

SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT LIVING AT HOME

A very warm welcome to our Spring '23 edition!

The end of the financial year and the start of the new one is always a good time to stop and take a breath. To take the time to look back and see how far we have come before looking forward and planning for even better things ahead. This time last year we were still battling to recover from the pandemic but, despite the ongoing presence of Covid 19, there is now a sense of a new normal having returned.

We have taken the opportunity as a team, to review everything we do and have streamlined our grants and processes to better be able to support residents needing adaptations - more details of this on page 4. This will mean a simpler faster process for applicants benefiting all our stakeholders - we look forward to your feedback on how this is working. We now need to ensure that our resources are right to match the increased grant numbers we hope to process. Together we hope to make the next 12 months a great one for IL-ES.

Thank you.

Teresa Howarth -
Principal Environmental
Health Officer (Housing)

And a warm welcome also to our new supplier...

We are delighted to welcome **Rigford Ltd** and their **Director Jay Righelato** to our growing list of approved suppliers. They are covering the entire East Suffolk region and also Babergh Mid Suffolk Council - we are already enjoying working with them!



Typical Level Access Shower

Supplier: Trevor Benton Construction

What's inside?

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- DFG Stat Attack! Putting it all into context
- Great News! New grants & other key changes
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- We'd love to hear from you!



Supplier Spotlight: Matt Clarke from Westone Housing Limited...

Q. How did it all begin and in particular, disabled adaptations?

"Mum started the family business in 2003, with the intention to provide services to Buy-to-Let Landlords only. However, the demand for trusted tradesmen throughout the industry soon became clear. After successfully maintaining Landlords' properties throughout East Anglia for seven years, we began to grow into refurbishing properties and small building works. We are now in our 20th year, employing 43 direct employees and paying 40-50 other businesses per month. I wore many hats when I started out as an Apprentice, i.e. sales, estimating, chaser, invoicing etc. Now we can specialise, which I think is more effective..."

Q. What gives you the biggest challenge(s) these days?

"It always has, and will be, staff – people! The 'trades' market has changed, with many people from Eastern Europe having returned home. More British trades are now taking up jobs on building sites and it has been a case of adapting. Things have thankfully Stabilised now after Brexit/Covid and trades is now good.

That said, new challenges have included the Cost of Living and uncertainty of peoples' spend for 23/24. This has led to tradespeople wanting security and regular pay so they can understandably plan their life. We can now offer that regularity and we have multi-year contracts (public sector) and insurance repairs too."

Q. What would you change about the DFG competition process if you could?

"The peaks and troughs of work you get – dependent upon whether you win competitions or not – makes it harder. It's natural to prioritise customers you get regular work from home which in turn leads to better performance. In some other areas of the UK they have invited SoW rates from suppliers and then calculated an average cost per SoW element. That also eliminates the very high and very low cost of jobs. Suppliers are then contracted to use those costs on jobs they are awarded, on a rotation basis for the next 12 months. It also helps build a long-term relationship, which I think is key!"



Q. What's the best/most satisfying part of the job?

"As Managing Director, it is receiving customer and client praise about our delivery teams. It's also about going the 'extra mile' and empathy. We undertake Customer Surveys and are used to doing insurance work, which I believe has made us good at aids & adaptation work, as we appreciate it is traumatic for clients."

Q. Any memorable cases?

"Colleagues Rob & Mark highted this one for two reasons: Firstly, the adaptation was within a shared property for women – the 'en-suite' of the applicant. Secondly, it required tight time management and forward commitment to a start date due to the customer being required to be placed into respite for the duration of work. Obviously, this isn't cheap, and we needed to work quickly and efficiently to turn the job around swiftly. We encountered problems with the pump which caused issues and a small delay but through good communication we kept all parties informed, which helped to remedy any potential problems."

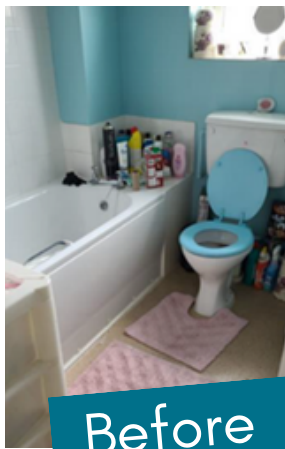
Q. Away from work, any particular interests and what's the photo all about?!

