

Disabled facilities grant



Disabled facilities grant



Introduction

If you or someone living in your property is disabled you may qualify for a disabled facilities grant towards the cost of providing adaptations and facilities to enable the disabled person to continue to live there. Such grants are given by local councils under Part I of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. This booklet briefly describes the help available and how to go about applying for a grant.

Getting advice

It is a good idea to get advice from a qualified person when considering the need to carry out any works to your property. You should consider how best to meet the costs.

In looking at possible options advice may be sought from the Housing, Social Services or Environmental Health department of your local council, but help may also be available from Housing Advice Centres and Citizens Advice Bureaux. There may also be a local Home Improvement Agency (HIA) which can provide advice and practical help on improvements and adaptations. HIAs are run by local councils, registered social landlords (RSLs) and other organisations and many (such as Care and Repair, Staying Put or Anchor) offer assistance mainly to elderly people.

Your local social services department employs occupational therapists who can assess what adaptations you may need.

If you are considering applying for a grant you should contact the local housing or environmental health department at your local council before you start any work. You will not normally be awarded a grant for any works completed before you receive approval from your local council.

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This leaflet does not provide an authoritative interpretation of the law; only the courts can do that. Nor does it cover every case. If you are in doubt about your legal rights or obligations you would be well advised to seek information from a Citizens Advice Bureau or to consult a solicitor. Help with all or part of the cost of legal advice may be available under the Legal Aid Scheme.

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Before applying for a grant

When you have established what adaptations or facilities are needed, you should find out the amount and type of work which needs to be done and the likely cost. Whether or not the work is grant-aided, it is important to ensure that the work gets done properly and at a reasonable price. For major work it may be best to employ a qualified architect or surveyor to plan and oversee the work – if you get a grant, the cost of their fees can be included in the cost of the works. The council may ask to see any plans or drawings provided by your architect or surveyor. It is also sensible to employ a reputable builder – some councils keep lists of local architects, surveyors and builders who specialise in renovation work, and may be able to help you in acquiring reputable professionals to provide these services.

When applying for grant, your council will normally require two written estimates before deciding on the cost of the works eligible for grant. It is sensible to get competitive quotes from reputable builders or installation companies and it may be worth using one who belongs to a trade association which operates a guarantee scheme such as those run by the Building Employers Confederation or the Federation of Master Builders. The council may be able to give you a list of builders or be able to advise you about employing one.



Getting a disabled facilities grant

Applications for grant assistance will generally be dealt with by the housing or environmental health department of your local council. You should not assume that you will automatically qualify for a grant, as they are means tested.



Who can apply for a grant?

- An applicant must either be the owner of the dwelling or be a tenant (including licensees), and be able to provide to the local council the necessary 'owner's certificate' or 'tenant's certificate'. This will not necessarily be the disabled person for whom the works are required. In such cases the applicant should make it clear on whose behalf the application is being made.
- A landlord may apply on behalf of a disabled tenant.

When applying for a grant the applicant, whether an owner occupier, tenant or landlord will be asked to sign a certificate stating the intention that throughout the grant condition period, currently five years, (or such shorter period as the disabled person's health and other relevant circumstances permit) the disabled person will occupy the dwelling as his or her only or main residence.



What is disabled facilities grant available for?

If you are disabled, grant is mandatory for essential adaptations to give you better freedom of movement into and around your home and to access essential facilities within it. Where necessary it can also provide

the essential facilities themselves. The types of work are:

- to make it easier to get into and out of the dwelling by, for example, widening doors and installing ramps;
- ensuring the safety of the disabled person and other occupants by, for example, providing a specially adapted room in which it would be safe to leave a disabled person unattended or improved lighting to ensure better visibility;
- to make access easier to the living room;
- by providing or improving access to the bedroom, and kitchen, toilet, washbasin and bath (and/or shower) facilities; for example, by installing a stair lift or providing a downstairs bathroom;
- to improve or provide a heating system in your home which is suitable to the needs of the disabled person;
- to adapt heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use;
- to improve access and movement around the home to enable the disabled person to care for another person who lives in the property, such as a spouse, child or another person for whom the disabled person cares; and
- to improve access to and from the garden of your home where feasible.



