

Cambridgeshire

Housing Adaptations Agreement

A joint agreement of:

Cambridge City Council
East Cambridgeshire District Council
Fenland District Council
Huntingdonshire District Council
South Cambridgeshire District Council
Cambridgeshire County Council

In partnership with

Cambridgeshire & Peterborough Clinical
Commissioning Group

Prepared in line with the aims and
aspirations of the Better Care Fund

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SECTION 1 – Background and Strategic Context

1.1 Introduction

The funding for Disabled Facilities Grants and other Grant was historically awarded to the district housing authorities directly from the Department of Communities and Local Government.

In 2008/09 the government extended the scope of the Regulatory Reform Order (2002) to include use of the DFG Capital Allocation. This allowed authorities to use the capital allocation on other types of adaptations, repairs and assistance. The Cambridgeshire authorities hadn't adopted this approach and continued to use the DFG Allocation purely for disabled facilities grants; funding their RRO policy initiatives through separate capital funding directly from their own capital budgets.

In 2014 the Government recognised the contribution good, accessible, warm and safe housing makes to improved health and social care outcomes and passed the DFG Allocation capital funding to the Department of Health to be included in the Better Care Fund. This was then passed down to the housing authorities by the County Council as required by BCF regulation.

The inclusion of the DFG Capital Allocation within the BCF and the new focus on housing working more closely with health and social care triggered the five district housing authorities, the County Council and the CCG to carry out a Review of DFGs and adaptations in Cambridgeshire led by the County Council as a project within the Older People's Accommodation Strategy. The review was initiated in early 2016 at the same time as the Government announced a significant increase in the DFG Capital allocation. In Cambridgeshire this meant an increase in capital allocation from £1.9m to £3.4m. The DFG Review was completed in September 2016 and resulted in three key findings:

1. New services are needed that consider people's needs in context, including early conversations and planning for the longer term.
2. Existing services will need to adapt to support a growing population
3. Funding arrangements across the system will need to change to support a shift in focus.

A key recommendation of the Review was to develop a joint policy across the partners to allow the more flexible use of the increased DFG Capital Allocation in line with the Better Care Fund focus on delivering health priorities and outcomes. The allocation cannot be spent more flexibly without the adoption of a Policy.

1.2 Strategic Context and Key Priorities

As the DFG capital allocation is now directed from the Department of Health through the Better Care Fund, the BCF Plan is the overarching strategic document that partners are now working to.

Cambridgeshire Better Care Fund Plan 2016/17.

As part of preparing the BCF Plan for Cambridgeshire, all organisations in Cambridgeshire agreed to the following vision for health and social care services:

Over the next five years in Cambridgeshire we want to move to a system in which health and social care help people to help themselves and the majority of people's needs are met through family and community support where appropriate. This support will focus on returning people to independence as far as possible with more intensive and longer term support available to those that need it.

This shift is ambitious. It means moving money away from acute health services typically provided in hospital and from ongoing social care support. This cannot be achieved immediately – such services are usually funded on a demand-led basis and provided as they are needed in order to avoid people being left untreated or unsupported when they have had a crisis. Therefore reducing spending is only possible if fewer people have crises: something which experience suggests has never happened before. However this is required if services are to be sustainable in the medium and long term.

Other strategies also recognise the crucial role that suitable housing plays in enabling people to live independently at home highlighting this in their own strategic priorities and outcomes:

- Health & Wellbeing Strategy;
- Cambridgeshire County Council Business Plan
- CCG - System Transformation Plan
- Cambridge Sub-regional Housing Statement
- District Housing Strategies

1.3 The Purpose and Scope of this Document

The purpose of this Agreement is to join together a common understanding of the strategic priorities of the five district housing authorities, the County Council and the Clinical Commissioning Group, to acknowledge the value good housing makes towards supporting these priorities and outcomes, and a framework from which to develop a shared Adaptations Policy across the district housing authorities.

The aim is to make best use of the Capital resources available through the Better Care Fund in Cambridgeshire and to promote partnership working and consistency of service for all residents of Cambridgeshire in order to meet the partners' shared priorities. This Joint Agreement is designed to provide a framework for a consistent approach to the use of capital resources for adapting the homes of vulnerable people in order to maintain independent living for longer.

The Better Care Fund Policy Framework 2016/17 states: 'The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) will again be allocated through the Better Care Fund. Local housing authority representatives should therefore be involved in developing and agreeing the plan, in order to ensure a joined-up approach to improving outcomes across health, social care and housing'. This Agreement demonstrates the partners commitment to adopting a joined up approach.

Independence at home may not necessarily be achieved by keeping people in the home they are currently living in by carrying out repairs and adaptations, but also through the provision of positive options to re-locate where appropriate. Where adaptations are required, this Agreement supports the delivery of high quality works in as short a time as possible.

Any policy developed by the district housing authorities as a result of this Agreement will ensure the best use of resources to achieve shared aims while recognising that there may be local policy differences within each district area. It is anticipated that although the aim is to agree a common policy, each district will expect to retain local initiatives, procedures, application processes and approvals.

1.4 Capital Resources

BCF Capital Allocation

The DFG Capital Allocation for Cambridgeshire has increased from £1.9 in 2015/16 to £3.4m in 2016/17. This is allocated across the districts as shown in the table below. While at the time of writing the actual amounts for 2017/18 onwards are unknown, it is expected that the total DFG Capital Allocation will increase nationally by 2019/20 to £500m providing incremental increases across the County.

