

REPORT TO THE EXECUTIVE
-------------------------



DATE	18/08/2021
PORTFOLIO	Housing and Development
REPORT AUTHOR	Clare Jackson
TEL NO	01282 477231
EMAIL	cjackson@burnley.gov.uk

DISCRETIONARY DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT (DFG)
---

PURPOSE
---------

1. To seek approval to amend the Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy 2012 that will ensure the Council continue to offer a comprehensive and flexible adaptations programme that improves the health and well-being of disabled residents.

RECOMMENDATION
----------------

2. To amend the Housing Renewal Policy 2012 and increase the discretionary disabled facilities assistance from £10,000 to £30,000 as detailed in appendix 1 to this report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATION
----------------------------

3. To allow the DFG grant allocations to adapt to the significant increase in building material costs.
4. To ensure that the Council can continue to fully assist disabled people in Burnley to live independent and safe lives within their homes.
5. To ensure the Council can fully meet the increase in demand for applicants with complex needs, particularly for children, where the solution is often an extension to the property.

SUMMARY OF KEY POINTS
-----------------------

6. DFGs are the only mandatory grants available to disabled people when works to adapt their home are judged necessary and appropriate to meet their needs and when it is reasonable and practicable to carry them out having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling. With the exception of child cases, DFGs are generally subject to a test of resources which means that the applicant's income and

savings have to be assessed. The maximum amount of grant available is currently set by statute at £30,000 and has been at this level since 2008.

7. The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO) gave local housing authorities the power to adopt discretionary policies with regard to housing interventions to promote independent living and wellbeing.
8. The Private Sector Housing Renewal Policy was last updated in 2012 and sets out Burnley's policies in relation to the forms of assistance it is able to offer, based on local priorities and the level of resources available. At this time there was no provision for discretionary disabled facilities assistance as historically there was insufficient government funding to meet the demand for mandatory DFGs and local housing authorities had to operate a waiting list.
9. Since the introduction of the Better Care Fund (BCF) in 2015, capital funding for DFGs is now paid directly to upper tier authorities (LCC), but the statutory duty continues to sit with the local housing authority. Currently the upper tier authorities allocate funding to their respective housing authorities as directed by Government. Since the introduction of the BCF, budgets for DFGs have significantly increased in Burnley.
10. In June 2019 the Council introduced a discretionary element to the disabled facilities grant of £10,000 giving a maximum assistance of £40,000. This was to account for the demand for more complex adaptations with the requirement for more specialist equipment and the increase in building costs since the original amount of £30,000 was set. Since Covid 19 building material costs have increased significantly, in some cases by 13%. The Federation of Master Builders reports that there is a building material shortage caused by Covid 19 and Brexit, leading to price increases in key building materials such as timber, steel, cement and roof tiles.
11. The DFG discretionary grant amount varies across Lancashire with Pendle and Ribble Valley Council mirroring Burnley's current policy at £10,000. Hyndburn Council are at £20,000, with the highest discretionary grant offered by Rossendale Borough Council at £70,000, taking the maximum grant available for adaptations work to £100,000. This report is proposing an increase in the discretionary element of disabled facilities grant in Burnley to £30,000 taking the maximum amount of grant available to £60,000.
12. Paragraph 5.6.8 of appendix 1 to this report contains the amendment.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND BUDGET PROVISION**

13. In 2021/22 Burnley Council has been allocated £2.7M from the Better Care Fund and any costs associated with the increase to the discretionary disabled facilities assistance will be funded through this allocation.

## **POLICY IMPLICATIONS**

14. Aim 4 of the Council's Housing Strategy is to promote sustainable and secure homes for all. Fundamental to this is enabling residents to access and maintain housing

where they feel safe, secure and can enjoy life in a comfortable home of their choice. Completing the DFGs on the properties detailed in this report will help achieve this aim.

<b>DETAILS OF CONSULTATION</b>
--------------------------------

15. Not applicable.

<b>BACKGROUND PAPERS</b>
--------------------------

<b>FURTHER INFORMATION</b>
----------------------------

**PLEASE CONTACT: Clare Jackson**

**ALSO: Paul Gatrell**