

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) Information Sheet

Introduction

If you or someone living in your property is permanently 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 the Council under Part I of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 and are means tested except in the case of adaptations for children.

There are strict eligibility criteria for Disabled Facilities Grants.

- ❖ Mandatory Grants - include access into and around the property and the main rooms used by the disabled person, safety of the disabled person and adapting the heating and lighting controls
- ❖ Discretionary Grants - In certain circumstances this provides a top up if the grant exceeds £30,000 . If you require further information about this please contact the Private Sector Housing Team.

Applying for the Grant

Prior to making an application your occupational therapist will make an assessment of your needs and confirm that the proposed works are necessary and appropriate. For some medical conditions the Occupational Therapist will need to seek advice from the disabled person's consultant.

You can receive help to make the application and throughout the whole process (including drawing plans, applying for building regulations and sending the work schedule and plans to tender etc) from the local Home Improvement Agency. If you are a council tenant then this help will be provided by your landlord. Some housing associations may provide a similar service. Your occupational therapist can advise you about this.

You can also apply for a grant if you wish to arrange the work yourself, however, if you are considering applying for a grant, you should contact the Private Sector Housing Team before you start any work. You will not be awarded a grant for any works completed before you receive approval from the council.

The Private Sector Housing Team will need to determine that the proposed works are both reasonable and practicable, depending on the age and condition of the property. They will need to look at the most cost effective way of meeting the needs of the disabled person. They may recommend an alternative to the proposed scheme such as using existing rooms e.g. use of a dining room as a bedroom. This should be done in consultation with your occupational therapist, who will be advising on functional needs, to ensure that any alternatives being considered are appropriate for your specific assessed needs, taking into account present and future predicted needs in relation to your disability/condition.

The disabled person or their agent will need to prepare a schedule of works and plans. These will be agreed in advance with the Private Sector Housing Team and enable the work to be tendered. The Private Sector Housing Team will be able to advise on the number of quotes that are required for any application.

Grant monies will only be paid when the council are satisfied that the work has been completed to their satisfaction and in accordance with detailed specifications laid down in the schedule of works, and with the grant approval. Please note, however, that you are responsible for ensuring that your builder meets the standard you require. A 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 may be considered.

The council may pay the grant in full on completion of the works or by instalments as the works progress. The council will normally pay the grant directly to your contractor. 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.

When making an application you must be sure that you intend to remain in the property for the foreseeable future. You will be asked to sign a certificate stating the intention to remain in the property for the next five years.

Role of the Occupational Therapist (OT)

The role of the OT is to carry out an assessment based on functional need, taking into consideration the disabled person's medical condition in order to identify any needs and possible solutions. If, as a result of this assessment, housing adaptations are needed then one option might be to advise you of the Disabled Facilities Grant as a solution. Another may be to give advice on the possibility of moving to a more suitable property, which is either already adapted or more suitable to be adapted.

If the OT feels that the works are both 'necessary and appropriate', they can support you in making an application and liaise with the Home Improvement Agency or appropriate agent as well as provide any necessary paperwork or information.

They would provide advice about the adaptations that are required and comment on proposed plans. They will also attend any case conferences and panels to explain how your needs are met by the proposal.

The OT is not responsible for the grant, and does not have the skills or specific knowledge to mediate on technical points about the structure or build process.

The role of Private Sector Housing

They administer the grant application and are responsible for making the decision about approving the grant and making payments. They will also make the financial assessment which will confirm the amount of grant that is eligible and whether any contribution should be made by the disabled person.

As part of this role they need to ensure that all options have been considered at an early stage. They will liaise with the occupational therapist to conclude which options are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled person. They will also consider whether the work is reasonable and practicable.

'Reasonable and practicable' means whether it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the works having regard to the age and condition of the building. This means that they have to take into account the condition of the house and whether it is safe to live in. They also have to consider if the dwelling is suitable for adaptation due to its design, any planning constraints and the affect of any adaptations on other occupiers.

Where the options are unusual or complex a case conference involving other professionals will be arranged to ensure that the options are considered from several view points and the decision reached is justified and consistent in relation to the regulations that govern the terms of a disabled facilities grant.

Before approving an application the Private Sector Housing Team will need to be sure that the proposal is the most cost effective option for meeting the disabled person's needs and that the application is properly made.

The Home Improvement Agency

Most people want to stay in their own homes as they get older or if they are disabled. With the right practical advice and support, they can. Our local Home Improvement Agencies can help with advice on benefits and other sources for funding where the work isn't covered by the disabled facilities grant. They will write the specification for the work, organise the tenders and supervise the work. Home Improvement Agencies have a wealth of experience in managing both the grant application and the design and build process. You are, of course, free to choose an alternative but we advise that you discuss options and preferences with the Private Sector Housing Team and your occupational therapist before making a start.

Fees, Costs & Charges

To help get the work carried out other costs and charges are likely to be incurred e.g. architects fees, planning permission, building regulations, agency fees You need to clarify with your agent what the costs are and if you can offset them against the grant; you also need to understand any liability you may incur.

Grant Conditions

Conditions will be applied to any grant awarded and it is important that you read and understand the condition of the grant.

Land Charges

It is a condition of the grant that a local land charge will be made in the case of owner occupied application where the grant exceeds £6,000. This allows the recovery of funds in the event of a property subsequently being sold or otherwise disposed of. The land charge will be made for the amount that exceeds £5,000, for examples in the case of a grant for £6,000 a £1,000 land charge will be taken up to the maximum allowed (at this point £10,000)

Land Charges Exceptional circumstances

However, when a property is disposed of repayment of the land charge may be exempt in the following circumstances:

- If a client moves to another property within the ten year period that does not require adaptations to be carried out; the new property is more appropriate to their needs (as confirmed by an occupational therapist) repayment will be waived.
- If the client is moving into an enhanced or extra care accommodation.
- If the client's death results in a child inheriting the whole of the property whose financial position is such that they could not raise a mortgage or a loan to repay the charge. This is intended to be a safeguard for children who have a mental impairment or who have acted as a carer for their parent.

Standard of Service

Delivering Housing Adaptations for Disabled People, A Good Practice Guide, sets out the service disabled people should reasonably expect to receive including recommended target times for delivery. On-line copies of the guidance are available on the Communities and Local Government web site www.communities.gov.uk/housing

Please see below typical target timescales that we would expect in the case of the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) acting as agent.

Time Line for Disabled Facilities Grants

Stage	Target Time	Notes
Receipt of referral from occupational therapist to first contact with client by HIA	5 Working days	
First contact to first HIA caseworker visit	10 Working days	
Referral from caseworker visit to technical officer first visit to survey	20 Working days	
Survey to submission of scheme to occupational therapist and client for approval	20 working days (Minor) 40 working days (Major)	Minor - £10,000 Major – Over £10,000
Scheme approval to grant application	30 working days (Minor)	Minor - £10,000

	90 working days (Major)	Major – Over £10,000 Increasing technical work, building regulations and planning permission may delay work.
Grant approval to completion	30 working days (Minor) 15 working days for stairlifts 90 working days (Major)	Contractor start dates may cause delay

Contact Details

**Wiltshire Council
County Hall
By-The-Sea-Road
Trowbridge
BA14 8JN**

Tel: 0300 4560100

e-mail: customerservices@wiltshire.gov.uk

Additional Information

Disabled Facilities Grant - Communities and Local Government Publication - Available free of charge, PO Box 236, Wetherby LS23 7NB. Tel: 0300 123 1124, email: product@communities.gsi.gov.uk. Please quote ISBN 978 1 4098 10469 .