



Department for
Communities and
Local Government

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Dear Colleague

Disabled Facilities Grant 2016/17 – Better Care Fund

April 2016

For the attention of:

1. Upper Tier Local Authority Chief Executives – covering Grant Determination
2. Unitary Authority Chief Executives – covering Grant Determination
3. London Borough Chief Executives– covering Grant Determination
4. Housing Authorities- by way of information
5. Care Commission groups – by way of information

The Chancellor announced at the 2015 Spending Round that up to £500 million of capital funding is being made available by 2019-20 for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) as part of the Department of Health's Better Care Fund ('the fund'). DFG is for the provision of adaptations to disabled people's homes to help them to live independently in their own homes for longer. The Fund is made up of local pooled funds, local partnerships between Care Commissioning Groups and local Authorities under section 75 of the NHS Act 2002. Many pooled funds are or are likely to have local authorities as "host partners" which means they have ultimate sign off on the accounts.¹

DFG has been included in the Fund so that the provision of adaptations can be incorporated into the strategic consideration and planning of investment to improve outcomes for service users. As was the case last year, DFG will be paid to upper-tier authorities in 2016/17. The statutory duty, however, remains on local housing authorities to provide adaptations to those disabled people who qualify for it will remain. Therefore each area will have to allocate this funding to their respective housing authorities (district councils in two-tier areas) from the pooled budget to enable them to

¹ Section 7 NHS Bodies and Local Authorities Partnership Arrangements Regulations 2000 (SI 2000/617)

continue to meet their statutory duty to provide adaptations to the homes of disabled people, including for young people aged 17 and under.

Special conditions have therefore been added to the DFG Conditions of Grant Usage (under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003) which stipulate that, where relevant, upper-tier local authorities must pay funds into their local pool and then they must ensure the pooled fund cascades an amount at least equivalent to the DFG allocation to district council level in a timely manner such that it can be spent within year. Condition 3 makes clear that Upper Tier Local Authorities have a duty to ensure that Housing Authorities covered by Annex B to their grant determination receive the correct amount so that they can meet their statutory duty. Minimum allocations for DFG have been provided for all upper-tier authorities, with further breakdowns for allocations at district council level. We recognise that the holders of the Fund may decide that additional funding is appropriate to top up the minimum DFG funding levels. Please ensure you carefully read the attached Section 31 Grant and comply with the conditions contained therein. The grant determination requires you to confirm that funding was used for the purposes that a capital receipt may be used for (condition 1); it is for you to determine how you obtain the assurance you need from the lower tier authority allowing you to meet this condition.

As you will know, in March 2016 the Department of Health discontinued the Social Care Capital Grant from 2016-17 and issued a letter to local authorities explaining that it was focussing all of its capital funding through the Disabled Facilities Grant. In the letter the Department of Health also stated that some areas may agree to invest some of the Disabled Facilities Grant into broader strategic capital projects, although this would be a local decision to be considered as part of the Better Care Fund planning process. The statutory duty on housing authorities to provide adaptations remains, so any decision at the local level to spend the Disabled Facilities Grant on wider capital projects must be considered as part of enabling housing authorities to continue to meet their statutory duty.

You may be aware that earlier this year, the Local Government Ombudsman published its report 'Making a house a home: Local Authorities and disabled adaptations'. The report highlighted varying levels of waiting times for adaptations around the country. While some areas are excellent, disabled people in other areas face extremely long waits for adaptations. We are keen to minimise these delays and would appreciate it if you could consider what action you can take with this year's grant to address this.

Officials from the Department of Communities and Local Government (DCLG) or the Department of Health (DH) have contacted you, and you have informed them that you are the host authority for the pooled BCF fund. In accepting this funding, you acknowledge that you (rather than the Clinical Commissioning Group) are the host in your area, have accountability for funding paid into the pooled fund, and that you can and will meet the conditions placed on the grant.

The Department of Communities and Local Government would also like to draw your attention to Foundations who are funded by the department. Foundations act as the

national body for home improvement agencies. Foundations can offer advice and support to home improvement agencies on the efficient delivery of adaptations and to local authority commissioners on commissioning local home improvement services. More information can be found at: <http://wwwFOUNDATIONS.UK.com/home/>

Yours sincerely,



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