



DERBY CITY COUNCIL

SOCIAL CARE AND HEALTH COMMISSION 25 OCTOBER 2004

Report of the Director of Policy

Disabled Facilities Grants: Progress Review

RECOMMENDATION

1. To consider the contents of this report and refer any comments to Council Cabinet.

SUPPORTING INFORMATION

- 2.1 The Commission's Adaptations Topic Review published in December 2002 made a number of recommendations aimed at reducing timescales to deliver adaptations, including Disabled Facilities Grants – DFGs.
- 2.2 At its meeting on 22 March 2004, the Commission considered a report outlining the progress made in implementing some of those recommendations which related to DFGs.
- 2.3 Following on from this report, the Commission reiterated to Cabinet its wish to see the outstanding recommendations from the Adaptations Topic Review implemented. These were:
 - the employment of a progress chaser
 - the establishment of block contracts for stair lifts and bathing facilities.
- 2.4 This report outlines the progress made in implementing these recommendations. It also assesses the impact that previously reported progress improvements and the increased budget for DFGs has had on delivery timescales.

Progress Chaser

- 2.5 An existing, highly experienced Community Care Worker has been in this role since July 2004. Initially, this was established as a three-month pilot scheme, with funding provided by the Renewal and Grants Section, using salary savings from a similarly graded post that was temporarily vacant. The funding provided was used to provide cover for the normal duties of the Community Care Worker.
- 2.6 The general feeling is that this post has proved very useful and all parties would like to see it continued. In providing a single point of contact internally between the Renewal and Grants Section, Social Services and Corporate Services, it is enabling service users to be kept better informed of the progress with regard to their adaptations. It is also ensuring that timings for the various stages in the adaptation progress can be better adhered to, therefore, reducing any unnecessary delays. Another benefit of the role is the freeing up of Occupational Therapists to concentrate on needs assessments without the distraction of having to progress chase timescales.

- 2.7 Social Services intend to keep the current potholder filling this role after the pilot scheme ends, although they will no longer have the additional funding to cover his normal duties. This arrangement will be reviewed and funding sought to establish the Progress Chaser as an additional post.

Contracting arrangements for stair lifts and bathing adaptations

- 2.8 A long-term partnering arrangement for the provision of new stair lifts has been tendered. We expect to enter into such an agreement with a stair lift company imminently. The main benefits of this are the possibility of streamlined procedures and enhanced, close working relationships with a single partner firm. However, initial analysis suggests that this will also offer some cost savings.
- 2.9 Wherever possible, we are now also using reconditioned lifts that are re-sited from properties where they are no longer required. This gives large cost savings in suitable cases and can also reduce the time taken to install a lift. This approach is not suitable or possible in every case, however, and we expect a mix of new and re-sited lifts to be provided, with the majority having to be new lifts.
- 2.10 Timescales for the provision of lifts has fallen greatly owing to improved procedures. A small number of emergency cases has shown how close working between Social Services staff and grants officers can produce extremely quick results. The best result to date being the issue of formal grant approval within four working days of first receiving the recommendation from Social Services. In that time:
- the stairs were surveyed by a lift company surveyor arranged by Social Services
 - a quote was provided
 - the service user was visited by a grants liaison officer to complete all the formal applications
 - a means test was done, checked and verified, the property ownership was confirmed by a Land Registry search
 - the grant approved and Social Services notified and requested to order the lift.

These actions are generally being done concurrently to minimise delay.

- 2.11 Adaptations requiring building work can never be this rapid, although considerable improvements are still being sought for recognised high priority cases. What chiefly determines the timescale is scheme feasibility and design carried out by Corporate Services architects. These elements of the DFG process are, however, vitally important in making sure that a complete environmental package can be tailored to meeting the service users' needs. As a result, they can often be complex and time consuming. Nevertheless, the scope to improve turnaround times for drawings and specifications, without compromising the quality and suitability of the adaptation for the service user, will continue to be examined.

2.12 The tendering process also accounts for a significant part of the overall timescale, although Corporate Services will be introducing a new system based on a schedule of rates for bathroom adaptations, which will enable long-term partnering arrangements with contractors who regularly carry out these adaptations. When introduced, following a competitive tendering process this November, the system will dispense with individual and small block tenders, with jobs being issued to partner contractors working to pre-determined rates. This will create an immediate time saving in each case. Also, since a choice of contractor can legitimately be made, individual jobs can be issued to contractors who have the least existing work, hopefully reducing the current delays between work being ordered and actually starting on site. The general shortage of builders and trades people is also increasingly a significant factor in the overall timescale to complete an adaptation. Using partnering arrangements that reduce uncertainties over tendering and the availability of work, combined with being able to select the most appropriate contractor for each job, should help to reduce delays in starting work.

DFG delivery timescales

2.13 For the past few years, the main measure of performance in respect of DFG delivery has been the average number of days from initial enquiry by the service user to completion of adaptation works. Although this is a crude indicator, which does not take account of process delays which are beyond the control of the Council, the reduction of 36 days from 503 in 2002/03 to 469 in the 12 month period ending 30 September 2004, suggests that the process improvements implemented over the past 18 months are having a positive effect.

2.14 Clearer evidence of this is obtained when the range of timescales of individual DFG cases is analysed. Figure 1 in Appendix 2 shows:

- an increasing number of DFGs being completed within the shorter timescale ranges
- an increasing number of cases completed within 50 days, whereas in 2002/03 there were none
- reducing numbers of long-term cases.