Local Authority	Previous DFG Capital Allocation 15/16	Current DFG Capital Allocation 16/17
Cambridge	£304,000	£576,272
Fenland	£498,545	£844,881
Huntingdonshire	£549,000	£1,018,751
E Cambridgeshire	£260,000	£472,949
S Cambridgeshire	£312,241	£566,013
Total	£1,923,786	£3,478,886

This Capital allocation is currently passed from the County Council to the districts in full. However this Agreement allows the individual district housing authorities, if they choose, to return capital to the County Council in appropriate circumstances. If this is agreed locally the County Council will use any such funds to complement its equipment and minor adaptations functions.

While this policy is designed to encourage flexible use of the DFG Capital Allocation, the availability of sufficient capital to meet the need for mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants should be seen as a priority.

SECTION 2 – Developing a Joint Adaptations Policy

2.1 Providing a Framework

This Joint Agreement on Housing Adaptations provides a framework from which the districts will work towards developing a Joint Adaptations Policy.

Partners will take into account the responsibility of owners to primarily maintain their own properties. However it also considers their ability to do so, their access to sufficient resources to carry out any necessary works, and the vulnerability of the different groups, especially in terms of maintaining independent living, reducing the number of older people moving into care homes due to inadequate housing and ensuring that people do not remain in hospital longer than necessary due to their housing circumstances at home.

2.2 Delivering adaptations

While the decisions to approve Grants remain with the local housing authorities across Cambridgeshire, Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) provide support and professional technical advice to ensure that the works are carried out to a satisfactory standard, and that they meet the applicant's needs.

For most grants a fee is charged by the HIA which is covered by the grant (up to the maximum grant available). District partners will make their own decisions regarding the level of fees charged in their areas, balancing demands on their HIA services, the level of capital available, the amount of fee income required to provide an effective HIA service and the impact on clients of any fee increase.

2.3 Types of assistance available

The partners to this Agreement agree that within any Joint Adaptations Policy there will be provision for the following elements:

2.3.1 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants

The district housing authorities award Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) according to the governing legislation and guidance issued by Central Government, which determines amongst other things the maximum amount of grant, the type of work that can be funded, the maximum contribution to be made and the test of financial resources that must be applied.

There is an expectation that performance on the time taken to deliver DFGs will improve and that performance measures and targets will be set. Districts agree to consider how they can fast-track standard adaptations either within or outside of the DFG framework and any policy will provide sufficient flexibility to facilitate this.

2.3.2 Discretionary Minor Repair Grants

The Joint Adaptations Policy should allow discretion, where capital funding allows, to provide Minor Repairs Grants for small works of repair, for example, to replace or repair rotted woodwork, minor electrical works, rainwater goods or other repairs that are not classed as adaptations and may include promoting warm homes and energy efficiency measures.

The partners acknowledge that this type of work while not being an 'adaptation' to a home, can contribute towards the overall Better Care Fund outcomes of maintaining a vulnerable person's good health, independence and overall wellbeing.

2.3.3 Financial Assistance (Top up) Grant or Loan

In some cases the cost of works eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant amounts to more than the maximum amount of grant (currently £30,000). In other cases the applicant is liable under the means test to make a contribution. The County Council and some district housing authorities have previously provided top-up grants or loans in certain circumstances in order to provide funds to enable the works to go ahead and therefore meet client's needs.

The partners agree that within a Joint Adaptations Policy provision will be made from the DFG Capital Allocation for Top-up Grants or loans, and that the County Council's Social Care responsibility towards meeting the needs of vulnerable households will be included, but with the decisions being made locally by the district councils. The detail of this element of the policy will be jointly agreed between the district partners and the County Council.

2.3.4 Disabled Persons Relocation Grants

All partners support the inclusion of a Disabled Persons Relocation Grant that can be considered when it is not straightforward or possible to adapt a disabled persons existing accommodation and a suitable alternative property can be identified.

This Grant would contribute towards the cost of moving and may include the payment of removal expenses, estate agent's fees, redecoration, etc.

2.3.5 Special Purpose Grants

In addition, the partners support the Better Care funds support of the use of the DFG Capital Allocation in the most flexible way and this Agreement supports the development of the policy and use of the funding for other initiatives for example:

- Home energy grants
- Boiler replacement
- Warm Homes initiatives including thermal insulation
- Remedying HHSRS Cat 1 hazards
- Security measures
- Additional specialist equipment
- Health Prevention initiatives
- Fuel Efficiency initiatives
- Housing Options advice and support
- Hospital discharge initiatives
- Handyperson services

Section 3 – Implementation and Review

3.1 Implementation

This Agreement will be implemented and come into effect when signed by the partners. All district housing authorities agree to review their local Regulatory Reform Order Repairs and Renewal policies adopting the principles contained within this Agreement with new policies to come into effect locally on 1st April 2017.

Partners also agree to work towards agreeing a Cambridgeshire Joint Adaptations Policy in partnership with the County Council by 1st April 2018.

3.2 Performance monitoring

At the time of writing the Better Care Fund has no specific performance measures around the DFG Capital Allocation, however it is envisaged that these will be forthcoming in future years. In the meantime, local performance targets will be developed especially in relation to time taken to deliver adaptations.

The provision of a Transitional Revenue Grant from the County Council in 2017/18 to the district councils in order to support the provision of home improvement agency services will include some performance targets which will be monitored by partners.

3.3 Review

This Agreement will be reviewed during 2018/19 following development of the Joint Adaptations Policy to ensure it is up to date and relevant in light of any future Better Care Fund Guidance and further local initiatives.

Add signatories of all partners below