Do the council have to give a grant?

When you apply to the council for a disabled facilities grant, they will need to check that the proposed works are:

- necessary and appropriate to meet the disabled person's needs. Usually, they will consult an occupational therapist from the local social services department to make the assessment; and
- reasonable and practicable depending on the age and condition of the property.

The council need to be satisfied about each of these matters, and the overall feasibility of the works, if they are to give a disabled facilities grant. A local council can refuse a disabled facilities grant if they believe the scheme is not reasonable and practicable.



How will the grant be calculated?

The maximum grant that can be paid is £30,000 per application in England and £36,000 in Wales.

To ensure that the grant goes to the most needy households, the amount of grant you will get will also be decided by a means test which will look at the income and capital of the disabled person and their spouse or partner, collectively called the relevant person. Where the application is for a disabled child or young person under the age of nineteen there is no means test.

The test calculates the relevant person's average weekly income, taking account of any savings above a certain limit (certain state benefits are ignored). This is then set against an assessment of basic needs, which are recognised by a range of premiums and allowances, to reflect outgoings.

If the relevant person's resources are less than this assessment, then they will not normally need to contribute to the cost of the works. If the disabled person is on income support, income-based jobseeker's allowance or in receipt of guaranteed state pension credit, they will not normally have to make a contribution.

If the relevant person's resources are more than the assessment, then a contribution will be required from them towards the cost of the works.

If a contribution is required from the relevant person this must be deducted from the amount of grant which would otherwise have been paid. Therefore, if the cost of the works is above the maximum £30,000 limit the grant will be that limit less the contribution. If the cost of the works is less than the £30,000, the grant will be the cost of the works less the contribution.

Where the cost of the eligible works are more than the grant limit the council may use its discretionary powers under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (see Other relevant assistance, page 11) to bridge part or all of the gap between what they are required to pay and the full cost of the works. Financial assistance may also be available from the Social Services Authority in certain cases.



How do I apply?

Contact the housing or environmental health department of your local council and ask them to send an application form. You should do this before you start any of the work. You will not normally get any grant if you start work before the council approve the application. If the work is urgent, you should get in touch with the council and let them know the circumstances. You should ensure that you separately secure any approval for building regulations or planning purposes that is required.

The council will provide you with an application form which will set out the further documentation you will need to support your application. An application is only valid if it is made on the council's form and if it includes all the information required.



Grant approval

The council must give you a decision in writing within six months of receipt of a completed valid application and of any additional information they may require. That is why you should return the completed application form at the earliest moment. In a few cases a local authority may specify a date before which grant is not payable. This will be no later than 12 months from the date on which the application was made.



Grant payment

Grant will only be paid when the council are satisfied that the work has been completed to their satisfaction and in accordance with the grant approval. Note, however, that you are responsible for ensuring that your builder meets the standard you require.

Grant can only be paid on provision of an acceptable invoice, demand or receipt of payment for the works. An invoice is not acceptable if it is for work or services provided by the applicant or a member of his or her family. Where the works are carried out by the applicant or a relative, only invoices for materials or services that are bought in will be acceptable.

The council may pay the grant in full on completion of the works or by instalments as the works progress.

The council may decide to pay the grant direct to your contractor or provide the instrument of payment in a form made payable to the contractor. If they do, they must tell you when they approve the application. This should not affect your right to ensure that the contractor has completed the works to your satisfaction. If the contractor has not, you should notify the council so that they can withhold payment, if appropriate.



Other relevant assistance

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 gives councils greater powers to provide discretionary assistance. This may take the form of low cost loans and equity release as well as grants to private homeowners and others to help them to renovate, repair or adapt their home. The Order also enables councils to provide other sorts of assistance, for example, helping someone move to more suitable living accommodation if it is satisfied that this would provide a similar benefit to improving or adapting the existing accommodation. Councils may give discretionary assistance in addition to mandatory disabled facilities grants.

Any assistance given must be in accordance with the council's published policy. For further information, contact the Environmental Health of the Housing Department of your local council.

