

**Audit & Governance Committee – 19<sup>th</sup> November 2018**

**Briefing Note on Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs)**

This note has been put together at the request of A&G Committee following the 19<sup>th</sup> November meeting.

**DFG Budget**

The DFG grant is administered as part of the Integration & Better Care Fund (BCF) managed by Gloucestershire County Council as host manager. The BCF provides a mechanism for joint health and social care planning and commissioning, bringing together ring-fenced budgets from Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG), District Council's Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) and funding paid directly to Gloucestershire County Council for adult social care services.

Each year a proportion of BCF is passed from the County Council to District Councils to be spent on DFG's and historically this allocation has been underspent across the County. The table below illustrates the level of DFG spend against DFG budget by District from 2014/2015.

	<b>Budget 2014/15</b>	<b>Spend 2014/15</b>	<b>Budget 2015/16</b>	<b>Spend 2015/16</b>	<b>Budget 2016/17</b>	<b>Spend 2016/17</b>	<b>Budget 2017/18</b>	<b>Spend 2017/18</b>
<b>Cheltenham</b>	£600k	£542k	£600k	£393k	£701k	£389k	£769k	£304k
<b>Cotswold</b>	£422k	£605k	£477k	£589k	£903k	£648k	£994k	£631k
<b>Forest</b>	£314k	£503k	£388k	£338k	£687k	£424	£752k	£363k
<b>Gloucester</b>	£684k	£409k	£484k	£254k	£800k	£489	£958k	£489k
<b>Stroud</b>	£257k	£212k	£400k	£237k	£572k	£284k	£623k	£149k
<b>Tewkesbury</b>	£758k	£779k	£657k	£657k	£944k	£333k	£1,039k	£391k

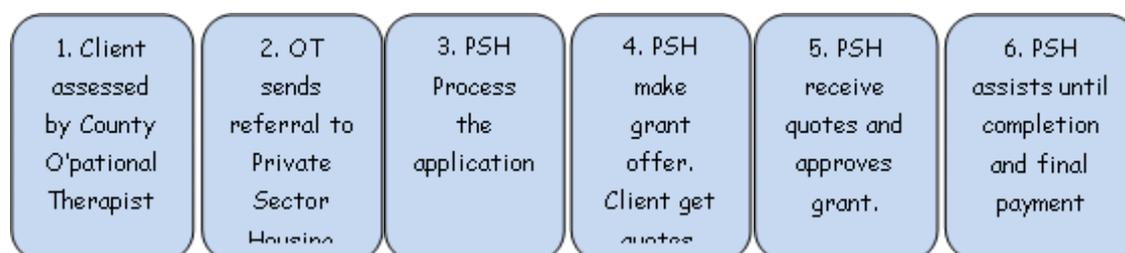
The historical underspending of this budget is being discussed at a strategic level across the County (Gloucestershire Strategic Directors Meeting) with a view to better understanding where impacts can be made. In addition to what can be done at a strategic level, as communicated with members at A&G, officers intend to review the Council's Housing Assistance Policy so that there is more flexibility and scope in how we spend our DFG monies moving forward so that more residents can benefit from it. Further information on the type of measures being considered will be shared with A&G Committee in the New Year when officers have been asked to attend with a verbal update. It

should be noted however that in 2017/2018 the average across all Gloucestershire Districts was to spend 45% of their annual allocation, whereas Gloucester was one of only 2 districts to spend over 50% of their allocation.

It is important to confirm that any underspend of the DFG budget does not go back to Central Government or the District's or County Council's core budgets, but instead gets returned to the BCF held by Gloucestershire County Council and used to benefit those residents with disabilities who require support.

### The Process

The initial stage of any DFG is for clients to be assessed by an Occupational Therapist (OT) who are commissioned by the County Council. Anecdotally we are aware that a reduction in the number of OT is having an impact on the waiting time (circa 6 months) between request for OT assessments and referrals being received by District Councils. An outline of the process is included below and you will note that Stage 2 is where the District Council commences its formal involvement.



The table below illustrates the volume of DFG applications received in previous financial years along with timescales for various steps within the process. Operational DFG data for 2017/2018 is currently being compiled.

Year	No Application received DFGs	Days between referral and offer letter (Steps 2-4)	Days between offer letter and approval (Steps 4-5)	Days between Approval and final payment (Steps 5-6)	Average DFG costs
15/16	42	29	71	115	£8,584
16/17	44	10	68	115	£9,141
*17/18	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
18/19 to date	24(41)	52.5	52.5	132.8	£5,625

\*Please note that operational data for 2017/2018 is still being consolidated into a single data set

Members will note that the number of applications each year has remained consistent at just over 40 although the figures indicate that the average cost per DFG has fallen which is likely to have exacerbated the underspend.

The Council currently has 136 DFG cases (at various different stages) registered, with 50% of these awaiting initial OT referrals. The remaining cases are either in process of being assessed for determination or allocated to officers for assessment. 15 cases are currently in the construction stage with contractors on site.

No cases have exceeded the 6-month time limit for the local authority to award/approve a grant after receiving an application.

Members will note that the time period between OT referral being received by the Council and an offer letter being produced has increased and this is due to staff turnover and sickness within the Housing Service. This situation is being addressed with temporary resource having already been recruited and additional permanent resource being arranged which will be self funding through income generation.

It is pleasing to note that the time period between offer letter being provided and approval being determined has decreased and this reflects the renewed focus of the team on those part progressed outstanding cases in order to get them moving forward.

The last column indicates that time period between approval of DFG and final payment being issues has increased but this should be treated with caution as things such as pace of delivery of works is quite often out of the Council's hands and is shaped by the client (family), Home Improvement Agency and contractor. What is pleasing to report is that no cases have exceeded the 6-month time limit for the local authority to award/approve a grant after receiving an application.

As mentioned earlier in this note, officers have been asked to attend A&G Committee in the New Year and will be pleased to provide an update on the internal review of DFGs that is currently taking place and in particular our intentions for ensuring that our DFG budget is supporting as many residents as possible whilst recognising the budgetary framework the Council has to operate within.

**End.**