

Thurrock Council
Adult Social Care
Disabled Facilities Grant and
Housing Assistance policy

About this policy

This policy ensures the council meets its statutory duty to provide mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) for residential adaptations where the appropriate legislative conditions are met under the provisions of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (the Act).

In addition, this policy outlines the discretionary financial assistance, by virtue of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 (RRO), to provide Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) for residential adaptations where the appropriate legislative and policy conditions are met.

Finally, the DFG fund is delivered through the Better Care Fund (BCF). This policy recognises the wider strategic planning and implementation of the BCF plan and intends to explore opportunities for the DFG service to support wider services within health, social care and housing.

The policy sets out the processes by which Thurrock Council's Adults, Housing and Health directorate (The Service) will meet the duties defined within the Act and defines our undertaking to applicants and their representatives concerning the service they should expect to receive when requesting a Disabled Facilities Grant.

Decisions concerning eligibility, whilst arrived at with full engagement of the applicant and/or carer, will always be subject to a professional judgement in the final analysis. As such, this policy describes the process in general terms, whilst accepting that each decision made will be arrived at on a case-by-case basis.

Author	Gavin Beard, Adult Social Care
Responsible officer	Gavin Beard – Principal Occupational Therapist / Occupational Therapy, Sensory and Disabled Facilities Grant Service Lead
Date	December 2021

Version history

Version number	Implemented by	Revision date	Approved by	Approval date	Reason
1	Gavin Beard	September 2016			DFG Review
2	Gavin Beard	November 2018			DFG Review following service audit and discretionary development
3	Gavin Beard	June 2019			Follow up on DFG Review / service audit and discretionary development
4	Gavin Beard	May 2021			Discretionary Grant development (RRO and Housing Renewal)
5	Gavin Beard	September 2021			Discretionary Grant development (RRO and Housing Renewal)
6	Gavin Beard	December 2021			Discretionary Grant development (RRO and Housing Renewal) – ASC Reform White Paper release and DMT scrutiny
7	Gavin Beard	December 2021	DMT	21 December 2021	Policy and principles approved at DMT. Minor amendments to language.
8	Gavin Beard	August 2022			DFG National Guidance review – error in applying means test to discretionary grant offer for children removed

Policy introduction

Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) are delivered via the Better Care Fund (BCF) programme. This programme supports local systems to successfully deliver the integration of health and social care in a way that supports person-centred care, sustainability and better outcomes for people and carers. The recent white paper for Adult Social Care reform; People at the Heart of Care, strengthens this further and sets out the intended vision for transforming the role that housing plays in adult social care.

It is acknowledged that there is a primary focus to support people through home adaptations via the mandatory grant; recognising the home environment can have a considerable bearing on people's safety, independence and overall health and wellbeing. However, it is also recognised that an integrated and holistic approach across health, social care and housing is essential to not only realise the benefits of accessible housing, but also achieve an understanding of, and subsequent approach to, meeting an individual's needs and the needs of the wider community in which they live.

This document sets out the way in which Thurrock Council will provide the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) for residential adaptations, including information on eligibility for grant assistance, the customer journey, grant conditions relating to applications, approval and payment of grant, and other relevant conditions and requirements.

This document confirms the council's intentions to provide additional support by virtue of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002 (RRO), which enables the council to provide Thurrock residents with financial assistance from a range of discretionary grants.

Finally, in consideration to the Better Care Fund plan and its wider strategic aims, this document also intends to explore opportunities for the DFG service to support wider services within health, social care and housing, especially where there is a recognised crossover with DFG services in supporting individuals to remain in their home and meet their wider housing needs.

Contents

1.	Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant	7
1.1.	Introduction	7
1.2.	Amount of mandatory grant.....	8
1.3.	General requirements and grant conditions – applications for Disabled Facilities Grant.....	8
1.3.1.	Applicant eligibility	8
1.3.2.	Residency eligibility	8
1.3.3.	Certificate required in case of owner's application	9
1.3.4.	Certificates required in case of tenant's applications.....	9
1.3.5.	Occupiers and consent certificates (houseboats and park homes).....	9
1.3.6.	Necessary and appropriate, reasonable and practicable	10
1.3.7.	Eligible works	10
1.3.8.	Maintenance and warranties	12
1.3.9.	Replacement of facilities / specialist equipment	13
1.3.10.	Removal of adaptations and reinstatement works.....	13
1.3.11.	Best value	13
1.3.12.	Financial test of resources / means tested contributions.....	14
1.3.13.	Grant approval	15
1.3.14.	Contractual relationships.....	16
1.3.15.	VAT exemption.....	16
1.3.16.	Grant payment.....	16
1.3.17.	Deferring grant payment.....	17
1.3.18.	Grant recalculation, withheld or repaid	18
1.3.19.	Grant conditions following completion	18
1.3.20.	Repayment of mandatory grant.....	18
1.3.21.	Changes in circumstances	19
1.3.22.	General provisions	19
1.3.23.	Compensation cases.....	20
2.	Customer journey.....	20
2.1.	Assessment.....	20
2.2.	DFG application.....	20
2.3.	Grant works	21
2.4.	Works completion.....	21
2.5.	Grant final payment and closure	21
2.6.	Grant interim payments	22
2.7.	Customer journey	22

3.	Better Care Fund and Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants	26
3.1.	Introduction	26
3.2.	Development intention.....	26
3.3.	Proposed inclusion within policy development	26
3.4.	Top-up to mandatory grant.....	27
3.5.	Dual residency of a disabled child	28
3.6.	Child in foster care	28
3.7.	Adult in "shared lives" or similar supported living scheme.....	28
3.8.	Move to alternative / suitable property.....	28
3.9.	End of life / life limiting conditions.....	29
3.10.	Threshold for financial assessment.....	29
3.11.	Timely discharge / admission avoidance (hospital / other non-residential).....	29
3.12.	Supported living and step down / rehabilitation / interim support	30
3.13.	Provision of non-fixed solutions (individual and service considerations)	30
3.14.	Safe / warm homes	30
3.15.	Innovative housing solutions	30
3.16.	Professional fees.....	31
3.17.	Care and support housing schemes.....	31
3.18.	Complementary services.....	31
3.19.	Repayment of discretionary grant.....	31
4.	Complaints and dispute resolution	32

1. Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant

1.1. Introduction

Thurrock Council is under a statutory duty by virtue of the provisions of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (the Act) to provide Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) for residential adaptations where the appropriate legislative conditions are met.

The purposes for which a DFG may be given are set out in the Act and can be summarised as follows:

- **Facilitating Access** – a grant may be given for works to remove or overcome any obstacles which prevent the disabled person from moving freely into and around the dwelling, access to the garden and enjoying use of the dwelling and facilities or amenities within it.
- **Making a Dwelling or Building Safe** – a grant may be given for certain adaptations to the dwelling or building to make it safe for the disabled person and other persons residing with them. This may include the provision of lighting where safety is an issue or for adaptations designed to minimise the risk of danger where a disabled person has behavioural problems.
- **Access to a room usable for sleeping** – a grant may be given for the provision of a room usable for sleeping where adaptation of an existing room in a dwelling (upstairs or downstairs) or the access to that room is unsuitable. Where the disabled person shares a bedroom with a spouse or partner a grant may be given to provide a room of sufficient size so that normal sleeping arrangements can be maintained.
- **Access to a bathroom** – a grant may be given for the provision of, or access to, a WC, washing, bathing and/or showering facilities for the disabled person.
- **Facilitating preparation and cooking of food** – a grant may be given to re-arrange or enlarge a kitchen to improve the manoeuvrability for a wheelchair and to provide specially modified or designed storage units, work top area etc. Where most of the cooking and preparation of meals is done by another household member, it would not normally be appropriate to carry out full adaptations to the kitchen. However, it might be appropriate to carry out certain adaptations that enable the disabled person to perform minor functions in the kitchen, such as preparing light meals or hot drinks.
- **Heating, lighting and power** – a grant may be given to provide or improve the existing heating system in the dwelling to meet the disabled person's needs. A grant will not be given to adapt or install heating in rooms which are not normally used by the disabled person. The installation of central heating will only be considered where the well-being and mobility of the disabled person would otherwise be adversely affected. Provision is also made under this section for the adaptation of heating, lighting and power to make them suitable for use by the disabled person.
- **Dependant Residents** – a grant may be given for works to enable a disabled occupant better access around the dwelling in order to care for another disabled

person who normally resides there whether or not they are related to the disabled person. Such works could include adaptations to a part of the dwelling to which the disabled person would not normally need access but which is used by the person to whom they are providing care and therefore it is reasonable for such works to be carried out.