The social services authority also has a responsibility to provide community care equipment and minor adaptations, which a person has been assessed to need and for which he or she is eligible, free of charge provided the cost (including fittings) is less than £1,000. Social services authorities retain the discretion to charge for adaptations costing over £1,000 where those adaptations are made by that authority in its provision of community care services.

Department for Communities and Local Government, jointly with the Department of Education and Skills and the Department of Health issued more comprehensive guidance in June 2006, entitled: *Delivering Housing Adaptions for Disabled People, A Good Practice Guide*, which sets out the service disabled people should reasonably expect to receive, including recommended target times for delivery. Online copies of the guidance are available on the Communities and Local Government website www.communities.gov.uk.

Further information

If you would like further copies of this booklet, please contact Communities and Local Government Publications,
PO Box No 236, Wetherby LS23 7NB.
Tel: 0300 123 1124, Fax: 0300 123 1125.
e-mail communities@capita.co.uk

Alternative formats and translations into other languages can be requested from:
alternativeformats@communities.gsi.gov.uk

How to apply?

Local councils are responsible for administering Disabled Facilities Grants. For further advice on how to obtain and/or complete an application form, please contact the housing department or environmental health department of your local council.

Communities and Local Government is responsible for DFG policy in England. This involves setting the framework and allocating resources. The department cannot intervene in individual cases.

If you are unhappy with the application process provided by your local council you will need to register your complaint with the local authority's monitoring officer, alternatively you may wish to contact the Local Government Ombudsman for applicants in England, who may wish to take up your case, the telephone number is: 0845 602 1983

Useful addresses for residents in England

**Foundations (Home Improvement Agency)
Bleaklow House
Howard Town Mill
Glossop
Derbyshire SK13 8HT
Telephone 01457 891909
Email: FOUNDATIONS@CEL.CO.UK**

Local Government Ombudsman
10th Floor
Millbank Tower
Millbank
London SW1P 4QP
Telephone 020 7217 4620

Who deals with complaints from: London boroughs North of the River Thames (including Richmond but not including Harrow), Essex, Kent, Surrey, Suffolk, East and West Sussex, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire, Hertfordshire and the City of Coventry.

Local Government Ombudsman
Beverley House
17 Shipton Road
York YO30 5FZ
Telephone: 01904 3780200

Who deals with complaints from: City of Birmingham, Solihull MBC, Cheshire, Derbyshire, Nottinghamshire, Lincolnshire, Warwickshire and the North of England (except the cities of Lancaster, Manchester and York.

Local Government Ombudsman
The Oaks No 2
Westwood Way
Westwood Business Park
Coventry CV4 8JB
Telephone: 024 7682 0000

Who deals with complaints from: London boroughs South of the River Thames (except Richmond) and Harrow; Trafford MBC; the cities of Lancaster, Manchester and York; and the rest of England, not included in the areas of Tony Redmond and Anne Seex.

The Equality and Human Rights Commission

England

Equality and Human Rights Commission Helpline
Freepost RRLG-GHUX-CTR
Arndale House
Arndale Centre
Manchester
M4 3EQ

0845 604 6610 - England main number
0845 604 6620 - England textphone
0845 604 6630 - England fax

Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 9:00 am-5:00 pm; Wed 9:00 am-8:00 pm (last call taken at 7:45pm)

Wales

Equality and Human Rights Commission Helpline Wales
Freepost RRLR-UEYB-UYZL
3rd Floor
3 Callaghan Square
Cardiff
CF10 5BT

0845 604 8810 - Wales main number
0845 604 8820 - Wales textphone
0845 604 8830 - Wales fax

Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 9:00 am-5:00 pm;
Wed 9:00 am-8:00 pm (last call taken at 7:45pm)

Scotland

Equality and Human Rights Commission Helpline
Scotland
Freepost RRLG-GYLB-UJTA
The Optima Building
58 Robertson Street
Glasgow
G2 8DU

0845 604 5510 - Scotland Main
0845 604 5520 - Scotland Textphone
0845 604 5530 - Scotland – Fax

Mon, Tue, Thu, Fri 9:00 am-5:00 pm;
Wed 9:00 am-8:00 pm (last call taken at 7:45pm)



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