

SUPPORTING INDEPENDENT LIVING AT HOME



A very warm welcome to our summer edition!

As life slowly returns to normal the Independent Living Team are steadily building a robust and effective service to help and support our Suffolk residents to stay safe and well.

ILES has an unprecedented number of clients coming forward for help. Our cases are being dealt with in date order, except for acutely urgent cases, such as patients in palliative care. The oldest cases now waiting, are from September 2020, a huge improvement from when we took over a year ago when some cases were more than 3 years old! We recognise this is still a long waiting time and are doing everything we can to reduce it. We need your help to encourage residents to resist picking up the phone or emailing to check on progress. Each chasing call or email takes 15 minutes to resolve and it is not

unusual to get 6 or 8 contacts a day. No calls would mean our flat-out admin team can move cases on, rather than spend time reiterating that the case is registered and will be dealt with at the earliest opportunity. So the message is "please don't call us, we'll call you!"

Teresa Howarth - Principal Environmental Health Officer (Housing)

What's inside?

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DFGs 'On line' and our valued Suppliers:

We use a Dynamic Procurement System (DPS) online platform to announce all our competitions for DFG works (approximately 350 each year!) and invite registered suppliers to tender. Since using the DPS, for the five-month period up to March 2021 we have awarded competition contracts worth a total of over £238,000! We continue to grow and will be awarding even more competitions each quarter -

watch this space!
Working closely with our valued suppliers is key to ensure that works are carried out to a high standard and meet the expectations of clients and ourselves. They have to pass a rigorous vetting process before registering. Currently we work in partnership with a number of suppliers and we are always seeking to add more.

DFG Stat Attack! Putting it all into context

Last year, despite the pandemic a shortage of contractors and building materials and the complexities of social distancing and staying safe, the team dealt with 466 enquiries; including completing 147 adaptations and issuing grant approvals for further 176 cases.

We have a large number of clients still to help though - 788 cases as at 23.6.21 that are either on the waiting list, in progress, complete/ closed or referred to SCC for assessment. Following the increase in OT assessment with the use of agency staff, we have 203 cases

with OT assessments awaiting first contact from us (122 of the new cases have only been received since 1st April 2021); 43 cases have been approved since 1 April 2021 and 28 were completed.

DFG waiting list - Managing expectations - How YOU can help!

With the recent addition of Sue to the Admin team (please see below!), every person on the waiting list will be contacted by phone and/or letter/email. Not only will this give them an update as to where they are on the list and their likely wait, but we will be able to see if their circumstances have changed and hence in turn it may also save everyone time too.

As Teresa said in the introduction, when you are speaking to a client please can

we urge you to make them aware of what we are doing? That should help to reduce the calls and emails we get from clients asking for an update and probably you too!

Whilst we work our way through the waiting list, we also want to ensure that urgent cases take precedence; those in palliative care or needing adaptations to be discharged from hospital. Thus to ensure the people most in need get prioritised, please can you ensure you only state

'urgent' if they genuinely meet that assessment criteria? We have recently received a high volume of cases that are marked urgent. If they do not meet agreed criteria, an urgent tag adversely affects others who have been waiting a long time already. Further advice on this assessment can be obtained from Nicole Philips (OT Team Leader, SCC). If in doubt or there are other pressing reasons, please do contact us first. Thank you for your support – we appreciate it!

Covid working

We continue to do everything we can to keep clients safe but also rely on their co-operation to wear a face covering if we visit and keep two metres apart at all times. Clients may also be asked to stay in another part of the house whilst we survey or whilst contractors work. If they or you have ANY concerns about the requests we have made, please talk to the Case Officer. Our staff will not remain in a client's home

if they do not follow the Government Advice.



Level Access Shower: D D Alger & Partners

How to apply for a DFG

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

For more details on DFGs generally and the various steps after an OT assessment, please visit our website (see footer).

New Team Members & more from our Officers



Susan Blanchard, Administration Assistant

"Hello, my name is Sue. Until recently I worked for the NHS where I had various roles including secretarial and reception. Throughout the pandemic and the lockdowns I worked on the front line as it were for Community Paediatrics and the children's mental health team. It has been a challenging time for everyone, and after some evaluation I decided to pursue a role in ILES that would provide real job satisfaction - helping in a small way to make a huge positive impact on people's well-being at a time when it is needed the most. I am looking forward to getting involved in the Disabled Facility Grant process, and indeed to working with the fantastic established team, all who have one goal in mind.....which is, to help people live independently, safely, for longer. My hobbies outside of work include travel and spending time with family and friends. All things we have taken for granted in the past, but now as circumstances, and science allows are able to enjoy again."