- Common parts – grant may be given for works to facilitate access to a dwelling through common parts of a building.

Although the provision of mandatory DFG's is covered by the Act and the Authority must comply with the legislation, this document sets out the policy that will be applied by the Local Authority in the provision of DFGs with regard to matters not specifically covered by the legislation.

1.2. Amount of mandatory grant

The maximum amount available for a mandatory DFG is £30,000. The grant will cover the full cost of eligible work up to a maximum of £30,000. This upper limit is set by statute and may be subject to change.

The grant is subject to a financial test of resources using the Ferret Renovator software package, or any similar package the council decides to use.

The applicant's assessed financial contribution will be deducted from the cost of the eligible work, or the £30,000 grant limit, whichever is the lower amount.

In the case of a disabled child, the parents 'or guardians' income and savings are discounted and there is no financial test of resources.

If the total cost of the eligible work exceeds £30,000, the applicant may be entitled to additional financial support to meet the balance of the cost. For further information, please refer to the Discretionary Disabled Adaptations section.

1.3. General requirements and grant conditions – applications for Disabled Facilities Grant

The following general requirements and conditions will apply to both mandatory and discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants

1.3.1. Applicant eligibility

Definition of Disabled Persons: For the purposes of the legislation relating to DFGs, a person is defined as being disabled if either:

- their sight, hearing, or speech is substantially impaired
- they have a mental disorder or impairment of any kind
- they are physically substantially disabled by illness, injury, impairment present since birth or otherwise

1.3.2. Residency eligibility

The Authority cannot consider an application for a mandatory or discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant unless it is satisfied that either:

- the applicant has or proposes to acquire, an owner's interest in every parcel of land on which the relevant works are to be carried out
- the applicant is a tenant of the dwelling where the relevant works are to be carried out
- the applicant will live in the adapted dwelling, houseboat or park home as their only or main residence throughout the grant condition period, or for such shorter period as the DFG Service may allow having regard to his or her health, or other relevant circumstances

The "grant condition period" is defined as the 5 year period beginning with the "certified date" of the grant completion.

The "certified date" is defined as the date certified by the council in which the completion of the eligible works is completed to the satisfaction of the council and the applicant.

The applicant will confirm satisfaction via signed declaration, and this denotes the end of the DFG process.

1.3.3. Certificate required in case of owner's application

An owner's application for a DFG must be accompanied by an owner's certificate which will certify that the applicant has, or proposes to acquire an owner's interest, and that the disabled occupant will intend to live in the dwelling as their only or main residence throughout the "Grant Condition Period".

1.3.4. Certificates required in case of tenant's applications

A tenant's application for a DFG must be accompanied by a tenant's certificate which will certify that the application is a tenant's application and that the applicant intends that the disabled occupant (whether that is the applicant or someone in the applicant's household) will intend to live in the dwelling as their only or main residence throughout the "Grant Condition Period".

A tenant's application should be accompanied by an owner's certificate from the person who at the time of the application is the landlord under the tenancy. The Authority can waive this where it is not reasonable in the circumstances to request a certificate.

Private tenants must obtain their landlords written permission for the subject works before a DFG can be approved. Where a landlord withholds this permission for the works to be undertaken a grant cannot be approved. Furthermore, where the owner of a privately rented dwelling cannot be located, or has died and the dwelling is in probate a grant cannot be given.

DFG approved and completed works would not include any element of reinstatement.

1.3.5. Occupiers and consent certificates (houseboats and park homes)

Occupiers of houseboats and park homes must provide an 'occupiers certificate' certifying the intention of the disabled occupier to occupy the qualifying houseboat or park home as his only or main residence throughout the grant condition period (5 years from the certified date). Any such certificate must also be accompanied by a 'consent certificate' from each person who owns the mooring or land on which the houseboat or park home is stationed, or who owns the houseboat or park home. Furthermore, where the owner of a privately

rented dwelling cannot be located, or has died and the dwelling is in probate a grant cannot be given.

1.3.6. Necessary and appropriate, reasonable and practicable

The DFG service, who administer the Disabled Facilities Grant, will consider and determine the eligibility for the grant when satisfied the works are considered "necessary and appropriate" for the needs of the disabled person, and, amongst other things, it is considered reasonable and practicable to carry out the works in the disabled person's home.

The DFG service will work primarily with the Occupational Therapy (OT) Service within Thurrock Council Adult Social Care to determine whether or not the nature of works are considered "necessary and appropriate" for the needs of the disabled person.

The DFG service will determine whether it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the works in the disabled person's home to approve the grant, and to do so, have regard to the age and condition of the dwelling and may access a range of architect and surveyor services where deemed necessary.

The DFG service may not consider it to be reasonable and practicable to adapt some dwellings, for example:

- where there are multiple or excessive changes in levels
- where the dwelling is in a poor or dilapidated condition
- where moving existing services would be prohibitively expensive
- where the dwelling is a listed building or in a conservation area, and the adaptation would be prohibitively expensive or inappropriate
- where the footprint or location of the dwelling makes an adaptation inappropriate
- where the adaptation work would have a negative effect on other residents

In cases where it is not possible to adapt a dwelling to an appropriate standard or where the cost of works is considered excessive, the DFG service may take the view that the works are not 'reasonable and practicable'.

1.3.7. Eligible works

The DFG service, who administer the disabled facilities grants, has considered that under section 23 (1) of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, the following adaptation works can generally be considered for a mandatory grant, but only where the Local Authority considers them to be "necessary and appropriate" for the needs of the disabled person and, amongst other things, it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the work in the disabled person's home:

- Handrails, half steps and ramped access to the primary external access door of the property, and where this will provide access to essential goods and services that is not already achievable. External step and stair lifts would be considered if reasonably practicable to be installed and are unlikely to be subject to vandalism.
- Automatic door opening to the primary entrance will only be considered for persons who are otherwise unable to open the door without support of others.
- Door entry systems will be considered where the person's mobility is severely limited and who are otherwise unable to open the door without support of others.

- Door widening of the main entrance door and the doorways to the bedroom, bathroom and living room to facilitate wheelchair or similar mobility aid access. Access to additional rooms may be considered where the disabled person is a carer of another individual residing at the property.
- Adaptations to the facilities in the bathroom and toilet, including the provision of shower facilities, such as "graded floor" or "level access" showers, low step showers and over bath showers, lever taps, and specialist WCs such as Clos-o-mat or Geberit.
- Maintaining existing bath / provision of a specialist bath will only be considered where there is a medical need identified for such provision, and this is supported with the necessary medical evidence. Where there is a recognised need for a bath to remain, such as other family members in the property, equipment options such as a hoist may be considered.
- Alterations to the height and/or position of light switches and power points to make them accessible to the disabled person.
- Other adaptations that are necessary to facilitate access to essential rooms by the disabled person, for example, stair lifts or vertical lifts.
- Breakdown of stair lifts – if stair lift is 5 to 10 years-old, a manufactures report may be needed to replace it. If over 10 years report may not be needed. It is considered good practice to include 5-year extended warranty/service contract.
- Provision or changes to heating systems for rooms that are in everyday use by the disabled person may be considered where a medical need can be demonstrated. This does not include repair to existing systems.
- Possible upgrading/replacement boilers where property is extended and the existing boiler is inadequate following such works.
- Laminated glass or specialist lighting or guards to fires and around radiators where disabled children present with violent or challenging behaviours and may present significant risk of harm.
- Hard standings (3.6 x 4.8 max) and associated crossover (dropped Kerb) for vehicle access where the disabled person is in a wheelchair or has extreme difficulty walking to the house. Where a suitable hard standing already exists, a crossover / dropped kern would not be considered.
- Structural alterations where necessary to provide fixings for disabled equipment provided by Social Services – for example, fixing for tracking /overhead hoists.
- Additional works to comply with listed building law or the conditions attached to planning permission – for example, pitched roof instead of flat roof, special bricks, timber windows to match the period of the house, etc.
- Repairs that are essential to enable the builder to carry out works, and that were "unforeseen" – for example, replacement of rotted or weak flooring as part of shower facilities installation, electrical repairs to enable works to be carried out safely like new consumer unit or earthing. This will be increasingly required with part P of the Building Regulations. Full re-wiring will not be allowed because this is a repair not an adaptation. Dealing with low water pressure may be eligible but replacing defective drainage would not be eligible.
- Kitchens. Where someone other than the disabled person does and will continue to do the cooking and preparation of meals, it will not normally be necessary to carry out full adaptations. However, it may be possible to carry out minor adaptations to allow the person to prepare light meals or hot drinks. Typically, this may include a low-level worktop with power points for a kettle/microwave. Where duties are shared within the family, discussion may be necessary to decide the extent of the alterations.

