3 District Councils (Harlow, Uttlesford and Brentwood) are participating in this in Essex.

Also linked to Right to Control but in Basildon Borough Council we have now seconded an OT into the Council who takes referrals directly from Social Care Direct or from the operational teams. This started in September and although early days the initial feedback was that there was greater job satisfaction expressed by the seconded OT, increased number of joint visits with the OT and the Housing Officer which means problems can be resolved much sooner, thus speeding up the customer journey.

Occupational Therapy Service Review

In its scrutiny review of the Occupational Therapy Service the Committee stated that it would “in due course, improving the administration of the Disabled Facilities Grant and efficient partnership working with districts so as to streamline decision points and to get the districts involved earlier in the process. This would not have resource

implications for the districts as they had been requesting that cases be passed over to them earlier.”