

Disabled facilities grant

Disabled facilities grant

Your Local Authority has general powers to improve living conditions in its area, and these may include the repair, improvement and adaptation of housing. It will have a published policy on how it uses these powers, available for instance at public libraries.

Local Authority assistance for these purposes can be in any form: loans, grants, in-kind or simply advice, and will vary according to the area in which you live. If you or someone in your household is disabled, you may qualify for a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

What is DFG?

Disabled Facilities Grants help with the cost of providing facilities and adaptations if you or someone in your household has a disability that makes living in your accommodation difficult. The main points to note are:

- Local authorities are responsible for administering the grants
- The maximum grant available in England is currently £30,000, in Wales £36,000 and in Northern Ireland £25,000 but the council can use discretionary powers to increase the

amount if the cost of the eligible works is more than this. DFG's are not available in Scotland.

- The amount paid is usually based on a financial assessment - a 'means test' – of your average weekly income in relation to your outgoings, and a contribution from you towards the cost of the work may be required. There is no means testing for families of disabled children under 19.

How it is calculated

The work must benefit the disabled person living in the property, and be 'necessary and appropriate'. The local authority will also take into consideration the age and condition of the property. Local authorities have the discretion to impose a maximum charge of £10,000 on privately owned properties that have been adapted with a Disabled Facilities Grant if they are sold within 10 years. This applies only to adaptations where the cost of the DFG exceeds £5,000.

Who can apply?

You can claim if you, or someone living in your property, is disabled and:

- you, or the person on whose behalf you are applying, are either the owner or tenant (including licensees) of the property
- you can certify that you, or the person on whose behalf you are applying, intend to

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occupy the property as your/their only or main residence throughout the grant period – currently five years.

- a landlord (private or social) may apply on behalf of a disabled tenant. Someone is disabled if: their sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired
- they have a mental disorder or impairment of any kind
- they are physically substantially disabled by illness, injury impairment present since birth, or otherwise
- they are registered disabled (or could be registered) with the social services department under the terms of the National Assistance Act 1948 or the Children Act 1989, however most local authorities waive this requirement.

What can you get a grant for?

A grant can be used to give you better freedom of movement into and around your home and/or to provide essential facilities within it. You can, for example, get a disabled facilities grant for the following things:

- widening doors and installing ramps
- providing or improving access to rooms and facilities - for example, by installing a stair lift or providing a downstairs bathroom.
- improving or providing a heating system which is suitable for your needs
- adapting heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use
- improving access to and movement around the home to enable you to care for another

person who lives in the property, such as a child.

Applying in practice

A local authority must give you a disabled facilities grant if you meet the conditions for getting one. However, local authorities have limited resources at their disposal and some areas have a greater demand than others. This means that they sometimes have to prioritise according to the most pressing need. In some areas waiting lists for grants are closed due to demand and in others consist of a few months.

Your local authority will advise you of the waiting time when you apply. Disabled Facilities Grants are available from the housing department of the local council, but in many cases it is better to approach the social services department first as it has the responsibility for deciding what adaptations are 'necessary and appropriate'. It does this by arranging a visit from an occupational therapist (OT) to assess the needs of the disabled person.

Following the assessment, the OT will make a report with recommendations for the specific work that needs to be done. They can be a good source of help and advice. Preparing for an assessment by an occupational therapist 1. Arrange a time of day to suit you and you will feel at your best 2. Make a list of all the things in your home that make life difficult 3. Explain to the occupational therapist how you feel on your worst day rather than on your best 4. Take your time 5. Have a friend or carer with

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you for extra support.

The council also has to be satisfied that the works are 'reasonable and practical' in relation to the age and condition of the property. The assessment is usually done by either an environmental health officer, a building surveyor from the council or possibly someone from a home improvement agency (HIA) who will arrange to visit the property with your application.

Help with your application

You can ask your local home improvement agency (HIA) to assist you with the application. These are locally based not for profit organisations and can help with all aspects of your application and manage the work that is carried out. To find out if there is a Home Improvement Agency in your area contact: Foundations 0300 124 0315 www.foundations.uk.com

It is really important that you do not start any work until you have received approval from your local council. You should check if you need to obtain planning and building regulations permissions before commencing the work. Disabled Facilities Grants are means tested so await the outcome of your test of resources before arranging for any professional services such as OT assessments or building surveys.

Do your research

Talk to helpful organisations such as Care and Repair or Age UK before you apply. The

work has to be necessary and appropriate – the grant will not cover the installation of patio doors if you can already access outdoors safely. The grant is means tested – even if you have been assessed as in need of an adaptation you may not get the grant if your income and savings exceeds the limit of the test of resources.

When describing your need relate how you are affected on a bad day – be prepared to justify why you need the grant and be clear about the criteria before you apply. Do not start any work until you have been given the go-ahead by the housing department – grants are never issued retrospectively.

Expect to wait – waiting lists are long for both assessments and grants. The grant will only meet the basic cost of the work – if you want to match up to existing decorations or sanitary ware you will have to meet the cost of this yourself.

Explore other funding options – equity release, property repair loans, other charitable grants may offer you a practical alternative if you cannot get a Disabled Facilities Grant.

Further Information

Gov.uk, the Government website gives all the official information about the DFG

[The Department of Communities and Local Government](#), responsible for Local Authorities has a useful downloadable booklet.

[AgeUK has the following factsheets: Age England FS 42: Disability equipment and](#)

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home adaptations

Age Scotland FS13S: Older Homeowners
funding repairs, improvements and adaptations

Age Cymru FS42W; Obtaining disability
equipment and home adaptations in Wales

Age NI FS5: Aids and Adaptations
or you can telephone 0800 **678 1174** for
information and advice.

www.ageuk.org