- Garden. Grant assistance will be considered for immediate access to the garden and does not include landscaping gardens to make them more suitable for the disabled person to access. Grant assistance will not be given where there is already suitable access to the garden and would not include extending an existing access – for example, creating a side access so a person can also go around the side of a house. Generally, the most modest solution for providing access to both the house and the garden will be considered and this can mean that one access may be sufficient to access both the house and the garden. Where homes have communal gardens – for example, blocks of flats served by a single access, grant assistance will not be considered for providing an individual access to the garden.
- Provision of additional facilities / Extensions. These include the provision of accessible bedrooms, bath/shower rooms, WC compartments and kitchens for the disabled user, for which the following will be considered.

The DFG Service is required to differentiate between what is desirable (while acknowledging what may be a perfectly legitimate aspiration on the part of the disabled person), and what is needed (necessary and appropriate), and for what the commitment of public funding is justified. It must ensure that a proposed scheme meets the required mandatory need without excess to ensure grant requirements and conditions are met in full, and that the DFG budget is spent in a manner to provide the maximum number of adaptations from the funding available.

The DFG Service will consider the most economic (cost effective, least intrusive) solution to meet the disabled person's need. It is considered essential to utilise internal areas/rooms to reduce the size of the extension to be provided, or even negate the need for an extension altogether. This should include utilising any rooms such as unused bedrooms, storerooms, integral garages (if convertible), secondary reception rooms etc. A scheme to provide additional facilities should incorporate the conversion of second reception rooms, storage areas, circulation areas and subdividing existing rooms where possible.

There is particular importance to this when considering high-cost adaptations / extension proposals. The DFG Service will expect alternative options to be properly considered and costed and evaluated before deciding whether to proceed with the proposed works. The DFG Service would also want to be satisfied those other alternatives to an adaptation, such as re-housing, have been considered and properly evaluated.

Only on evidence of this, will high-cost adaptations / extension proposals be considered and approved.

1.3.8. Maintenance and warranties

Ownership of facilities and equipment funded from the grant transfer to the applicant who is awarded the grant, and will therefore be responsible for maintenance, repairs or removing the facility and / or equipment once it is no longer needed.

The DFG Service / Local Authority reserve the right to retain ownership and require the return of certain types of specialist equipment (all ceiling track hoists – excluding tacking) or portable accommodation provided under a DFG.

This will be made clear to the applicant at the time of approval of the grant and the applicant shall notify the DFG Service when the equipment and/or portable accommodation is no longer needed.

Once eligible works are completed, the Local Authority will not finance or organise servicing, repairs or maintenance during or after the expiry of any applicable warranty period (with the exception of Ceiling Track Hoists), which is usually 12 months.

Applicants are encouraged to consider a longer warranty at the time of the installation as repairs can be expensive. A 5-year warranty will be funded as part of the Grant for certain specialist equipment – for example, stairlifts, specialist toilets. No additional warranty beyond 5 years will be provided.

Information relating to facility / equipment ownership / warranties will be provided to the applicant as part of the grant approval process.

1.3.9. Replacement of facilities / specialist equipment

Consideration to replace damaged or broken facilities and / or equipment will be given under a further DFG providing:

- it cannot be repaired (with evidence available from an acceptable engineer / supplier)
- it has not been wilfully damaged (with evidence available from an acceptable engineer / supplier)
- it still meets the needs of the client (supported by OT Services)
- it has been annually serviced and maintained (beyond the warranty period where applicable)
- the warranty period has expired

A Disabled Facilities Grant will not be considered where a facility or equipment that was present in the dwelling previously has been removed by or under the instruction of the occupant unless there is evidence to support a valid reason for removal.

1.3.10. Removal of adaptations and reinstatement works

The DFG Service will not remove adaptations when they are no longer required, or undertake reinstatement works. Applicants will be made aware of this before the DFG work is undertaken.

If an applicant changes their mind about an adaptation once the Occupational Therapist assessment has been carried out and the works have been undertaken, unless there has been a significant change in the applicant's medical condition the council will not remove or carry out further adaptations.

1.3.11. Best value

The Local Authority uses public money to fund the provision of both mandatory and discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants, and as such, it must consider value for money.

The DFG service will review returned quotations and where applicable, sketches and technical drawings against the OT recommendations to ensure they meet the needs of the applicant.

The applicant will be required to obtain a minimum of two quotes for the cost of extensive works, and the grant will usually be approved based on the cheapest quote unless there are extenuating circumstances.

Where quotations for works appear higher than that of the expected costs, and above the average cost of works of a similar nature, the DFG service will inform the applicant and reserves the right to obtain a further quotation.

Where the applicant wishes to have a higher or more complex specification to that recommended, and the associated costs are more than the minimal specification required to meet the disabled person's needs, the applicant will be liable for the additional costs.

Where the applicant wants to use a contractor that will cost more than the quote that is deemed acceptable by the Local Authority, the applicant will be liable for the additional costs and will have to pay the difference direct to the contractor.

Where the applicant has a preferred scheme of works that meets their assessed need to the same degree as the scheme proposed by the Local Authority – that is, the provision of a ground floor extension in lieu of a vertical through floor lift installation – the Local Authority will part fund the preferred scheme to the same value as the grant eligible works – that is, the cost for supply and install of the vertical lift only.

The Occupational Therapy Service will be consulted to ensure that the applicants preferred scheme meets their assessed need in full, and any additional costs associated with the clients preferred scheme, including unforeseen works, architects' fees etc., must be met by the grant applicant.

Evidence that sufficient funds are in place must be made available prior to works starting.

Where the applicant wishes to undertake an adaptation themselves, or by a relative, they can request this to be considered by the DFG service. Where agreed, grant funding will only be given for building materials or services obtained and will only be paid once upon receipt of the relevant receipt(s) or invoice(s).

1.3.12. Financial test of resources / means tested contributions

All applicants applying for a DFG, in accordance with the Act are means tested to determine whether any contribution is to be paid towards the cost of works. This is except for children's cases.

The Local Authority will undertake the means test in line with the prevailing statutory provisions in force at the point of application.

The test of resources only considers the resources of the disabled applicant, and their spouse or partner where applicable. The means test does not consider the applicant's outgoings.

Applicants in receipt of one of the following types of income will be 'passport' through the means testing process:

- Income Support
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Income Based Job Employment Support Allowance
- Guarantee Pension Credit
- Housing Benefit
- Working/Child Tax Credit, if income for tax credits is below a specified amount
- Universal Credit, except "nil" award

This list is prescribed by central government and may be amended from time to time.

In circumstances where the test of resources results in a 'nil' grant – that is, where the applicant's contribution is greater or equal to the cost of the works – the applicant can request the council to approve the 'nil' grant. This will enable the cost of these works to be deducted from any future application for a DFG within the following 10 years providing the adaptations recommended by the Occupational Therapist were provided in full.

In most cases, an Initial Test of Resources (ITR) will be undertaken to provide the prospective applicant with an early indication of their likely contribution.

At present, parents of disabled children and young persons are not subject to a test of resources.

