

Health And Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel

DATE	19 th March 2025
REPORT OF	Katie Brown – Director of Adult Social Care
SUBJECT	Disabled Facilities Grants
STATUS	Open

CONTRIBUTION TO OUR AIMS

The Council has two strategic priorities – Stronger Economy and Stronger Communities. Within that second priority, it is important to adapt older and disabled people's homes to help them to live independently and safely.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The report provides an update on the delivery of the Housing Assistance Policy (HAP) and associated action plan which aims to improve performance in respect of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) applications.

MATTERS FOR CONSIDERATION

That the Panel notes the progress made to date.

1. BACKGROUND AND ISSUES

- 1.1 On 1st April 2023, the new HAP was implemented, with revised Standard Operating Procedures being introduced the following month. This set out a new approach for responding to requests for DFG applications.
- 1.2 Given that the former contract framework for DFGs was operational until 31 March 2024, the new delivery methods did not begin on 1st April 2024. There are now two new DFG frameworks in place, which are:
 - Lot one – Traditional Mandatory DFG – Works up to £30,000 – there are 8 suppliers on the new framework.
 - Lot two – Contractor led Design – Minor, simple and non-complex schemes – there are 6 suppliers on the new framework.

Occupational Therapy Service

- 1.3 There have been 986 referrals received by the Occupational Therapy (OT) Service between April 2024 and January 2025 (ten months). For comparison, the total number received in the whole financial year (twelve months) in 2023/24 was 840 referrals, 722 referrals in 2022/23 and 874 in 2021/22. This is a significant increase!
- 1.4 The key OT performance measures (average timescales are based on working days) are:

Indicator	2023/24	Q1 – 24/25	Q2 – 24/25	Q3 – 24/25	Jan 25
Average number of residents waiting for first OT/clinical assessment	283	320	313	275	229
Average waiting time to complete first visit from the initial resident referral	77	95	67	52	69
Average number of residents actively being seen	553	545	526	496	514
Average time taken to get to panel from initial OT DFG assessment	35	34	42	44	21

- 1.5 Since the staffing problems reported at the last meeting on 25th September 2024, the service has continued to maintain establishment which, in turn, has had a significant impact on the numbers waiting for assessment, with that number reducing by over 100 from 1st April 2024 to 31st January 2025.
- 1.6 The apprentice position is in post and working on clinical caseload alongside completing their training in order to further future proof the establishment.
- 1.7 All senior registered positions are filled; hence the numbers waiting are declining. The rotational junior registered post is filled but a start date is awaited now their training is completed. However, it is envisaged that this should not be much longer and then this too will aid reduction of waits.
- 1.8 Collaborative work continues with the housing strategy team at NELC and delivery partners to maximise the capacity we have. This includes a trial of simpler cases handed over to the Trusted Assessors for monitoring/intervening as needed once adaptations are approved. There is a meeting arranged to review this process and hopefully roll out further with the expectation that this should free up more clinical capacity to process further assessments.
- 1.9 Collaborative work also continues on processes and proformas to ensure all are working to the same guidelines, and clear detail is provided from the clinical assessment in order to enable clinicians to step back once approved and progress to other assessments waiting.

Equans

- 1.10 The key performance measures for Equans (averages are based on working days) are:

Handyperson Scheme

Indicator	2023/24	Q1 – 24/25	Q2 – 24/25	Q3 – 24/25	Jan 25
Number of residents Equans have been asked to contact regarding a handy person service	151	44	40	37	11 (132 in 10 months)

Average time taken by Equans to respond or confirm next steps of handy person service process to residents	7	5	4	7	3
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Minor Adaptations

Indicator	2023/24	Q1 – 24/25	Q2 – 24/25	Q3 – 24/25	Jan 25
Number of minor adaptations	1185	315	362	328	104 (1109 in 10 months)
Average time taken to for Equans to deliver works from OT instruction	5.7	5	5	4	4
Number of minor adaptations installed at 1st operative visit which do not require OT assessment	151	44	40	37	11 (132 in 10 months)
Average time to complete works from referral (no OT assessment required)	7.9	5	4	7	3
Number of minor adaptations completed which required OT assessment	1130	290	388	316	143 (1137 in 10 months)
Average time taken to complete works after OT instruction	27.9	20	22	18	22

