

WIRRAL COUNCIL

CABINET : 10th July 2007

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES

CAPITAL GRANT FOR IMPROVING THE CARE HOME ENVIRONMENT FOR OLDER PEOPLE 2007/2008

Executive Summary

The Department of Health has made available a grant to Local Authorities for Improving the Care Home Environment for Older People. The Grant is available for public, private and voluntary homes where the majority of places are for Older People. It aims to improve quality through improving the physical environment and must be spent during 2007/08. Wirral's allocation is £890,000 and a distribution proposal, agreed by representatives of the voluntary sector, Wirral PCT and DASS, was submitted to the Department of Health on 28th March. 10% of the total sum is to be retained by Wirral council for administration and contingencies. Notification that Wirral's plans had been accepted was received on 30th May.

1 Background

- 1.1 In December 2006, the Department of Health announced a one-off capital grant of £67.725 million for improving the care home environment for older people in homes registered to provide nursing or personal care where the majority of places are for older people. The grant was allocated to local authorities based on the number of residents aged 65 or over supported by the authority and Wirral's allocation is £890,000. It was envisaged that £5,000 would be the minimum level of grant allocated to any one home.
- 1.2 The grant is linked to the Dept of Health publication "A new ambition for old age - next steps in implementing the National Services Framework for Older People." This highlights the need for older people to be treated with dignity in all care settings.

2 Use of the grant

- 2.1 Guidance made it clear that the funding is for capital expenditure only and must address improving the quality of social care services by enhancing the physical environment in which residential care is provided for older people. It is available for homes in the public, private and voluntary sectors. It is designed to benefit the maximum number of care home residents, and to improve "user experience".
- 2.2 Grants should support improvements that will make the greatest difference to the quality of life of residents. For example, projects could include:

- Replacing worn-out carpeting or floor coverings, to reduce the risk of falls;
- Upgrading dining rooms, to improve food intake;
- Redecorating or upgrading residents' bedrooms, to engender a sense of self-worth;
- Upgrading bathrooms to enhance self-care;
- Improving gardens or outside spaces used by residents, to encourage outdoor exercise;
- Alterations that would give the residents greater privacy.
- Providing information technology that benefits older residents, for example residents' access to internet, email etc

It would be inappropriate for the grants to be used, for example, for:

- Refurbishment of staff rest rooms or other facilities not used by residents;
- Staff training or any other revenue activity;
- Medical equipment such as syringe drivers, monitors etc, which do not have an impact on the physical environment;
- Routine maintenance that offers no noticeable improvement in the care environment (e.g. boiler replacement).

- 2.3 The full market value of any assets purchased through this grant may be recovered by the Secretary of State if they are disposed of or cease to be used for the provision for which the grant is made. The Authority is liable in those circumstances and will monitor the process closely during the grant period.

3 Arrangements in Wirral

- 3.1 A letter was sent on 22nd February to all the registered homes for Older People in Wirral informing them of the grant and its conditions and the process to be followed. It invited them to write to the council by no later than 16th March if they wished to apply for funding from the grant. Homes were asked to identify the improvements they wished to make, indicate the costs involved and describe the resulting benefits for their residents.
- 3.2 69 applications were received from the 101 eligible homes in Wirral and on 21st March they were considered by a panel consisting of representatives of the Voluntary Sector, Wirral PCT and DASS.
- 3.3 It was not envisaged that the funding be distributed equally between homes and the panel agreed local criteria to supplement the national guidance and assist in its evaluations. The local requirements were that improvements be other than matters of routine maintenance and decoration, that they demonstrate imagination and/or innovation, and show special consideration for individual comfort/dignity.

- 3.4 At the end of the process, sums agreed for individual homes ranged between £5,000 and £23,720. In all, £101,001 (11.35% of the total) was apportioned to homes in the voluntary (not for profit) sector, £649,316 (72.99%) to private sector homes, and £139,335 (15.66%) to Local Authority Homes.
- 3.5 Local Authorities are required to take reasonable steps to ensure that grant monies are used for the purposes specified and, as indicated in 2.1.3 above, DASS intends to monitor the process closely through inspection. Homes receiving the grant have been informed of the need to keep adequate records clearly demonstrating their expenditure for audit purposes.

4 Financial and Staffing Implications

Payment of this grant has clear financial implications in that £139,335 has been made available to DASS in respect of improvements to the six eligible Local Authority residential homes, and £89,000 for administration and contingencies.

5 Equal Opportunities Implications

Older People are among the most deprived groups in society and those in residential and nursing care are at risk of being particularly excluded.

6 Human Rights Implications

Many of the improvements funded through this grant relate to the maintenance of individual privacy and dignity.

7 Local Agenda 21 Implications

The payment of this grant is linked to Strategic Issue 5, a caring environment for everyone and Strategic Issue 6, maintain and enhance Wirral's natural, managed and built environments.

8 Community Safety Implications

There are no direct community safety implications.

9 Planning Implications

The proposed improvements include some conservatory extensions and there may be planning implications arising from this.

10 Local Member Support Implications

There are care homes for Older People throughout Wirral and Older People living in every ward stand to benefit from this grant.

11 Background Papers

LAC (2006)16: Capital grant for improving the care home environment for older people 2007-2008

12 Recommendations

That the arrangements made for distributing the capital improvement grant in Wirral be approved.

KEVIN MILLER
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