

## SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE DISTRICT COUNCIL

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**REPORT TO:** Housing Portfolio meeting 8 November 2006  
**AUTHOR/S:** Chief Environmental Health Officer/HIA Team Leader

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### DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT FUNDING

#### Purpose

1. To request additional Disabled Facilities grant funding from the Housing Capital budget

#### Background

2. (a). The housing grants service is client-led and as such demand is difficult to predict. For adaptation works, Primary Care Trust and Social Services Occupational Therapists (OTs) refer private sector clients requiring adaptations to the Home Improvement Agency (HIA). The HIA team works closely with the OTs, this includes monitoring of the OT waiting list. In consultation with Housing Agencies, over the last 2-3 years the OT (adult) team have reduced their waiting list from 19 months to 3 months and an expected rise in referrals to the HIA has taken place. This has inevitably led to an increase in Disabled Facilities grant (DFG) applications and the requirement for additional DFG funding over this period. The expectation has been that the volume of OT referrals would now stabilise.

(b). However, numbers of South Cambs private sector adult clients on the OT waiting list have risen dramatically from around 40 in April 06 up to 70 in August. This has now led to an increase in adult DFG referrals, up from an average of 7 per month to 14 in July and 10 in August. A higher referral rate is likely to be sustained into the next financial year as the clients on the OT waiting list filter through to the HIA.

(c). The referral rate into the HIA has been further increased by changes in legislation for child DFG applications. Since December 2005, the means test has been abolished for the mandatory element of the DFG, currently set at a maximum limit of £25,000. The Paediatric OTs were asked to predict the likely volume of referrals, this was anticipated to be 13 over a 2-3 year period starting Jan 06. We have to date received 21 referrals since Jan 06 and currently awaiting an update on likely future numbers.

(d). Altogether, this has meant that the DFG budget has been committed earlier than could have been predicted last year.

3. **Considerations**

(a). The HIA currently has 'on hold' 6 DFG cases totalling £81k which are ready for approval and can be completed by the end of the financial year. At this time in the financial year the HIA can receive OT referrals and complete the works by the end of the financial year, those with quotations attached, (for stairlifts or hoists for example), are particularly quick to process. (More cases will be ready for approval in coming weeks).

(b). The child DFG applications can move very quickly through to completion as no means testing takes place if the works are below the £25k limit.

(c). SCDC policy on child DFGs requires means testing on discretionary costs over £25k, limited to maximum of £15k

(d). Further policy changes on DFGs are to be submitted to Cabinet in November

(e). We would need to ensure priority cases could be funded.

(f). The Council has to ensure it can meet its statutory duty of providing mandatory DFGs up to £25k.

(g). The remaining balances in the discretionary grants budgets have been vired into the DFG mandatory grant budget and have already been committed.

(h). Housing PFH has already agreed to a virement of £50k into the DFG mandatory grant budget. This has also been committed.

### Options

4. The options to be considered for additional funding of DFGs are:

(a). Agree additional funding from underspends in Housing Capital budget;

(b). Agree limited additional funding and delay some approvals until other funding found within the Council or spend falls in next financial year.

(c). Disagree with offer of additional funding from Housing Capital Budget.

### Implications

5. (a). Cases will progress and our statutory duty will be met if option 5a is followed

(b). Delays in progressing cases could leave vulnerable and disabled clients at risk for longer than necessary. Danger of statutory duty not met. If Option 5b or 5c is followed.

(c). Next year's DFG budget could be committed before the start of the new financial year which would detrimentally affect progress on DFGs following behind. If Option 5b or 5c is followed.

Financial	As detailed in report
Legal	We could fail to meet our statutory duty.
Staffing	Coping with the increased workload will place the HIA team under additional pressure and performance is likely to slip.
Risk Management	Delays may increase risk to disabled clients. However, those most in need are identified as priority cases and as such the HIA will endeavour to process them with minimum delay.
Equal Opportunities	N/A

### Consultations

6. PCT and Social Services OT Managers have been consulted.

### Effect on Annual Priorities and Corporate Objectives

7. Affordable Homes	Adapting a home under statutory grant can make it an affordable option for clients
Customer Service	Ability to maintain good customer service
Quality, Accessible Services	Adaptation works improve the quality of life of clients and, for child cases, their families too.
Village Life	Special adaptations funded by Disabled Facilities grants may help disabled people avoid the need to move from their village.
Sustainability	Disabled adaptations are often needed to allow people to remain their own homes, rather than requiring specialist accommodation), or to return home after a stay in hospital thereby providing a more sustainable solution.
Partnership	The HIA works in partnership with the PCT and County Council, with some DFGs supported by Social Services funding

### Conclusions/Summary

8. The DFG budget does not reflect the demand from South Cambs private sector applicants. Measures are in place to offer other housing options to avoid the DFG route, (or to reduce the cost falling to DFG), despite this the referrals into the service have risen. Inevitably the overall cost demand will rise. Further measures to limit DFG expenditure, and to request additional DFG funding are being placed before Cabinet in November. Meanwhile, the DFG budget is fully committed and a waiting list has been created for cases still awaiting approval.

9. **Recommendations**

Agree additional funding of £81k or as available, from Housing Capital Project underspends.

**Background Papers:** the following background papers were used in the preparation of this report: Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996

These documents need to be available for public inspection.

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