Major Adaptations

Indicator	2023/24	Q1 – 24/25	Q2 – 24/25	Q3 – 24/25	Jan 25
Number of feasibility assessments passed to Equans to deliver	133	33	34	50	19 (136 in 10 months)
Time taken to complete feasibility study from when OT approved study	24.2	36	36	36	36
Average number of residents, post Panel waiting for an Urgent referral to commence on site (completing pre construction paper work)	48.1	44	46	54	48
Average time to complete paperwork / pre construction process following Panel approval for Urgent referrals	84.4	53	60	55	47.7
Average number of residents, post Panel waiting for Non-Urgent DFG applications to commence on site (completing paperwork / pre construction work)	282.8	171	142	105	78
Average time to complete pre construction work from Panel approval for Non-Urgent referrals	329.5	342	356	326	360.2

Number of DFGs in progress and physically on site	13.4	17	17	9	20
Number of DFGs completed	162	43	36	33	9 (121 in 10 months)
Average time taken for Majors from OT decision to commence works	200.7	157	164	157	145.8
Average time to complete all Major DFG works from OT decision to complete works	253.5	151	180	183	189.6

- 1.11 Equans remain committed to explore opportunities to achieve improvements in service delivery and have continued to support the implementation of the Council's new enforcement system, ARCUS. This is used across all enforcement services including DFGs. This has assisted to support the Council with establishing a DFG caseload for Lincolnshire Housing Partnership (LHP) and for the new Trusted Assessor roles. As part of this, Equans are working with NELC to review cases to assess the nature of the works to enable transfer to Direct delivery to bring down the waiting list.
- 1.12 Equan's Facilities Management (FM) property maintenance team continue to provide the handy person scheme that is available to residents. Since April 2024, the team has received 132 requests with a turnaround period of 5 days on average.
- 1.13 The FM property maintenance team undertake thermal warmth improvement works and minor adaptations (minor adaptations increased from £1,000 to £2,500) to residential properties that are carried out under the HAP. Since April 2024, the team has received 1109 referrals for minor adaptations with an average completion of 4.8 days.
- 1.14 The type of major DFG adaptation delivered by LHP and the direct delivery model (via the Trusted Assessor) are wet rooms, with a large proportion of other adaptations still being delivered by Equans. This means all of the more intricate construction schemes (e.g. extensions, through floor lifts and or larger scale adaptations of a property) are delivered by Equans. Equans review cases with NELC to explore cases to see if they are suitable for the direct delivery model for reduction in wait time. This process is working well, and the waiting list has significantly reduced since April 2024. At the start of the financial year, there were 165 cases on the waiting list and at the end of January 25, this has reduced to just 64 cases, demonstrating that the implemented change is having a positive impact.
- 1.15 Despite the introduction of the direct award trial in the latter half of 2023/24, the number of major DFGs completed saw a small increase from 147 in 2022/23 reporting period to 162 completed in 2023/24. This is a consequence of utilising resources to support the introduction of a number of agreed system and process improvements which have been introduced.
- 1.16 Currently, the team have completed 121 major adaptations in the first ten months of 2024/25. In 2023/24, the average days to complete a major DFG was 253.5; this compared to 2022/23 outturn of 300 days which would suggest improvements in the delivery for major adaptations are being achieved. In the first ten months of

2024/25 reporting period, this had reduced to 176 days.

- 1.17 Equans recognise there are further improvements which can be made. That said, the positive, improved position which has been highlighted demonstrates Equans are committed to supporting the council with reducing the waiting list and improving the service which is provided to residents.

Registered Housing Providers

- 1.18 During 2024/25, the Council worked in partnership with Lincolnshire Housing Partnership to deliver adaptations where the housing association applied for the grants directly, on behalf of their tenants. They then carried out the work through their own contractors to deliver the adaptations identified by the Occupational Therapy service.
- 1.19 Lincolnshire Housing Partnership (LHP) has two contractors delivering works on site. At the end of January 2025, they had completed 43 grants, surveyed and booked in 54 jobs, and were on site completing works for a further 8 residents. There are 31 cases on their waiting list.