"I wanted to do a cycling event and the 'Head to Toe Charity' were organising a 60-mile event around Cambridgeshire to support the incredible work of the local NHS Healthcare Teams. The charity literally looks after someone from head to toe, eg creative and sensory therapies; a dedicated sensory rooms for all ages, etc. It's a different way of providing therapy not funded by the NHS. Just my way of saying "thanks"!..."

...Nice one Matt and thanks too for your support of the DPS!



Mrs H from Lowestoft couldn't praise contractor **S Dewell Building Contractors Ltd** and his employee Alan enough. She said:
"They were very polite and respectful; nothing was too much for them. I can't praise them enough!"



Before



After

Supplier: S Dewell Building Contractors Ltd

LS of Lowestoft was simply "delighted" with Richard from **Norfolk Stair Lifts** after they had completed their installation. Our Technical Officer remarked how anxious our client was beforehand, but commented how Richard had put her at ease; had a laugh with her and she was soon comfortable with him during the works.

Meanwhile, **Mrs R from Melton** was another very satisfied recipient after **Brandon Wetrooms** completed a new level access shower for her, as our pictures show. They also highlight how, as an option, clients can opt to pay for extras such as shower boarding and a special wash hand basin if they prefer.



Before



After



Supplier: Brandon Wetrooms

DFG Stat Attack! Putting it all into context

We currently have **52** cases with OT assessments on the waiting list. Clients are all advised by letter that their application will be processed in date received order and according to priority, with the focus on palliative care when received. **261** cases have been approved since **1 April 2022 to the 28th February 2023**. This includes **37 Supplementary grant cases** to support client contributions (or cases which previously would not have been eligible), **18 Priority grants** and **15 Discretionary Disabled Facility Grants** (which only became available in early February). **214 cases have been completed** (some approved in the previous financial year) which includes **35 Supplementary cases** and **18 Priority cases**.

Currently there are **30** cases with works on site/ awaiting final sign off, **25** awaiting a start date agreement and **14** that have start dates agreed making **69** in total ready to be carried out/ completed. Despite contractors calendars still being very busy we are seeing more cases getting start dates arranged with shorter lead times!

Great News! Two New Grants; Higher Threshold and Referrals from Other professionals...

Following a recent review, we are delighted to announce a string of significant improvements:

Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant (DDFG):

A **non-means** tested grant with a maximum amount of £15,000!
In simple terms, it means that...

Under the old scheme a client needing a level access shower and a ramped access costing £8,000 may have had to contribute up to £3000 on top of the maximum £5000 Supplementary Grant, depending on the means test. With this new grant the FULL cost of the works would be covered by the grant, irrespective of their income and capital resources!

Gone is the **Supplementary Grant** of £5000 that was available prior to 1 February. Likewise the **Fast Track and Priority Grants**.

It also brings East Suffolk Council more in line with other Suffolk authorities. We anticipate most of our clients will use this DDFG and only those with extensive works costing more than £15,000 will make an application for a mandatory grant (with a £30,000 maximum).

With no means test it simplifies and speeds up the process thus benefitting all and hopefully encouraging more people to go ahead with essential adaptations to their homes.

And there's more! The DDFG can also be used when:

- a client needs to move because their home cannot be adapted
- to repair hazards in the home to reduce risks leading to fewer falls and accidents
- works to assist clients with dementia and
- assistive technology to help a client remain in their own home – watch this space for further news on this developing area too!

Repairs Adaptation Grant

RAG): Funding for works between £500 to £5,000 to repair existing adaptations is now available! A mandatory DFG cannot be used for such repairs but now **WE CAN** fund essential repairs to through-floor lifts, stairlifts and wet-room floors using an RAG.

Again, it is **NOT** means-tested and clients can approach us direct for this grant – a referral from an Occupational Therapist is **NOT** needed!

Referrals: We can now accept referrals for adaptation works from **other health professionals** in addition to those from Occupational Therapists!

How to apply for a DFG

An Occupational Therapy (OT) Assessment is needed first and the client should contact the Independent Living Suffolk (ILS) Team at Suffolk County Council to arrange this, via ILS@suffolk.gov.uk or Tel: **0800 121 7711**.

For anything else, please see our contact details at the end of this newsletter.

We'd love to hear from you!

Find out more about DFGs and meet 'The Team' in the back issues on our website. And do let us have your comments and suggestions. Our contact details are below...thank you!

CONTACT US

www.eastsuffolk.gov.uk/housing/adaptations-and-independent-living

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