

City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee: Safeguarding and SEND Sub-Committee – For information	Dated: 01/07/2025
Subject: Housing Assistance Policy	Public report: For Information
This proposal: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes.• provides statutory duties.	Providing Excellent Services
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children's Services
Report author:	Ian Tweedie, Head of Service, Adult Social Care

Summary

As part of its local authority function the City of London (CoL) is allocated an annual Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) for the purpose of home adaptations to support residents with disabilities to maintain their independence.

Applicants for the grant are means tested and, depending on the financial circumstances of the household, may have to contribute towards the recommended adaptation cost.

The CoL has introduced a Housing Assistance Policy (HAP) to improve outcomes for residents by streamlining the process and reducing delays. This includes the CoL funding up to the first £12,000 of any agreed DFG application without means testing.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. The DFG aims to help eligible older and disabled people to make changes to their home so they can access and use all essential facilities. Central Government funding for the DFG is allocated to the City Corporation through the Better Care Fund (BCF) on an annual basis.
2. In England, disabled adults and children can receive a capital grant of up to £30,000 per application, (relating to one particular purpose). The DFG is open to eligible owner-occupiers, tenants (including council tenants) and landlords. It is means tested, and the applicant might have to contribute to the costs of the work. The grant could pay for adaptations such as widening doors and installing ramps or grab rails, improving access to essential facilities around the home, such as with a stairlift or level-access shower, or adapting heating and lighting controls to make them easier to use.
3. The Department of Community and Children's Services reviewed the DFG as part of the wider BCF plans, and identified an action to improve awareness and increase the number of residents benefiting from the DFG by introducing a HAP. This aligns with:
 - BCF policy objectives to enable people to stay well, safe, and independent at home for longer and providing the right care, at the right place, at the right time
 - a key commitment in the Adult Social Care Strategy; Helping individuals meet their own needs and aspirations in a safe and supportive way.
4. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) provides general powers for local housing authorities to provide assistance for housing renewal, including home adaptations. Local authorities can publish a HAP under the RRO.
5. Government guidance (2022) states that HAPs can be used to 'streamline the application process for home adaptations' and 'may include a brief application form, limiting the situations where the means test applies and varying the requirements around contractors'. It states that providing a Home Improvement Agency 'to help and support with making a valid application is also likely to improve take up of the grant and ensure that adaptations are fit for purpose'.

Current Position

6. Central Government funding for the DFG is allocated to the City Corporation through the BCF on an annual basis. The local BCF is managed by the City Corporation, with reporting requirements to the Health and Wellbeing Board and NHS England.

7. A Housing Assistance Policy (Appendix 1) was agreed by the Department of Community and Children's Services Departmental Leadership Team and has been implemented in the CoL from 1 February 2025.
8. The HAP has the following aims:
 - Increase transparency around how people can access funding and what discretionary funding is on offer so that residents know what is available to meet their needs.
 - Added accountability around DFG timescales to ensure that the City Corporation is following best practice and providing best service to residents.
 - Create a consistent approach across staff and support audit processes.
 - More flexibility for CoL to use the DFG and increase the number of grants awarded.
 - Ultimately, more flexibility would result in more home adaptations for disabled children and adults, helping them to be independent for longer.
9. Under this policy, to ensure that there are no delays and to support all those in need, the City Corporation will contribute the first £12,000 towards any recommended works, without means testing the applicant.
10. All adaptation recommendations must be assessed and approved by Occupational Therapy staff from the Adult Social Care (ASC) Service.
11. The CoL DFG funding is only available to residents within the CoL. All requests are subject to the availability of grant funding, and ASC will work alongside other statutory services to ensure that all funding options are explored and considered. The current allocation for 2025/26 is £40,457.
12. A Home Improvement Agency is being used to facilitate and guide residents through the process of project management of adaptations for a fee using DFG funding on a trial basis.

Options

13. N/A

Proposals

14. N/A

Key Data

15. On average there are two to three DFG applications each year in the CoL. Examples of usage include,
 - level access shower
 - walk-in shower
 - over bath shower
 - stair lift

- ceiling track hoist
- specialist toilet.

16. At the end of 2024/25 there were four DFG applications and/or works currently in progress. The cost for these works has been forecast at approximately £44,000 which will be offset against a carry-over of £70,838.88, with the remainder of the carry-over added to the 2025/26 grant allocation.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

17. Strategic implications – There is a direct link with the Corporate Plan 2024–2029, Providing Excellent Services: Supporting people to live healthy, independent lives and achieve their ambitions is dependent on excellent services. Vital to that continued pursuit is enabling access to effective adult and children’s social care, outstanding education, lifelong learning, quality housing, and combatting homelessness.

- Financial implications – Under the HAP, the City Corporation reserves the right to amend or suspend the discretionary elements of this policy if demand for discretionary grants exceeds the available budget.
- Resource implications – None
- Legal implications – None
- Risk implications – None
- Equalities implications – The Equality Act 2010 includes a definition of disabled to determine eligibility for assistance under this HAP. The definition states that a person is ‘disabled’ if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a ‘substantial’ and long-term negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.
- Climate implications – None
- Security implications – None

Conclusion

18. To improve outcomes for older and disabled residents, the CoL has introduced a HAP. This will enable a streamlined approach for DFG applications to make adaptations to the homes of disabled residents, which improve their independence and quality of life. ASC will oversee the implementation of the HAP.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Housing Assistance Policy, February 2025

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