Direct Award Delivery, Hospital Discharge and Relocation Grants

- 1.20 The Council, with its partner Equans, launched a new contractor's framework in April 2024.
- 1.21 The new framework included a direct delivery option where simple grants would be delivered by the contractor, from design to completion.
- 1.22 The newly appointed Trusted Assessors deliver these grants and, to the end of January 2025, have completed 62 grants, with a further 42 booked in and 14 cases out on site. There are 51 cases on the waiting list. This includes new cases taken on by the Trusted Assessors who are gaining confidence to tackle more complex cases.
- 1.23 In addition, the Trusted Assessors are working closely with the Home Options Team to relocate households who are on the Housing Register looking for adapted accommodation. To the end of January 2025, they have completed 25 relocation grants.
- 1.24 The new Housing Assistance Policy provided the opportunity for residents who were unable to go home from hospital or respite care due to poor housing conditions to have these addressed. The grant enables the resident to go home and free up bedspace. This has proved popular, and, to the end of January 2025, 11 grants have been completed. These include residents who have been in long term respite care. It is widely recognised that people recover quicker at home where they are in familiar surroundings.
- 1.25 The Trusted Assessors completed their qualifications in November 2024. This means they can support the Occupational Therapy Service to reduce waiting times, once the adaptation delivery waiting times are reduced to a more manageable level.

Housing Assistance Policy Action Plan - Update

1.26 Having reviewed and revised the HAP and Standard Operating Procedures in April 2023, officers produced a delivery plan to implement the changes required to implement the improvements to the delivery of DFG applications. The progress being made against this action plan is as follows:

Title	Description	Responsibility	Current position
Minor Adaptations	Adaptation up to the value of £2,500	Equans	Being Delivered
Mandatory Major Adaptations	Adaptation up to the value of £30,000	Equans	Being Delivered
Trusted Assessor	Create role profile and recruit to two posts	Council	Both recruited and in post
OT Recruitment	Recruit additional grade 6 post and new grade 4/5 trainee post	OT	Both were recruited – see NLAG staffing update above for latest position.
Longhurst and LHP Referrals	The Council will refer all properties owned by Lincolnshire Housing Partnership (LHP) and Longhurst Housing Association (LHA) direct to the registered providers.	Council	Work to LHP properties are underway – see above update. Longhurst – This is still in negotiation. However, there are fewer Longhurst grants so the impact would be minimal.
Relocation Grant	Are used to provide support for applicants who are living in a home which cannot be adapted or will not meet the applicants long term needs.	Council	Council Trusted Assessors are now processing Relocation Grants to free up technical officers, so they can deliver more DFG's. The Trusted Assessors are now able to deliver simple adaptations without the need for additional support from an Occupational Therapist who has already assessed the applicant. This frees up clinical staff; however, it is recognised that in some complex cases or those that have waited a while, there may be a need to reinvolve the clinical staff for support in the process.
Hospital Discharge Grant	This grant is for people who have been discharged from hospital but are not yet able to return home because of the condition of their houses. This grant is designed to help these people fund the vital home improvements needed to allow them to move back home.	OT/Council	The Council is working with the ICB and have regular case calls. There have been cases highlighted where residents have been placed in respite care for lengthy periods, and a grant has speeded up the process to move them back home.
Assistive Technology Grant	Introducing Smart technology to properties	OT/Council	Under development as part of a wider review. Priority has been given to reducing waiting times.