Such preliminary tests will not be applied in urgent cases or where the Occupational Therapist and the DFG officer is aware that the client is in receipt of a passport benefit.

1.3.13. Grant approval

The Local Authority is required to approve or refuse the grant within 6 months of a valid grant application being made. A valid application is deemed to be made when the following documentation is submitted:

- a completed application form
- the appropriate certification together with proof of ownership or tenancy (including works consent)
- the appropriate evidence of financial resources in order that the council can undertake the Test of Resources
- the appropriate number of quotes have been submitted

Officers from the Authority will review and assess the documentation submitted are appropriate and fulfils a valid application.

Where an architect or structural engineer is required, the applicant will be responsible for engaging their services. However, the DFG Service must approve the estimated fees for such service before the grant is approved. Applicants are encouraged to ensure these professional services are provided by a qualified person, preferable members of the Royal Institute of British Architects/ British Institute of Architectural Technicians / Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors / Institution of Structural Engineers.

The Local Authority will not approve an application for a grant where the relevant work has already begun, but not yet complete, unless the service is satisfied that there were good reasons for beginning the works before the application was approved.

Where an application is approved, the service may treat the application as varied so that the relevant works do not include any that are completed.

The Local Authority will not approve an application for a grant if the relevant works have been completed.

1.3.14. Contractual relationships

The DFG service will support the applicant to act as the "agent" in arranging and coordinating the works themselves, offering greater choice and control to the applicant in how the eligible works are carried out.

The DFG service will provide relevant guidance for the applicant to approach and obtain all the necessary quotations from the applicants chosen contractors and submit these to the DFG Service.

The DFG service will confirm the grant award, from which the DFG applicant can progress with instructing the successful contractor to initiate and complete the eligible works.

Whilst work is being undertaken, the DFG Service will wherever possible visit the property to ensure that the work is being undertaken as per specification. When the work is completed, the officer will carry out a final inspection to ensure it has been completed satisfactorily.

The purpose of the final inspection is simply to ensure grant conditions have been met in full. All contractual relationships with respect to the carrying out of the works are between the grant applicant and the contractor.

Grant applicants must be aware however, that the DFG Service is in no way responsible for the work of the contractor and that there are no contractual obligations between the contractor and Thurrock Council (exclusion of works whereby the DFG Service agrees and confirms the DFG Service will act as "agent" on behalf of the Applicant).

If there is a dispute between the grant applicant and the contractor, the DFG Service will not be able to actively engage in dispute resolution (unless by some act or default the Authority has caused the issue which has led to the dispute) but will offer the applicant information and advice in regards to consumer rights.

1.3.15. VAT exemption

VAT exemption maximises available funds for the applicant and DFG Service, and will be applied to all eligible zero rated works as defined by HMRC. The applicant is required to notify the contractor of VAT exemption and request zero rated works are identifiable on all quotations / invoices, and the relevant VAT certificate is provided.

VAT Exemption will be applied upon notification of works completed, and receipt of invoices and a zero-rated VAT certificate from the contractor that completed the works.

1.3.16. Grant payment

The legislation requires the Authority to pay the grant on condition that the work has been carried out to its satisfaction.

The payment of a grant, or part of a grant, is conditional upon:

- The eligible works were carried out within twelve months from the date of approval of the application.

The DFG Service may extend this period where it is felt to be appropriate; for example, where satisfied that the eligible works could not have been carried out

without carrying out other works that could not have been reasonably foreseen when the application was made.

- The eligible works were carried out by one or more of the contractors whose estimates accompanied the formal application for grant.

The DFG Service may relax this condition where satisfied that circumstances have arisen which could not reasonably have been foreseen at the time the application for the grant was made, which have materially altered the ability of one or more of the contractors to carry out the eligible works within the time period specified.

- The eligible works were completed to the satisfaction of the DFG Service and applicant.

The DFG Service will require a signed declaration from the applicant that they confirm the works have been satisfactorily completed, and all relevant approvals / certificates for planning permission, building control , electrical and gas (and other) have been obtained. The DFG Service will confirm the "certified date" of grant completion and start of the "grant condition period".

Together, this denotes the end of the DFG process

The "grant condition period" is defined as the 5 year period beginning with the "certified date" of the grant completion.

The "certified date" is defined as the date certified by the council in which the completion of the eligible works is completed to the satisfaction of the council and the applicant.

If there is a dispute between the grant applicant and the contractor, but the Local Authority is satisfied that the work has been completed to a satisfactory standard, payment of any outstanding grant money will be made to the applicant, and it will be the responsibility of the applicant to pay the contractor.

If the Authority is not satisfied with the standard of work, it will retain the grant money until such time as any works issues have been resolved, at which point it will pay the applicant.

The DFG Service will offer guidance in circumstances where the applicant remains unsatisfied with the eligible works.

- The DFG Service is provided with an acceptable invoice, demand or receipt for payment for the works, and any preliminary or ancillary services or charges in respect of which the grant or part of the grant is to be paid.

For this purpose, an invoice, demand, or receipt is acceptable if it satisfies the DFG Service and is not generated by the applicant or a member of the applicant's family.

1.3.17. Deferring grant payment

The DFG Service has the discretion to defer any payment of an approved grant for a period of up to twelve months from the date of grant approval. Any such decision must be set out within the grant approval notice.

1.3.18. Grant recalculation, withheld or repaid

The DFG Service is entitled to refuse to pay the grant, or any further instalments of the grant which remains to be paid, or make a reduction in the amount of grant in the following circumstances:

- conditions of the grant have not been satisfied (1.3)
- conditions of grant payment have not been satisfied (1.3.16)
- the Authority ascertains that the amount of grant was approved on the basis of inaccurate or incomplete information and exceeds that which the grant applicant was entitled
- the Authority ascertain that without their knowledge the eligible works were started before the application was approved
- the cost of works is less than the estimated expense upon which the grant was calculated
- the work has been carried out by a contractor who was not one of the contractors who originally quoted for the work

Where any of the above situations arise, the DFG Service can demand repayment by the applicant in whole or in part, the grant or any instalment of the grant paid together with interest from the date of payment until repayment. Each case will be considered on its own merits in deciding whether to recover any such payments.

1.3.19. Grant conditions following completion

There are certain grant conditions that run for a period following the completion of the grant (the grant condition period). These conditions will run from the certified date – that is, the date at which the DFG Service has certified that the works have been carried out to its satisfaction. The application of such conditions will only apply if the grant applicant has an owner's interest in the subject property and will remain in place for 10 years from the certified date.

1.3.20. Repayment of mandatory grant

In accordance with the Disabled Facilities Grant (Conditions relating to approval or repayment of Grant) General Consent 2008, a condition is attached to Mandatory Grants to enable the Local Authority to require the repayment of an element of the grant (currently maximum £10,000) if the dwelling is sold within ten years of the grant being completed.

The Local Authority shall require the repayment of disabled facilities Grant in the following circumstances:

- breach of grant conditions (Section 1.3)
- change in circumstances (Section 1.3.21)
- Compensation cases (Section 1.3.23)
- if the grant is for a sum exceeding £5,000, and:
 - the applicant (the recipient) has a qualifying owner's interest in the premises on which the relevant works were carried out – that is, they are not a tenant
 - the recipient disposes (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or other) of the premises in respect of which the grant was given within 10 years of the certified date of completion
 - the amount of repayment which will be required is that part of the grant that exceeds £5,000 but is subject to a maximum repayment of £10,000

In coming to the decision to require repayment, consideration is given to the circumstances below to ensure the Local Authority is satisfied that it is reasonable in all circumstances to require the repayment:

- the extent to which the recipient of the grant would suffer financial hardship were he to be required to repay all or any of the grant
- whether the disposal of the premises is to enable the recipient of the grant to take up employment, or to change the location of his employment
- whether the disposal is made for reasons connected with the physical or mental health or well-being of the recipient of the grant or of a disabled occupant of the premises
- whether the disposal is made to enable the recipient of the grant to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or infirm and in need of care, which the recipient of the grant is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the recipient of the grant is in need by reason of disability or infirmity

If a grant recipient is of the opinion that any of the exemptions may be appropriate, then they will be required to submit written representations to the DFG Service setting out their case in full. The decision on whether to waive either all or a proportion of the grant recovery will be made by the DFG Service Lead, Adult Social Care Service Manager and Corporate Finance Services.