Derren Linsdell and Polly Markopoulos, Technical Officers

"We visit the client's home to measure up, take photos, ask some questions because it's important to get things right before the builder is onsite. Currently, we are being creative in how we survey due to Covid-19. Where practical, we'll request photos and videos to be sent by WhatsApp, email or text in an effort to reduce the risk and keep everyone safe. The important thing is that we work with clients to make sure that the work for that Level Access Shower and access into the property are not delayed unnecessarily due to Covid. However, if all else fails we will visit whilst adhering to government guidance."

Paul Jay, Technical Officer

"I have worked at Ipswich Borough Council for the past thirteen years within the Surveying & Assets Team. I was Lead Surveyor, focused on adapting council owned properties to meet the individual needs of disabled applicants. I am looking forward to working within the ILES Team and developing new working relationships with colleagues, Occupational Therapists & Building Contractors, as well as exploring the East Suffolk District, meeting new applicants and surveying the wide variety of housing types. Outside of work my family and I enjoy holidaying on the Suffolk & Norfolk coast in our touring caravan. We are regular visitors to the Tangham Forest and Southwold Harbour sites. I enjoy cycling and am a member of the Tunstall & Rendlesham Off Road Group. Loyal Ipswich Speedway fan for 35years and a regular visitor to Foxhall Stadium on Thursday evenings."



Sarah Mills, Judith Owen and Vanessa Upton, Case Officers:

"We look after a case throughout the grant process, contacting the client once it has been passed to us from the Admin Team. There is a lot of paperwork involved, but our aim is to make the process as stress free as possible, so we try and do the majority for our clients where possible.

Once a case has been approved, we then liaise with a Technical Officer to ensure works proceed smoothly. It really helps us if information, such as contact details, of the owners of the property where the work is being carried out are readily available, especially if the client is a tenant. If we need financial evidence and there is someone who deals with this on the client's behalf, their information is also very useful. If clients have any issues at any point throughout the process or if they need referrals to other services – we are here to help!"



"Thank you for burning the midnight oil. Appreciated. Also thank you for the very professional manner of your visit. Mum is fully on board with the approach we are taking and I personally was very appreciative of your efforts to involve Mum in the decision making. We have been very careful to include her fully. It is her home after all, so I am really grateful that you did that. Thank you very much for all your assistance on this project. It has been a pleasure dealing with you and your help and advice has made this very much easier for us....."

Mr H (son), Kesgrave, March 2021

"I am very pleased with the work; stairlift, level access shower and ramp, the workmen were fantastic and kept us updated throughout the process, Polly and Vanessa have communicated throughout the whole process and can't thank everyone enough!"

RP, Lowestoft, May 2021

"I have had my bathroom turned into a wet room as I am disabled. I feel very strongly about the builder that did the work and would like this email to be passed to everyone in authority and connected to the work I have had done. I have a lot of issues and I am described as vulnerable, I get a lot of anxiety when new people come to my home and it really affects my health for a few weeks. The professional that did the work is called Tom (TAK Building) and from the moment I met him he has been absolutely fantastic. He worked hard and quickly

and did an amazing job, and I love my new bathroom so much. Tom made me feel not only comfortable but totally at ease, he was respectful kind and honest, I would highly recommend him for any job anywhere and to the most fragile of people. I asked him to let me know when he got here each morning and to let me know before he left each night, and to let me know in advance when anyone else would be coming to the house. This he did with a reassuring smile and a gentle voice. He is in my opinion the very best of human beings each of us should strive for. I want you all to know Tom is a huge asset to any project he is involved with. From the bottom of my heart thank you to all who made this work possible and everyone involved but especially Darren (from the ILES Team who came out with Tom the first time) and Tom himself for their kindness, a thunderous round of grateful applause to you. Thank you!

RW, Woodbridge, May 2021

DFGs in other areas of Suffolk

For DFG's in other areas of Suffolk, please contact:

Babergh & Mid Suffolk: amanda.todd@baberghmidsuffolk.gov.uk

Ipswich: carole.balding@ipswich.gov.uk or clare.lovell@ipswich.gov.uk

West Suffolk: andrew.newman@westsuffolk.gov.uk or debbie.paine@westsuffolk.gov.uk

Got any questions?

Please do let us have any comments you have on the newsletter; any suggestions and questions about DFGs generally. Our contact details are below...thank you!

CONTACT US

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

 0300 003 0231 |  independent.living@eastsuffolk.gov.uk