Children in Care/Joint Residency	Adaptation up to £30,000	OT/Council	Being delivered
Palliative Care Grant	A working group will explore the opportunity to provide temporary adaptations for applicants who are palliative.	OT/Council	Being delivered – available. Work has progressed to look at options to deliver these works.
Dementia Friendly Homes Grant	Preventative in nature and allow for adaptations to be provided with a diagnosis of dementia and before the condition escalates to the point where a DFG would otherwise become necessary.	Council	Available, if required. However, further work required with partners within the voluntary sector. Priority has been given to reducing overall waiting times.
Stay Warm Scheme	These are typically preventative in nature and allow for the applicant to heat their home easing their condition, if it is made worse by living in cold a cold home.	Equans	Being delivered

Communication to and Feedback from Clients

1.27 The communication to and feedback from clients is summarised below:

Occupational Therapy Service

1.28 The friends and family test is the tool used by the Occupational Therapy service for measuring customer satisfaction. Return rates have been low but the survey has recently been relaunched, with communications provided to the team and copies in referral packs that clinicians have once a case allocated to them. Alongside this, a QR code is now available that all staff carry for individuals to scan, and then complete feedback electronically should they desire. These will be reviewed and if feedback is still limited, as it is still dependent on individuals taking action, a random sample to call and verbally gain feedback could be the next steps.

Equans

1.29 As a part of the standard suite of documents, document 22 is issued on completion of the works as an opportunity for clients to feedback on their DFG (see appendix 1)

1.30 The return rate is low with only 14 surveys having been returned out of the 121 cases delivered year to date. Completion of the survey is optional, but more could be done to encourage completion.

1.31 One option is that officers could offer to complete this document at handover with the client rather than leaving the survey with them to return via mail. The only concern with this approach is that the individual may be unwilling to make negative comments if they are completing the survey in front of a staff member.

Direct Delivery and LHP

- 1.32 Currently, the direct award applicants are not formally surveyed for their views, albeit this will be addressed in future.
- 1.33 However, there have been positive verbal responses from residents, who have been pleased to see work happening in their homes.
- 1.34 LHP are the applicant for their properties and therefore it is inappropriate to undertake surveys with them regarding the works.

Artificial Intelligence (AI)

- 1.35 The Director of Adult Social Care is progressing conversations with ICT and Digital to discuss the potential use of AI and digital solutions to keep patients informed of progress with their case, particularly whilst they are waiting for their OT assessment or work to commence on site.

Summary

The following statistical information is correct as of 31st January 2025:

- 1.35 The Major DFG waiting list (382 cases in October 2023; 314 cases in March 2024 and 241 cases in August 2024) is now:
- Equans - 64
 - Direct Award – 51
 - LHP – 31
 - Require relocation - 22
- Total – 168**
- 1.36 Major DFGs underway with clients (e.g. survey complete / work booked in, cases on hold such as waiting for planning permission, etc), but not yet installing on site:
- Equans – 82 (including some on hold)
 - Direct Award – 42
 - LHP – 54
- Total - 178**
- 1.37 Total number of Major DFGs on site:
- Equans - 20
 - Direct Award – 14
 - LHP – 8
- Total - 42**
- 1.38 Since the new delivery methods became operational in April, the number of completed Major DFGs (April to January 2025) is:
- Equans – 121
 - Direct Delivery – 62
 - LHP – 43
 - Relocation – 25 (undertaken by Trusted Assessors)
 - Hospital discharge – 11 (undertaken by Trusted Assessors)

Total – 262 complete in ten months

- 1.39 In the past six months, it is pleasing to note that the Occupational Therapy Service has managed to address their staffing issues and retain a full establishment. This has had a massive positive impact on delivery, with the waiting list reducing by over a hundred cases during the first ten months of 2024/25. This level of decrease is despite a significant increase in the number of referrals this year (referrals are already over 140 cases up on the whole of the last financial year, with two months still to go).
- 1.40 Since the new delivery model came into operation on 1st April 2024, LHP and the direct award contractors have completed over 100 adaptations in addition to the 121 completed by Equans. With Trusted Assessors undertaking further work on relocation and hospital discharge, the number of completed cases is 262 in ten months. This is predicted to over double the completed cases last financial year.
- 1.41 This has helped to reduce the waiting list from 314 cases in March 2024 to 162 cases at end of January 2025. Many of these are non-urgent cases who require simple adaptations, albeit urgent cases are always given priority.
- 1.42 The three teams have worked together to focus attention on reducing waiting times over the past year and the new delivery model has clearly had a positive effect on delivery. The teams acknowledge that communication with applicants about their wait time needs to improve and this will be the focus of attention going forward.

