

The Vale of Glamorgan Council

Cabinet Meeting: 6 June, 2016

Report of the Cabinet Member for Housing, Social Care and Health

Disabled Facilities Grants Performance Report for end of year 2015-16

Purpose of the Report

1. To advise of the Council's performance delivering Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) during the financial year 2015-16.

Recommendations

1. That the report on performance for delivering DFG's during 2015-16 be noted.
2. That the proposals for improvement from Audit Reports on the Service be noted.
3. That the work towards achieving the proposals for improvement from the Welsh Audit Office Report be noted.

Reasons for the Recommendations

1. To apprise Cabinet on the Council's performance delivering DFG's during 2015-16.
2. To apprise Cabinet on the finding of two Audits undertaken on the DFG service.
3. To apprise Cabinet of the progress made on delivering the proposal for improvements in the service's audit reports.

Background

2. The Council has a statutory duty to consider and approve applications for DFG's. DFG's fund the adaptations of privately owned homes to allow residents to live as independently as possible in their own home for as long as possible where there is an identified need and the property can be reasonably adapted.
3. The delivery time of DFG's is a national performance indicator. The Council has sought to improve its performance in delivering DFG's. In the past 6 years the Council has achieved considerable improvement.

Relevant Issues and Options

4. The performance of the DFG Service has again improved in 2015-16. A detailed breakdown of the DFG service performance at the end of year is attached in [Appendix 1](#).
5. For the financial year 2015-16, the average time to deliver a DFG reduced to 178 days, against a target of 195 days. In 2014-15, the average delivery time was 199 days and the Council was ranked 8th across Wales. Based on 2014-15 figures, the performance outcome across 2015-16 should be above the Welsh Average and see the Council in the top performance quartiles. The comparative data for 2015-16 performance is not published until September 2016.
6. The target average delivery time for a child's DFG was not met. The target set was 195 days, and the team delivered the service in an average of 201 days. The overall performance for children DFGs was adversely affected by one case. This case was a multi-faceted adaptation in a mid-terraced property with access only through the front entrance. All work within the property needed to be completed before the external step lift and access could commence. This complication lengthened the delivery time for this case. As there were only nine child cases delivered across the year, this case also adversely affected the overall performance figure. If this one complex case was removed from the performance indicator calculation, the average number of days falls to 186 days, below the target set at 195 days.
7. During 2015-16, the DFG service saw an increase in demand. Following the allocation of additional capital funding in Autumn 2015, all capital funding allocated to the service was spent in meeting this demand. However, despite the increase in demand and workload for the team, the service still reduced its delivery time and retained a high level of satisfaction from their clients.
8. During 2015-16 there were two audit reports published which recommended improvements to the DFG service. In September 2015, the Wales Audit Office published its audit report which considered whether the DFG service was providing an effective response to users' needs. This report made the following proposals for improvement:
 - a. Implement a process review for Disabled Facilities Grants that assesses arrangements from the service user perspective and has regard to the implementation of change by other Councils.
 - b. Establish a broader range of measures that enables the effectiveness of the DFG service to be evaluated in terms of meeting user needs and the efficiency of resources being deployed as well as monitoring the speed of delivery.
 - c. Adopt 'plain English' principles to assess revisions necessary to current DFG guidance documents and future publications/advice for service users.
 - d. Introduce measures that can be used to establish a corporate understanding of the way in which the service and others contribute to supporting independent living.
9. The following actions have been taken, or underway, in response to these suggested improvements:
 - a. Officers from the DFG service have visited colleagues in Neath Port Talbot Council to gather information and learn how they undertook a lean systems review.

Officers from the DFG service are working with the Business Improvement Team and the Management Team to take forward lessons learnt from that visit in conducting a process review.

b. Occupational Therapists are contacting clients following the completion of the grant work to determine if the DFG met their identified needs and to determine if the DFG was effective. Where additional need is identified, further work or action is undertaken to ensure the client has full use of the adaptations.

