

Report to: **Adult Social Care and Community Safety Scrutiny Committee**

Date: **8 September 2011**

By: **Director of Adult Social Care**

Title of report: **Disabled Facilities Grant and Adaptations Support**

Purpose of report: **To provide an update on the recent work undertaken jointly with the District and Borough Councils to improve the grant process develop an adaptations support service and support clients to identify alternative housing options.**

RECOMMENDATION

The Committee is recommended to:

1. Consider and comment on the contents of this report

1. Financial Appraisal

1.1 The County Council has a statutory duty under Section 2 of the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 to provide assistance with adaptations where an individual's needs have been determined to be eligible under the Fair Access to Care guidance (FACs). In the first instance the County Council will endeavour to meet its duties through a referral to the relevant District or Borough Housing Department for the provision of a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). The 2011/12 combined budget for DFGs across the five Boroughs and Districts is £3.367M.

1.2 Funding from the County Council's capital budget will therefore only need to be considered if the housing authority is unable to fully discharge the duty by the provision of a DFG. There are potentially three scenarios where this would be the case:

- a) Where the person's eligible needs exceed the scope for the provision by the housing authority i.e. they fall outside of the mandatory provisions of the Act.
- b) Where the Disabled person asks for financial assistance, to meet their assessed contribution towards the cost of the adaptation.
- c) Where the Disabled person asks for financial assistance with the costs of an adaptation that exceeds the DFG limit of £30,000.

1.3 In 2010/11 the County Council topped up the funding for eight DFG applications with a total combined contribution of £8,500.

2. Background and Supporting Information

2.1 The County Council, in partnership with the District and Borough Councils, has been working to develop a pathway for housing adaptations within East Sussex. Following a review of the existing services it was agreed that the pathway, supported by a Housing Solution Service and an Adaptation Support Service, needed to deliver the following key principles:

- Consistency across the County
- Clarity of commissioned activity
- Agreed priorities with District and Boroughs
- A flexible approach to varying levels of need
- A system for monitoring time frames for adaptations

3. Housing Solution Service

3.1 Currently there is no mechanism for alternatives to adaptations to be explored with individuals which can result in an adaptation that is not the best or most cost effective solution or indeed feasible or practicable.

3.2 The Housing Solution Service aims to explore and provide alternatives to adaptations and is shared between the County Council and the Districts and Boroughs of Eastbourne, Hastings, Rother and Wealden. The purpose of the service is to ensure that individuals receive appropriate and timely support which enables them to make informed choices about their housing needs and explore possible alternatives to a major adaptation funded through a DFG.

3.3 The Housing Solution Service aims to:

- Make the best use of available resources
- Provide a timely targeted preventative service
- Link appropriately to the Adaptation Support Service
- Provide a real alternative to costly and inappropriate adaptations

3.4 From October 2011 there will be four Housing Solution Workers jointly funded for two years in the first instance by the County Council and the Boroughs and Districts, working as part of a county wide team, but based in each of the participating Housing Authorities. Hastings Borough Council will act as the lead authority and the effectiveness of the service will be monitored and evaluated.

4. Adaptation Support Service

4.1 Historically three Home Improvement Agencies have undertaken the technical support service in respect of disabled adaptations within the county. They were established in the five Boroughs and Districts and over time were developed in an inconsistent manner to incorporate differing services and functions depending on location.

4.2 In order to provide a more focused technical support service for disabled clients, the local authorities of Wealden, Rother, Eastbourne, Hastings and Lewes in partnership with East Sussex County Council have jointly commissioned an Adaptations Support Service.

4.3 The service will enable people to have all the necessary information about whether or not their property is adaptable or if alternative housing options need to be considered and if appropriate to assist them in applying for a DFG and support them whilst their home is being adapted.

4.4 It was the intention to award two contracts for two years from 1st April, 2011, one covering Hastings and Rother in the east of the County and one covering Eastbourne, Lewes and Wealden in the west. Whilst the process was successful in the east, a contract was not awarded for the west as none of the tenders represented good value for money.

4.5 The three Boroughs and Districts in the west together with the County Council are therefore working in partnership to develop alternative ways to support individuals to access the technical support required, by reviewing what support each organisation is able to provide. It is believed that this will provide an opportunity to streamline the process and improve the delivery of adaptations.

5. Conclusion and Reason for Recommendations

5.1 The above activity has created an opportunity for the County Council and the District and Borough Councils to jointly review their operational systems and processes for delivering major adaptations and deliver a more consistent and proportionate approach to support individuals to overcome the environmental barriers that they face, whilst ensuring value for money in the use of DFG budgets.

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