This condition is a local land charge and is binding on any person who is for the time being an owner of the dwelling or building. The placing of land registry charges will in the longer term allow the council to recycle funding back into the budget for future DFGs.

It should be noted that the repayment mechanisms only apply to owner occupiers and do not apply to tenants or landlords.

1.3.21. Changes in circumstances

Certain changes in the applicant's circumstance may affect the payment of grant. Such changes, prescribed by legislation, are either:

- where the works cease to be necessary or appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled person
- the disabled occupant ceases to occupy the dwelling
- the disabled occupant dies.

In such circumstances the council can decide either:

- not to pay the grant, or pay any further instalments
- that some or all of the works should be completed, and the grant or partial grant will be paid
- that the grant application should be re-determined

1.3.22. General provisions

Where work has commenced but grant entitlement has ceased, and where the DFG Service has decided that the works, or some works should be completed and the grant, or an appropriate proportion of the grant is paid, the DFG Service will arrange to make good the work so that the property is safe, secure and watertight.

This may not include carrying out such work as finishing internal surfaces and plumbing any new facilities (unless these are the only facilities in the property) for example. Any work over and above making the property safe, secure, and watertight would have to be paid for by the applicant or some other appropriate person.

1.3.23. Compensation cases

Section 51 of the Act allows the council to impose a condition on a grant applicant to take reasonable steps to pursue any compensation claim that may make an award for adaptations.

It is a condition of the grant that the applicant takes reasonable steps to pursue any relevant claim and to repay the grant so far as appropriate out of the proceeds of such a claim. A claim may include an insurance claim or legal claim against another person in respect of damages to the premises to which the grant relates

In the event of a breach of this condition, the applicant shall on demand pay to the Authority the amount of grant so far as relating to any such works.

The Authority may determine not to make such a demand or to demand a lesser amount. The assumption is that the amount will be demanded in full, however on representations from the applicant, the Local Authority will consider each case on its own merits.

Following a successful claim, the Grant would then be repayable.

2. Customer journey

2.1. Assessment

The OT Service will initially undertake an assessment of need and where appropriate, support the applicant in accessing a DFG. The OT Service will submit the necessary supporting information, recommendations and works specifications to the DFG service to initiate the DFG referral and application.

The DFG service cannot refuse to accept a referral from an independent Occupational Therapist who may be employed directly by the prospective grant applicant, but retains its duty to consult with the Local Authority in which the applicant resides.

In such cases, all relevant information will be forwarded to the OT service and no decision on grant eligibility will be made until their assessment and recommendations have been made.

2.2. DFG application

The DFG service will initiate the grant application by providing the prospective grant applicant with the necessary application form and supporting guidance to complete. The prospective applicant is expected to complete and return the application within 1 calendar month.

The DFG service will also initiate an Initial Test of Resources (ITR) to provide the prospective applicant of an indicative contribution of the cost of works. Where there is evidence, the prospective applicant is in receipt of "passported" benefits, the prospective applicant will be informed and no Initial Test of Resources will be undertaken.

Upon receipt of the completed form and all supporting documentation, the DFG service will progress with the grant approval once satisfied the general requirements and grant conditions as described in section 1.3 are met in full.

The DFG service will formally confirm the outcome of the means test and subsequent contribution to the cost of eligible works, and confirmation of the Grant approval.

The DFG service will provide a step-by-step guidance to support the applicant through each stage of the DFG process.

Where the application has not been returned within 1 calendar month, the DFG service will write to the prospective applicant to request the application is returned within 10 working days, after which it will be considered the prospective applicant no longer wishes to apply for the grant and the application will be closed.

2.3. Grant works

The DFG service will support the applicant to act as the "agent" in arranging and coordinating the works themselves, offering greater choice and control to the applicant in how the eligible works are carried out.

The DFG service will also provide relevant guidance for the applicant to approach and obtain all the necessary quotations from the applicants chosen contractors and submit these to the DFG Service. Returned quotations and where applicable, sketches and technical drawings will be reviewed against the OT recommendations to confirm they meet the disabled person's needs and deliver best value.

The DFG service will confirm the grant award, from which the DFG applicant can progress with instructing the successful contractor to initiate and complete the eligible works.

Where it is evident the applicant is unable to act as the "agent" themselves, or with the support of family, friends, or community support; the DFG service will act as the "agent" and coordinate works on behalf of the applicant.

The applicant will receive confirmation the DFG service will act as the "agent" in such cases, and supporting information and step by step guidance will be provided.

The DFG service will access the Local Housing Authority adaptations service framework agreement, and progress and monitor eligible works on behalf of the applicant.

2.4. Works completion

Upon notification of the works completion and invoices submitted, the DFG service will initiate the post inspection procedure. The post inspection procedure is dependent upon the nature of the works, and is either completed by the DFG officer or technical support services within the Local Housing Authority.

2.5. Grant final payment and closure

The DFG service will confirm the Local Authority is satisfied all general requirements and grant conditions have been met as described in section 1.3. The DFG Service will notify the applicant of the intention to release the grant in full.

2.6. Grant interim payments

Interim payments will be considered depending on the nature of eligible works agreed, and is often the case for extensive works such as a property extension. Where requested, the DFG service will acknowledge the request and initiate a post inspection of works completed so far.

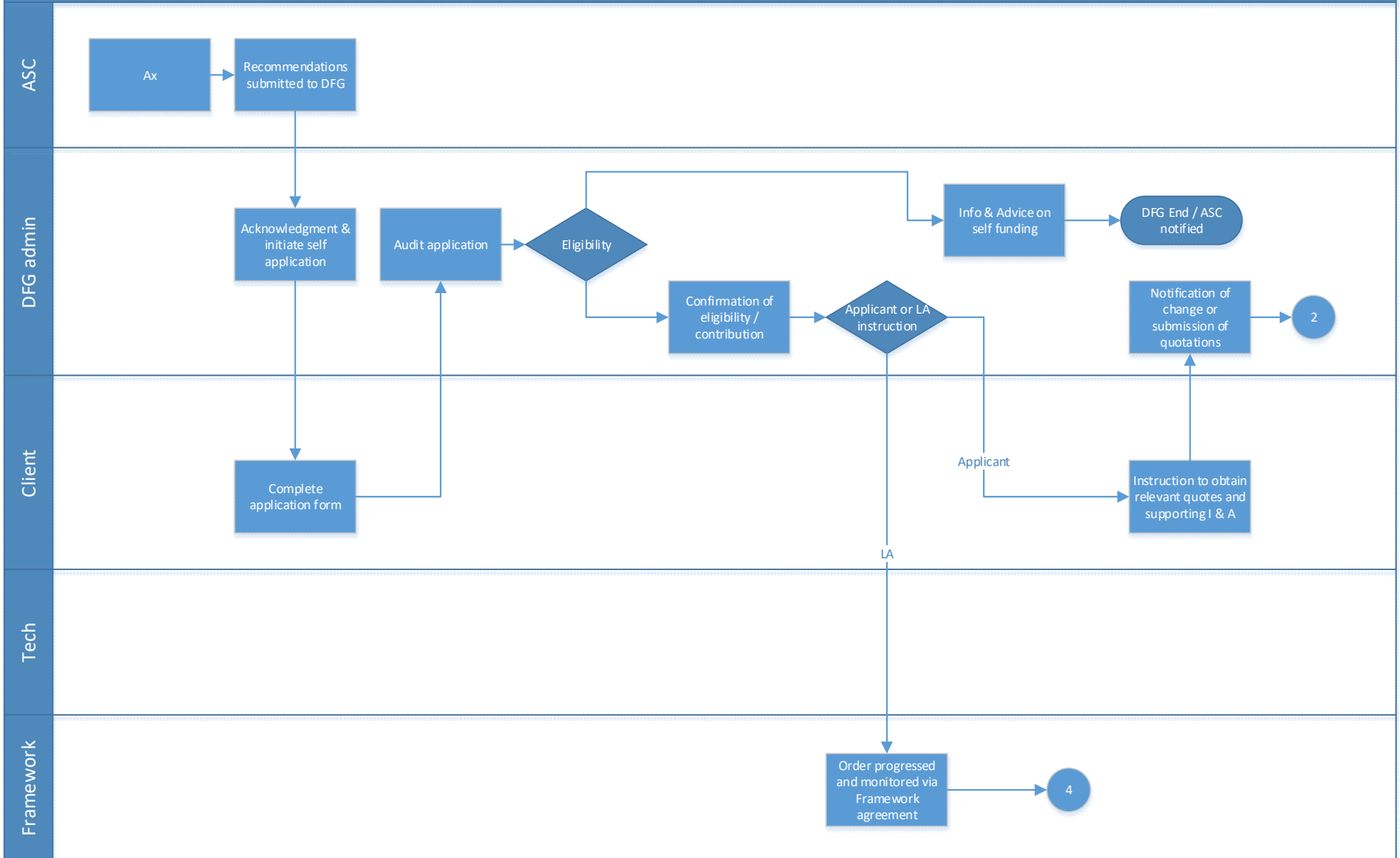
The post inspection procedure is dependent upon the nature of the works, and is either completed by the DFG officer or technical support services within Local Housing Authority.

The DFG service will confirm the Local Authority is satisfied all general requirements and grant conditions have been met as described in section 1.3, and release a proportion of the grant to enable the applicant to progress an interim payment.

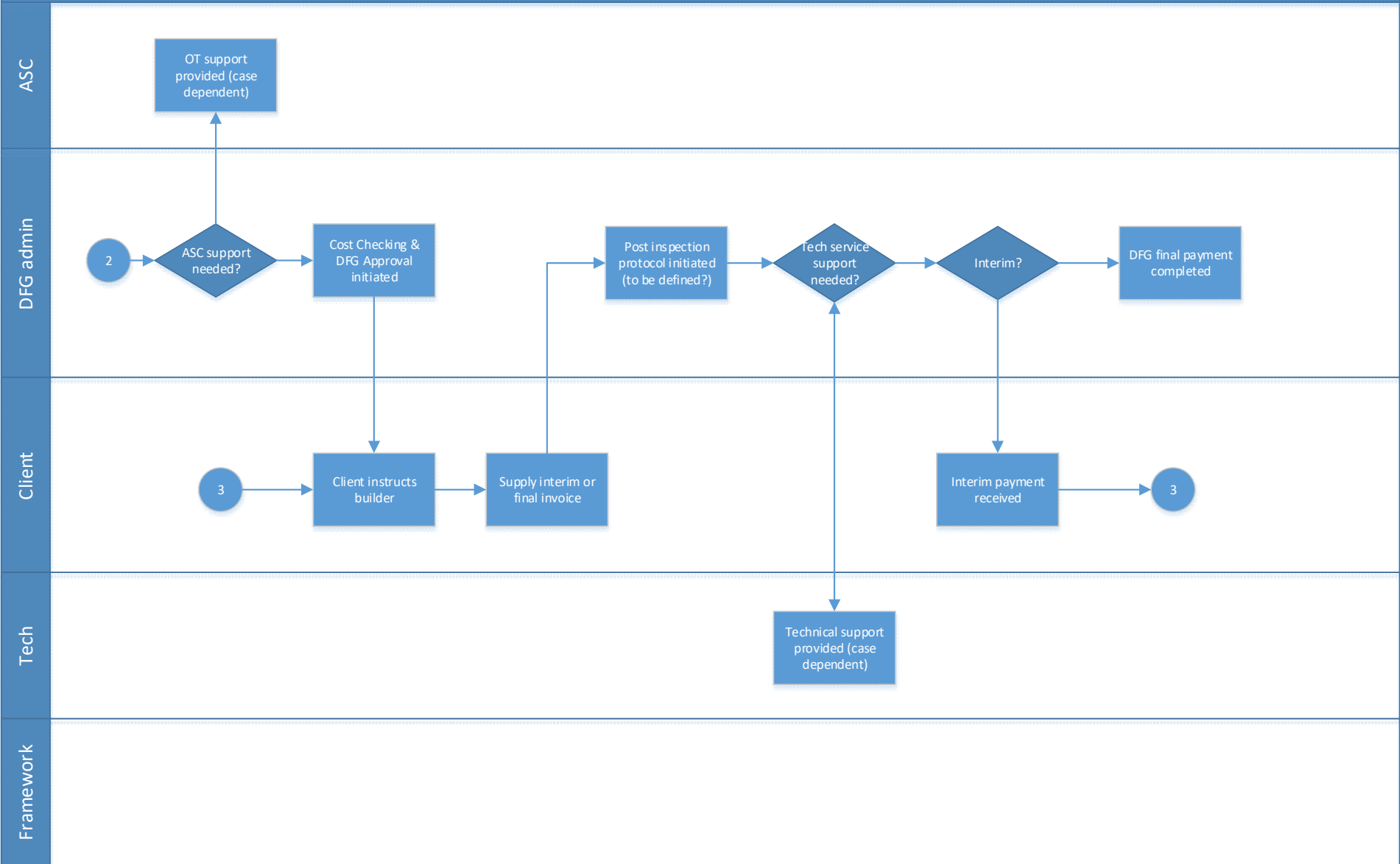
2.7. Customer journey

The customer journey described above is summarised in the diagrams below.

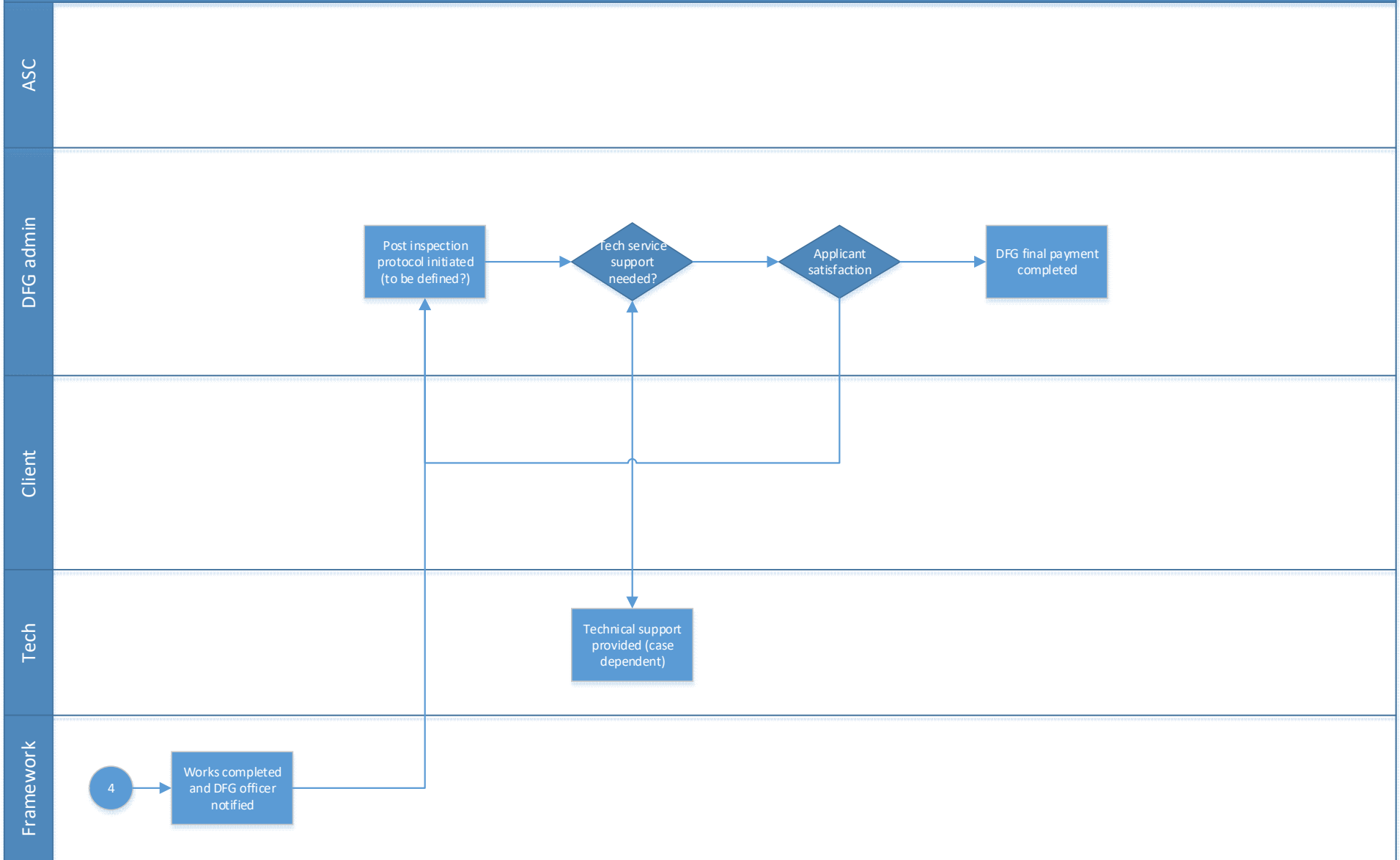
DFG Customer Journey



DFG Customer Journey



DFG Customer Journey



3. Better Care Fund and Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants

3.1. Introduction

The government is committed to person-centred, integrated care. This is driven by the Better Care Fund, where local health, social care and housing services are committed to work together towards common aims that enable people to live healthy, fulfilled, independent and longer lives.

The DFG Service will support the delivery of the BCF plan, and will have consideration of the wider strategic planning and implementation of the BCF to support wider services within health, social care and housing, especially where there is a recognised crossover with DFG services in supporting individuals to remain in their home and meet their wider housing needs.

In addition, the Local Authority also has the power to offer discretionary financial assistance by virtue of the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England & Wales) Order 2002.

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 ("the RRO") removed most of the prescriptive housing renewal grant legislation contained in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. Article 3 of the RRO introduced wide ranging discretionary powers to allow councils to develop different forms of assistance to meet local needs. The council intends to make use of the RRO provisions to enable it to use funds received from the Better Care Fund more flexibly, responsively and effectively from 2018.

Using these powers, the Local Authority intends policy review and development in offering discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants under various circumstances, some of which are given below.

All requests for Discretionary grants should be submitted to the DFG service by the relevant OT, healthcare professional, or private sector housing service.

3.2. Development intention

A policy review and development for the DFG service for the offer of Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants initiated in 2017.

Review of the Discretionary DFG grants policy will be undertaken each year to consider the status of the BCF plan and local resident and service needs.

The decision to award any Discretionary Grant is at the discretion of the council, and Discretionary Grants may be withdrawn by the council at any time.

3.3. Proposed inclusion within policy development

The council will consider providing such assistance in the form of a discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant to a disabled person in the following circumstances:

- as a 'top up' to a mandatory grant and / or to fund unforeseen works

- to provide adaptations for a child's second home where the parent's live separately
- to provide adaptations for a child / young person in foster care
- to provide adaptations for an adult supported in "shared lives" or similar supported living scheme
- to assist a disabled person or their family to move to more suitable accommodation
- to dispense financial assessment for works below £5000
- to facilitate a timely discharge from hospital or other non-residential settings
- to avoid unnecessary hospital admission or other non-residential settings
- to facilitate fast track adaptations for end of life / life limiting conditions
- to improve accommodation of a nature that supports residents in supported living and step down / rehabilitation services, or in need of interim support
- provide non-fixed solutions, including, but not limited to Tech Enabled Care and ICES
- explore and provide innovative housing solutions / schemes for a range of client groups, including, but not limited to dementia, autism etc (purpose build housing solutions)
- to support safe / warm homes initiatives, including, but not limited to minor repairs, house clearance
- to recover additional professional fees
- to support care and support housing schemes
- to support complimentary services in meeting an individual's wider housing needs
- to support handyman / minor adaptations schemes

Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant assistance will be subject to the financial resources available at the time of the application. If there are insufficient resources to deliver approved or anticipated mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant applications, the Local Authority reserves the right not to approve any discretionary grant applications.

Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant assistance will be subject to the same general requirements and grant conditions set within the mandatory grant and may be subject to the same means test applied for the mandatory grant and registered as a land charge.

3.4. Top-up to mandatory grant

Although the maximum amount of grant available for a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant is currently £30,000, the Local Authority will consider, through this policy development proposal, to provide a discretionary top-up of up to £20,000 under circumstances where the cost of eligible works exceeds £30,000 (either because of unforeseen works or the extent of the original work that is recommended to the DFG Service).

This type of assistance will only be offered as a top up for schemes that fall within the mandatory grant headings as previously described.

When determining an application for discretionary assistance, applicants will need to show that other options have been explored including, but not limited to, self-funding, charitable funding and top-up from relevant health and social care services.

The exception to this is the provision of a discretionary grant for 'unforeseen' works that are encountered once works on site have commenced, where the maximum discretionary grant in these circumstances is limited to £2,000, unless exceptional circumstances are presented.

3.5. Dual residency of a disabled child

Where the parents have joint custody of a disabled child, only one dwelling will be classed as their main residence for the purposes of a mandatory DFG, which may or may not be in Thurrock.

In certain circumstances, a discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant may be available to provide adaptations to the second home, up to a maximum of £20,000.

In determining the works that might be considered as eligible for assistance, the Local Authority will consider the suitability of the property for adaptation, the complexity and scope of the adaptations required, and any observations or referral made by the Occupational Therapy service. The adaptations may not necessarily mirror those of the main residence but will need to demonstrate benefit for the care of the disabled child.

Any discretionary grant of this nature will be subject to a means test where applicable and will be registered as a land charge in full.

3.6. Child in foster care

A Disabled Facilities Grant can be granted for a child in foster care providing the likely length of care at the dwelling is expected to be years rather than months. In such circumstances the grant will be discretionary and not mandatory and will be subject to the availability of funding.

Due to the diverse circumstances surrounding children in foster care, each case will be considered on an individual basis by the Disabled Facilities service and will consider any local agreements and protocols in place with social care services

Any discretionary grant of this nature will be subject to a means test and will be registered as a land charge.

3.7. Adult in "shared lives" or similar supported living scheme

A Disabled Facilities Grant can be granted for an adult in a "shared lives" or similar supported living scheme providing the likely length of care at the dwelling is expected to be years rather than months. In such circumstances the grant will be discretionary, up to a maximum of £20,000 and will be subject to the availability of funding.

Due to the diverse circumstances surrounding an adult in a "shared lives" or similar supported living scheme, each case will be considered on an individual basis by the Disabled Facilities service and will consider any local agreements and protocols in place with social care services

3.8. Move to alternative / suitable property

Where the DFG service deems it not to be reasonable and practicable to adapt an applicant's current home to meet their needs (unsuitable for improvement, repair, or adaptation, and / or avoid need to progress costly adaptations to the existing property), then a grant of up to £10,000 may be awarded at the council's discretion to assist the applicant to move to a more suitable home in addition to any adaptations required.

The assessment of the suitability for adaptation of the existing and new property will be considered by the DFG service in close liaison with the Adult Social Care OT service. The OT will support the determination of the suitability of a new property to meet the needs of the applicant.

If the value of the grant for the adaptations in the new property is expected to be under the threshold (£5,000) for means testing according with section 3.9, then the relocation grant will not be subject to means testing.

Any legal charge on the property in accordance with section 1.3.20 will not consider the amount of the relocation grant. To be eligible for the Relocation Grant, an owner occupier must commit to remain in the property for the grant condition period of 5 years.

3.9. End of life / life limiting conditions

The DFG service intends to support the delivery of "fast track" DFG support for individuals who are on the end-of-life care pathway and / or have a life limiting condition.

The funding will be available if there is no other relevant health or social care funding obtainable, and "fast tracked" (not means tested) following a referral from an OT or relevant health and social care practitioner, or officer from private sector housing services.