In addition, DFG clients are requested to complete a customer satisfaction form. This form has been developed and is used across Wales to enable outcome data to be compared with neighbouring authorities. This data is not available at present.

c. Standard paperwork used in the service has been reviewed and key documents re-written using the principles of 'plain English'. As guidance documents and policies are reviewed over the coming months, these too will be written following the 'plain English' principles.

d. Within the Well-being Outcome of "Active and Healthy Vale", the Corporate Plan 2016-20 includes a Well-being Objective of "Safeguarding those who are vulnerable and promoting independent living". Work has commenced to identify a suite of measures that will enable the Council to demonstrate the progress being made towards achieving this objective. Identifying these measures is being undertaken initially by the Sponsoring Director for the Well-being Outcome, the lead officers from across the Council who are responsible for associated corporate plan actions and the Council's partners from the Health Service. This work will form the basis of discussions with the Elected Member Working group that has been established to develop the arrangements to support the Council's revised Performance Management Framework. Following agreement of the measures by the Working Group, development of performance monitoring reports will continue in order to demonstrate the progress that is being made to achieve the Council's Well-being Outcomes. The first reports will be considered by Scrutiny Committees in September 2016 based on quarter one's performance.

10. The Council's internal audit team undertook the second audit. This audit found the control of the service was reasonable and identified a number of areas of strength. The Audit report also identified three areas where improvements could be made:
 - a. Officer delegations to be clearly defined and approval and payment limits reviewed,
 - b. Better control over the framework contractors performance using the contract in place to assist in maintaining control,
 - c. Some variations in the works undertaken being agreed outside officer delegation limits.
11. The issues concerning officer delegations (a and c) have been addressed, with reviewed and clarified officer delegations and tightened processes.
12. Contractor performance has also been addressed. Where the performance is not to the standard expected, officers are working with the Framework to ensure the performance is improved or the contractor will be removed.

Resource Implications (Financial and Employment)

13. There are no direct resource implications as a result of this report.
14. There is an identified capital budget for the approval and payment of Disabled Facilities Grants.
15. Regeneration and Adult Services have identified revenue budgets to deliver the service.

Sustainability and Climate Change Implications

16. Adaptations to a property allow the occupant to remain at home as long as possible to enable them to contribute to a sustainable community.

Legal Implications (to Include Human Rights Implications)

17. Housing Authorities in meeting their responsibilities under The Housing Act 1985 (To consider housing conditions and provision in their area) are required by the Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970 (CSDP) to have specific regard to the special needs of chronically sick and disabled persons.
18. Social Services have duties and powers under a range of legislation including under the CSDP to disabled adults and children to assist in carrying out adaptation work or provision of additional facilities and in relation to Children In Need under the Children Act 1989 to provide services which may include accommodation.

Crime and Disorder Implications

19. There are no crime and disorder implications as a result of this report.

Equal Opportunities Implications (to include Welsh Language issues)

20. There are no specific equal opportunities implications as a result of this report.

Corporate/Service Objectives

21. Corporate Plan 2016-2020
Objective 2: Providing decent homes and safe communities.
Objective 8: Safeguarding those who are vulnerable and promoting independent living.

Policy Framework and Budget

22. This is a matter for Executive decision.

Consultation (including Ward Member Consultation)

23. This report is not ward specific and as a result no ward member consultation has been undertaken.

Relevant Scrutiny Committee

24. Homes and Safe Communities.

Background Papers

None.

Contact Officer

Elen Probert - Team Leader Community and Housing Renewal

Officers Consulted

Legal Service - Mike Walsh, Principal Lawyer

Financial Service - Vicky Lloyd, Accountant

Adult Services - Lance Carver, Head of Adult Service

Operational Manager, Regeneration - Bob Guy

Head of Performance & Development - Huw Isaac

Responsible Officer:

Rob Thomas, Managing Director