

Report to CRHB 7th July 2017

Joint DFG policy for Cambridgeshire

Purpose of report

To advise on, and seek input into, a project to develop a joint DFG policy across the five Cambridgeshire districts.

Background

DFG grant funding is now channelled to the districts via Cambridgeshire County Council through the Better Care Fund (BCF). Allocations to all the districts have increased over the last couple of years, and are expected to continue to do so up to 2019-20. This is part of a government commitment to a phased increase in the national allocation, on the basis that better use was expected to be made of DFG allocations to meet BCF objectives around a joined-up approach to improving outcomes across health, social care and housing.

Following the county-wide review of DFGs carried out in 2016-17, it was agreed that the districts would work on a joint policy to expand the types of intervention which could be funded by DFGs, beyond mandatory requirements, to help meet these objectives. An Adaptations Agreement signed by the county and district councils in early 2017 listed the following as potential interventions which could be funded.

- Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants, including fast-tracking some adaptations, either within or outside of the DFG framework.
- Discretionary minor repair grants or loans.
- Topping up of DFGs where statutory limits are insufficient to meet an applicant's needs.
- Relocation grants or loans to enable people to move if that is the best option (following Cambridgeshire County Council's decision to longer offer these grants).
- Special purpose grants or loans for other works – eg boiler replacements, minor home improvements, etc.

Other types of work to be considered as part of the joint policy:

- Works to support hospital discharge
- Funding towards equipment not able to be funded through the equipment service
- Assistive technology and/or environmental controls
- Adaptations for people with dementia, learning, sensory etc disabilities Other works which could save higher levels of expenditure elsewhere
- Other works suggested by Foundations at:
<http://www.foundations.uk.com/media/4718/preparing-a-policy-under-the-regulatory-reform-order-formatted.pdf>

(Some of these are already funded by some districts where separate Repair and Renewal funding has been made available).

Although we may end up with some local policy differences, we aim to achieve as much agreement as possible in terms of:

- Whether to use grants and/or loans in different circumstances
- A common approach to means-testing
- Any minimum and/or maximum amount payable for different grants/loans (where legally permissible)
- Minimum residency requirements
- The types of relocation costs that can be funded
- Approach to recouping funding if the recipient moves – eg through legal & local land charges, repayment of loans etc
- An action plan for further development of processes and procedures which fall outside of the direct scope of the project

Process

The project is being commissioned by the Integrated Commissioning Board. A project team has been set up, made up of representatives from each of the districts, the county council, the three home improvement agencies, and Cambridgeshire & Peterborough CCG.

We are aiming for the policy to be in place by 1st April 2018.

Issues

- Districts will still have to meet statutory requirements around provision of DFGs. With rising costs and an ageing population, the extent to which additional interventions can be funded will be dependent on funding available. This includes government grant levels, and decisions by the districts around ring-fencing the grant received and/or making additional contributions from their own resources. Mixed willingness amongst housing associations to contribute to mandatory DFGs for their own tenants also impacts on the size of the pot.
- One of the recommendations from the county-wide review was to focus more on up-front prevention work. This will need to lead to a reduction in statutory demands on the DFG pot if the scope of DFGs is to widen. A new, upstream Housing Options for Older People (HOOP) services is being trialled in South Cambridgeshire.
- The upstream prevention work is to be funded through the phased withdrawal of county revenue from the Home Improvement Agencies. There are real concerns about the long-term viability of the agencies following this decision, and therefore the ability to continue to offer an adaptations service. This issue, along with improving efficiency of HIA services, is being pursued outside of this project, although links obviously need to be made.
- Provision of top-up grant previously fell between county and districts. From April 2017 there is no county funding available for top-ups above the statutory £30k DFG limit, and any such payments will in future need to be funded by the districts, subject to availability of resources.

Questions for CRHB

- Has anything been missed?
- Are there additional issues which need to be taken into account?
- How do CRHB/ individual members of the board want to be engaged?

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