

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS

ASSESSING THE OPTIONS

The occupational therapist will visit and assess how your needs or the disabled person's needs can be best met. This might be achieved by a piece of equipment, an alternative method of carrying out the task, a simple adaptation or by moving to a more appropriate property. If the needs cannot be met in either of these ways then the occupational therapist may make a referral to Private Sector Housing for an adaptation to the home which may be undertaken with the help of a Disabled Facilities Grant.

The occupational therapist will ask whether help is required to make an application for the grant and for supervising the work. If help is required then they could send full details to a Home Improvement Agency who can provide an expert service designed to assist in making the application and getting the adaptation completed. Alternatively, the disabled person can choose either to undertake the application and adaptation themselves or engage an agent.

The next step is to decide what works are necessary to meet the needs of the disabled person. This may be straight forward, for example:

- If the disabled person cannot get upstairs easily to the bedroom and bathroom, then the installation of a second handrail or a stairlift might be the most effective solutions
- If the disabled person cannot safely get in or out of the bath, and the use of specialist bathing equipment has proved to be unsuccessful, then replacing the bath with a level access shower is likely to be the most effective option.

In some cases a member of the private sector housing team will come to the home and meet with the disabled person, occupational therapist and home improvement agency to look at the options that are available to meet the needs of the disabled person. During this visit a range of options that meet the disabled person's needs will be discussed with the aim of deciding which option provides the most cost effective scheme.

The options that are available are dependant on the needs, layout, shape and size of the home. Not all homes are suitable for the adaptation. Some of the problems that we come across are:

- Narrow hallways that are difficult for wheelchairs and prevent adaptation.
- Small terraced houses that cannot be extended.
- Steep steps to the entrance that prevent access.
- Conservation and planning constraints that prevent some adaptations.
- The cost of work may exceed the maximum grant.

Sometimes moving to a new home that is already adapted or easier to adapt will be the best long term option.

In some cases the home improvement agency will be asked to draw up possible options for presentation at a case conference involving the occupational therapist, a member of the private sector housing team and the disabled person or their representative. The purpose of the case conference is to ensure that all decisions can be justified and that there is consistency of approach for adaptations undertaken by the council.

Once the best option for adaptation has been agreed an application for a grant can be put together by the home improvement agency. This will mean getting estimates from builders and contractors and gathering the information that you need to make an application. In some cases Planning and Building Regulation approval will be required.