



Local Authority Leaders and Chief Executives
cc.WLGA

10 March 2021

Dear Colleagues

Removing the means test on small and medium Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)

We know that reducing barriers so disabled people can maintain their independence, safety and good health allows them to continue to live at home with dignity, and it also reduces pressures on our health and social care services. From April 2021 it will be simpler for disabled people to get help with small and medium sized adaptations to their homes as we take measures to remove the means test from small and medium Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG).

DFGs are the main source of help for disabled people in the great majority of households in Wales, those which are owner occupied or in the private rented sector. This is the main way in which those disabled people get help with the most common types of adaptations, such as stair lifts, ramps and downstairs toilet and washing facilities. We must do everything we can to remove barriers so disabled people can maintain their independence, safety and good health. This not only allows them to continue to live at home with dignity, it reduces pressures on our health and social care services.

Our most recent data shows us that small and medium sized adaptations made up the vast majority of DFGs – 1,507 small and 2,214 medium adaptations, compared with just 269 large adaptations. If the requirement to conduct a means test is removed, independent research calculates the cost to local government in Wales would be an additional £238,000, whilst each local authority would save £6,000-£10,000 in annual administration costs. This research by the Wales Centre for Public Policy has been published on their website today.

Local authorities are under statutory duties to provide DFGs to eligible disabled people and this will not change. However, they can use of powers under the Regulatory Reform Order 2002 to make grants without applying a means test. For this reason, I am increasing the Enable grant to local authorities from April 2021 by £400,000, to £4.4 million. This additional grant can be used to meet the capital pressures and address any potential bottlenecks as a result of increased demand. I feel confident that working together with local authorities we can continue to improve access to adaptations for those who need them, as well as reduce waiting times.

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Rydym yn croesawu derbyn gohebiaeth yn Gymraeg. Byddwn yn ateb gohebiaeth a dderbynnir yn Gymraeg yn Gymraeg ac ni fydd gohebu yn Gymraeg yn arwain at oedi.

We welcome receiving correspondence in Welsh. Any correspondence received in Welsh will be answered in Welsh and corresponding in Welsh will not lead to a delay in responding.

The adaptations themselves should continue to be funded from the capital the Welsh Government distributes to local government to meet the cost of DFGs.

We will monitor the impact of this policy over an initial three year period. We will need to collect information about the numbers of applications for DFGs, completion rates and waiting times. We will report on progress annually.

It will be a condition of the Enable grant that local authorities do not means test small and medium DFGs. I expect local authorities to comply for the benefit of disabled people who live in their areas. If, in due course, we find we need to, we do have the option of legislating in the next Senedd.

In relation to the small number of large adaptations carried out each year, I wish to highlight the amended the guidance for the Integrated Care Fund (ICF) capital programme for 2021/22 which I issued in January. Large adaptations are usually only required in complex cases, such as families with disabled children and adults with life-limiting diseases. Resolving the financial issues can be very time consuming, leading to significant and unnecessary continuing distress. Under the amended ICF guidance, Regional Partnership Boards are now able to use their discretion to meet the additional costs of adaptations which cost more than £36,000. I will be monitoring how much use is made of this flexibility over the coming year.

Finally, I would like to take this opportunity to thank the members of the Housing Adaptations Steering Group, including local authority housing officials and the WLGA, for their work in bringing us to a point where we can take such an important step to improving the lives of disabled people in Wales.

Yours sincerely



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Y Gweinidog Tai a Llywodraeth Leol
Minister for Housing and Local Government

Attached: revised Housing Adaptations Service Standards