2. RISKS AND OPPORTUNITIES

- 2.1 The new approach to managing DFGs implemented in April 2023 was essential in order to improve performance, especially given the difficulties in recruitment and retention of staff by the OT service and Equans.
- 2.2 If no action was taken to reduce the waiting lists, clinical and technical performance levels would not improve, and this would continue to have an adverse impact on the wellbeing of individuals applying for DFGs as they would have to wait longer to receive assistance.
- 2.3 The additional staffing and new delivery methods introduced in April 2024 have clearly had a positive impact, as demonstrated above.

3. REPUTATION AND COMMUNICATIONS CONSIDERATIONS

- 3.1 The HAP, which developed the new approach to managing DFGs, was subject to public and stakeholder consultation in early 2023. The proposed policy was amended in accordance with feedback.
- 3.2 It continues to be reviewed, and any changes made to Standard Operating Procedures as necessary to improve performance. Any changes to the processes and paperwork are discussed with housing, Equans, OT service and legal as required.

4. FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

- 4.1 The annual capital allocation from the Better Care Fund to the Council is currently £3.513m, however an additional allocation of £0.483m has been provided (which

is ring fenced to spend only on DFGs), with a remaining balance or underspend from previous years of £2.836m. The in-year allocation for 2023/24 was spent and the allocation for 2024/25 is forecast to be spent, with some of the previous year's balance used to fund the additional delivery methods and improvement plan, as outlined in the report.

5. CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE IMPLICATIONS

- 5.1 Applications for DFGs are received from children and young people as well as adults. These applications are considered on their own merits, in accordance with the HAP and legislation.

6. CLIMATE CHANGE AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1 There are no implications to climate change and/or the environment.

7. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1 As detailed within the financial considerations section above, all spend related to Disabled Facilities is funded via external grant allocations. The efficient and effective application and discharge of disabled facilities grant contributes to the council's wider budget management and value for money aims.

8. LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1 There are no direct or immediate legal implications arising from this report. It is an interim update progress report on performance and delivery of the improvement plan. Regular monitoring and reporting is recognised as good practice.

9. HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS

- 9.1 There are no human resource implications arising from this report.

10. WARD IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1 There are applicants for DFGs from all Wards.

11. BACKGROUND PAPERS

Meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel – 30 March 2022
[Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel | Democracy \(nelincs.gov.uk\)](#)

Meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel – 30 November 2022
[Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel | Democracy \(nelincs.gov.uk\)](#)

Meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel – 2nd August 2023
[Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel | Democracy \(nelincs.gov.uk\)](#)

Meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel – 20th March 2024
[Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel | NELC \(nelincs.gov.uk\)](#)

Meeting of the Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel – 25th September 2024
[Health and Adult Social Care Scrutiny Panel | NELC](#)

12. CONTACT OFFICERS

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KATIE BROWN
DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Home Improvement Service Customer Survey



Working in partnership

Home Improvement Service

ADDRESS **insert**

Part A

How good was our service?

We are committed to providing a good service to all our customers. If you only want to complete these three questions, that will help us.

1

How satisfied are you with the overall service provided?

Dissatisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐
Very Satisfied ☐

2

How satisfied are you with the way we deliver the service?

Dissatisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐
Very Satisfied ☐

3

Has your quality of life and wellbeing improved because of our service?

Dissatisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐
Very Satisfied ☐

4

If you have any other comments or suggestions that could help us improve, please provide them below:



Part B

Your Contractor

To help us recommend good contractors in future we would really welcome your comments about the service your contractor provided

5

Did the contractor start and finish the work on time?

Yes ☐ No ☐

6

How satisfied are you with the quality of work and the service provided by the contractor?

Dissatisfied ☐ Satisfied ☐
Very Satisfied ☐

7

Did the installer clear up afterwards to your satisfaction?

Yes ☐ No ☐

8

Would you recommend the Service to others?

Yes ☐ No ☐

9

If you have any other comments, please provide them below: