

Item xx: Supporting People in Their Own Homes DFGs.

Recommendations

Chief Executives are asked to:

1. Approve the recruitment of a county adaptations manager
2. Endorse key points of a pooled budget for adaptations
3. Endorse the waiver of means test currently being trialled
4. Note the implementation requirements including major decision in December 2018

Summary

At the last Chief Executives Board, the Board unanimously supported further work towards a consistent and improved customer experience for adaptations, to continue beyond July 2018 when the current phase ends. Key points approved were:

- Implement a single policy across the county.
- Adherence to the good practice guidance.
- A single pooled budget.
- A single point of contact.
- Dedicated resource to implement proposals.
- Approved provision of minor adaptations and deep cleans. The Better Care Fund can be top sliced as set out in the report.

This note gives further detail on the key elements and the next steps required.

Dedicated Resource

The current phase of work with these comes to an end on 31st July 2018. In order to maintain momentum and further build on this work, a dedicated resource is essential, to be in place as soon as is reasonably possible.

This single coordinating point, referred to here as “county adaptations manager”, will be a senior position acting across all organisations. The role will be responsible for

- Pooled budget of approx. £13m (2018/19 amounts)
- Strategy and policy development
- Matrix management of operational staff
- Performance management across the whole customer journey
- Reporting to the Steering Group, with escalation of issues as necessary.

This has been evaluated according to the Chichester DC job evaluation scheme and assessed as a senior level post, GRADE 10 at salary band £52,990, incl car allowance. With on costs, this equate

to £67,800 p.a. Also making allowance for mileage and expenses and some administrative support, it is proposed that £100k be top sliced from the 2018/19 DFG budget to fund the post. For expedience it is proposed that the role should be hosted by Chichester DC, at least initially, reporting to the Director of Housing and Community of Chichester DC with dotted line reporting to an Executive Director at WSCC.

Chief Executives previously approved the role in principle at the April 2018 Board meeting, and are now asked to approve the recruitment of an individual to the post as soon as possible. The post is initially for a two year period however it is anticipated that if the project is successful the post will become permanent. In the event of post being terminated and the postholder being made redundant then all the D&Bs and WSCC will be equally liable for the full redundancy cost.

The proposed timeline is:

Description	Date
Issue advert internally (all West Sussex Councils)	19 June
Closing date for applications	6 July
Interviews	WC 23 July
Appointment made	WC 23 July
Successful candidate in post	Asap subject to notice/negotiation with current employer.

Pooled Budget

Chief Executives have already approved in principle a single pooled budget for adaptations so that funds can be applied to areas of greatest need.

The budget for 2018/19 across the County is estimated at £13.7m, made up of:

Amount	Description
£7.7m	indicative 2018/19 DFG allocations
£6.4m	2017/18 monies carried forward (including £2.8m commitments)
-£0.4m	top slice for minor adaptations and co-ordinating resource
£13.7m	Total

For 2018/19, an informal agreement is proposed, underpinned by Chief Executives' endorsement of the key principles.

For 2019/20, a formal agreement for pooled budget is intended to be in place, with formal decision on this by December 2018.

It will be a task for the County Adaptations Manager to implement the detailed agreement, but key principles for approval by the Chief Executives now are:

- Nominal allocations to districts/boroughs to remain as per current Government allocations
- Redistribution of underspends/overspends to meet need across the County
- Careful monitoring of spend to anticipate underspends/overspends and initiate action as necessary
- Option to stop discretionary grants once commitments reach a trigger point of 75% of budget
- WSCC to host the pooled budget, as a pragmatic arrangement as they are the initial recipients of the DFG grant
- Districts/boroughs to remain responsible for control of budgets, paying invoices etc

Waiver of means test

The DFG steering group has agreed the principle of waiving formal means test to facilitate access to adaptations. This is in line with previous advice received, and appears to be the direction of travel for other authorities too.

Rather than specify types of adaptations for waiver of means test, it was agreed to waive means test for any adaptations up to £10,000. Instead a simple self-declaration of eligibility according to capital and income is to be put in place, and this is to be set consistently with that of the Care Act financial eligibility threshold, i.e. capital not to exceed £23,250.

It was intended that Chichester DC will apply this change with immediate effect, as their policy gives them sufficient flexibility to do so. However, since the last steering group I have agreed to put this on hold until the Adaptations Manager is appointed as a number of concerns have been raised that need further consideration. Others to implement do so after confirming that they have authority to do so.

It is expected that adoption of this change will reduce the number of people dropping out of the process due either unwillingness to undergo means test or too high a financial contribution. Subject to demonstrating its effectiveness, this change would be embedded into the revised county-wide policy for decision in December 2018.

Key decision and timing

For all to be in order for a formal start to the pooled budget on 1st April 2019, it is proposed that each authority seek a decision from their Council by end December 2018, to cover:

- Approval of the pooled fund arrangements
- Approval of a revised county-wide policy, informed by the project work to date

Governance

It is proposed that oversight of the county-wide approach including pooled fund should be via the DFG Steering Group, with appropriate representation from each District/Borough as well as West Sussex County Council. To enable appropriate ownership and decision making, the WSCC representative should be at Director or Executive Director level.

Background

The DFG transformation phase 3 was endorsed by the Chief Executives and Leaders Boards last year. The purpose of the project was “Help people to live in their own homes – easily and with dignity with the right adaptation when they needed it.” This was to be achieved by a combination of transformational change and tactical actions to address issues relating to extended end-to-end times, silo working and multiple handoffs for the customer, and in recent years a pattern of underspend i.e. not helping as many people as could potentially be reached. Full details of the project were set out in previous reports to the Chief Executives Board. The current phase of work ends in July 2018.

The DFG Transformation Project has made significant progress in improving the customer experience. To date the project has delivered:

- Greater flexibility in the use of the grant funding, enabling people to be helped who would not otherwise have been eligible for funding.

- A common discretionary grant policy across the County, the only one we are aware of in a 2-tier area (note CDC has a more flexible policy than was agreed by the other D&Bs as it has continued to test new discretionary elements such as waiving the means test) .
- Improved process flow from WSCC to districts/boroughs through fast tracking of simpler adaptations as well as allowing direct referrals to the districts/boroughs, with improvement to customer delivery times.
- Improved working with a major housing provider, with agreement for tacit consent for works applicable across the County, thereby reducing the time that customers have to wait for landlord approval from many months to 14 days.
- An agreed process with hospitals for referral for hospital discharge grants.

It is early days to be seeing quantitative improvement for customers but in the limited time since approval of discretionary policies, districts and boroughs have been dealing with over 100 discretionary grants.

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Annexes

- List of background papers, supporting documents etc.