3.10. Threshold for financial assessment

The DFG service intends to remove the financial assessment for DFGs in the following instances:

- all works where the cost of the approved grant does not exceed £5,000.
- hospital discharge in urgent (or extreme circumstances) cases identified by health and / or social care professionals, including where the costs exceed £5,000.
- end of life or life-limiting condition cases identified by health and / or social care professionals, including where the costs exceed £5,000.
- safe / well homes cases identified by health and / or social care professionals, including where the costs exceed £5,000.
- at the discretion of the council, other presenting cases with presenting exceptional circumstances that is recognised in consultation with health and/or social care professionals, including where the costs exceed £5,000.
- at the discretion of the council, discretionary powers to waive the means test altogether in some cases if the applicant would face excessive financial hardship if required to pay for the entirety of the adaptation

3.11. Timely discharge / admission avoidance (hospital / other non-residential)

The DFG service, at its discretion, may pay up to £5,000 to support eligible applicants from hospital or other non-residential settings. The funding will be available if there is no other relevant health or social care funding obtainable, and "fast tracked" (not means tested) following a referral from an OT or relevant health and social care practitioner, or officer from private sector housing services.

Work which may be carried out include, but are not restricted to; deep cleaning, clearing properties, repairs needed to free a property of Category 1 Hazards under the Housing

Health and Safety Rating System, other urgent repairs, repair of heating systems and the provision of emergency heating.

3.12. Supported living and step down / rehabilitation / interim support

The DFG service, at its discretion, may support adaptations or non-fixed solutions to support an individual living in interim accommodation and / or engaged with services that would later enable the individual to return home where eligible DFG works would be required and / or are in situ.

The DFG Service, at its discretion, may explore financial support for the provision of equipment or temporary works up to £5,000 where the processes needed to secure a long-term solution are likely to be lengthy, or delays are foreseen, and it is considered appropriate for interim help to be provided.

3.13. Provision of non-fixed solutions (individual and service considerations)

Individual: A Discretionary Grant may be considered for the provision of aids and adaptations when; during assessment and consideration of adaptations to the home environment, the provision of specialist equipment would best meet the need at a reduced cost to that of a major home adaptation; for example, but not limited to, modular ramping solutions delivered via Integrated Community Equipment Services (ICES) when permanent solution is unsuitable, a specialist wheelchair that adjusts height to existing kitchen work surfaces as opposed to altering the kitchen or specialist stair climber where stair lift / through floor lift / extension may not be suitable.

Service: Discretionary Grant funding may be considered to enable services to deliver ICES, Tech Enabled Care (TEC) or other solution that improves the accessibility of the applicant's home and contributes to an applicant's wider housing needs.

3.14. Safe / warm homes

The DFG service, at its discretion may pay up to £10,000 per application to support eligible applicants. The funding will be available if there is no other, or in combination with, relevant funding obtainable from Private Sector Housing or other source and following a supported referral from private sector housing services.

The funding will be "fast tracked" (not means tested) and work which may be carried out can include, but are not restricted to; deep cleaning, clearing properties, repairs needed to free a property of Category 1 Hazards under the Housing Health and Safety Rating System, and / or other urgent repairs, repair of heating systems and the provision of emergency heating.

DFG discretionary funding will be allocated to the applicant, Private Sector Housing service or other service provider to deliver such initiatives that improves the accessibility of the applicant's home and contributes to an applicant's wider housing needs.

3.15. Innovative housing solutions

The DFG Service, at its discretion, may contribute to the provision of innovative Housing solutions for eligible applicants, and contributions may be up to £10,000 per dwelling. The funding will be available following a referral from an OT or relevant health and social care

practitioner, or officer from private sector housing services where there is no, or in combination with, health or social care, or other funding sources obtainable.

Examples of, but not limited to, can include schemes exploring housing solutions for people with Sensory impairment, Autism, Dementia, Learning Disability, Mental Health needs, significant Neurological trauma and / or Multiple impairments.

Service: Discretionary Grant funding may be considered to enable services to innovative housing schemes that would otherwise improve the accessibility of the applicant's home and contributes to an applicant's wider housing needs.

3.16. Professional fees

The DFG service, at its discretion, may fund service delivery costs for Occupational Therapy Services for activity relating to DFG provision.

The DFG service, at its discretion, may pay individualised professional fees, including associated charges required for preliminary DFG work, to see if the project is feasible for cases where the DFG does not proceed. The fees must be reasonable and are limited to £2,000 (except in exceptional circumstance), and cover, but are not limited to, surveyors' fees, structural engineer fees and private OT fees. All fees must be agreed with the council before any work takes place in order to be eligible, and this will be done on case-by-case basis.

3.17. Care and support housing schemes

The DFG Service, at its discretion, may contribute to the provision of purpose-built adaptations to new or existing registered landlord properties and / or care and support needs housing scheme for disabled people. Contributions may be up to £20,000 per dwelling, and eligibility would be satisfied if the intended eligibility for residents of the purpose-built property aligns with DFG general grant requirements and conditions.

Examples of, but not limited to, can include schemes exploring purpose-built schemes for people with Sensory impairment, Autism, Dementia, Learning Disability, Mental Health needs, significant Neurological trauma and / or Multiple impairments.

3.18. Complementary services

The DFG Service, at its discretion, may contribute to larger funding sources, such as, but not limited to, telecare (TEC), community equipment (ICES) and minor adaptations / repairs to support the design and delivery of services that fit with local delivery priorities and arrangements to best meet the needs of individuals, which would satisfy eligibility (intended eligibility for residents in receipt of the service aligns with DFG general grant requirements and conditions) and restore or enable independent living, privacy, confidence and dignity for individuals and their families.

3.19. Repayment of discretionary grant

Like the provision of mandatory grant, a further condition is attached to Discretionary Grants to enable the Local Authority to require the repayment of an element of the mandatory and discretionary grant (currently maximum £10,000) if the dwelling is sold within ten years of the grant being completed.

The Local Authority shall require the repayment of the Disabled Facilities Grant in the following circumstances:

- breach of grant conditions (Section 1.3)
- change in circumstances (Section 1.3.21)
- compensation cases (Section 1.3.23)
- if the grant is for a sum exceeding £5,000, and:
 - the applicant (the recipient) has a qualifying owner's interest in the premises on which the relevant works were carried out – that is, they are not a tenant
 - the recipient disposes (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or other) of the premises in respect of which the grant was given within 10 years of the certified date of completion
 - the amount of repayment which will be required is that part of the grant that exceeds £5,000 but is subject to a maximum repayment of £10,000

In coming to the decision to require repayment, consideration is given to the circumstances below to ensure the Local Authority is satisfied that it is reasonable in all circumstances to require the repayment:

- the extent to which the recipient of the grant would suffer financial hardship were he or she to be required to repay all or any of the grant
- whether the disposal of the premises is to enable the recipient of the grant to take up employment, or to change the location of his employment
- whether the disposal is made for reasons connected with the physical or mental health or well-being of the recipient of the grant or of a disabled occupant of the premises
- whether the disposal is made to enable the recipient of the grant to live with, or near, any person who is disabled or infirm and in need of care, which the recipient of the grant is intending to provide, or who is intending to provide care of which the recipient of the grant is in need by reason of disability or infirmity

If a grant recipient is of the opinion that any of the exemptions may be appropriate, then they will be required to submit written representations to the DFG Service setting out their case in full. The decision on whether to waive either all or a proportion of the grant recovery will be made by the DFG Service Lead and Adult Social Care Service Manager / Assistant Director.

This condition is a local land charge and is binding on any person who is for the time being an owner of the dwelling or building. The placing of land registry charges will in the longer term allow the council to recycle funding back into the budget for future DFGs.

It should be noted that the repayment mechanisms only apply to owner occupiers and do not apply to tenants or landlords.

4. Complaints and dispute resolution

Where applicants are dissatisfied with the service they have received (including where a grant has been refused), they should contact the DFG Service initially. If the matter is remains unresolved to Applicants' satisfaction, the applicant can initiate a formal complaint via the authority's adopted Customer Complaints procedure.

If after receiving the authority's response the complainant remains unsatisfied, the applicant can write to the Local Government Ombudsman.