Figure 2 in Appendix 2 also shows an increasing number and proportion of cases completed within 350 days.

2.15 The introduction of the partnering arrangements outlined in this report should enable these timescales to be improved further.

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Background papers:	None
List of appendices:	Appendix 1 – Implications Appendix 2 – Delivery Timescales

IMPLICATIONS

Financial

- 1.1 The Government's Specified Capital Grant for 2004/05 to support the Council's expenditure on mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants – DFGs – is £389,000. The total budget for DFGs in 2004/05 is £1.4 million.
- 1.2 Any additional resources will need to be found from within the overall Housing Capital Programme.
- 1.3 The establishment of a Progress Chaser on a permanent basis will have revenue implication. Although as yet unquantified, it will be the subject of a revenue development submission for 2005/06.

Legal

2. Disabled Facilities Grants are made under the provisions of Part 1 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and are a mandatory entitlement.

Personnel

3. None.

Corporate objectives and priorities for change

- 4.1 Provision of home adaptations for disabled people comes under the Corporate Plan objectives of **protecting and supporting people**.
- 4.2 Such provision also contributes to the Council's priority of **developing plans to modernise the fostering service and residential and community care for adults to meet the level of demand and the requirements of the National Care Standards Commission**.



Figure 1 - Disabled Facilities Grants - number of days from initial enquiry to completion

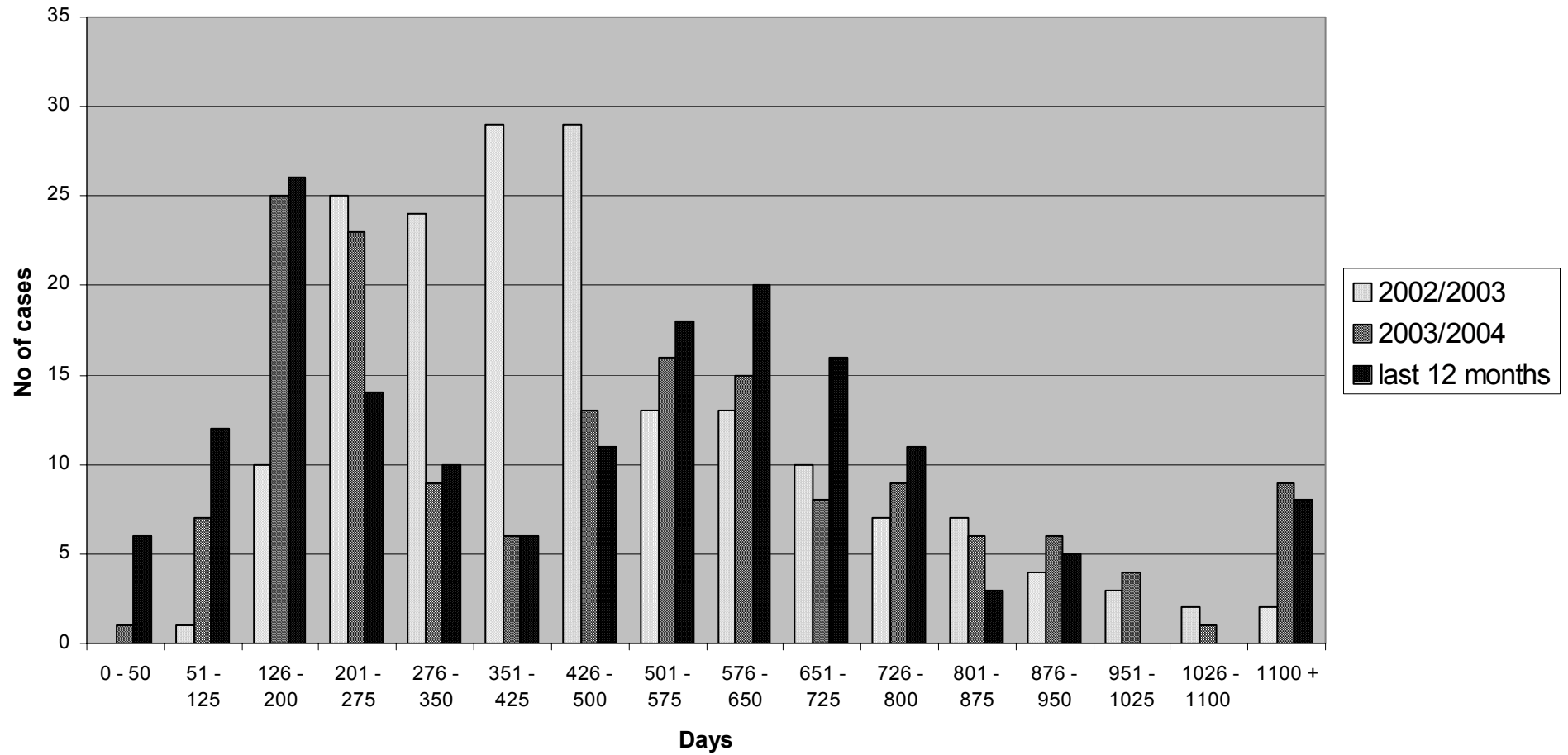


Figure 2 - Disabled Facilities Grant completions

