



## Applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant

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## **Introduction**

If you or someone living in your property is disabled you may qualify for a Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) 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 and the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002. This document briefly describes the process when you apply for a grant.

The maximum mandatory DFG is £30,000.

## **Enquiry stage**

In order to apply for a DFG you must have an assessment by an Occupational Therapist first. You can arrange this by contacting Social Care Direct by telephone, email or letter. Contact details are at the end of this leaflet.

If the adaptations are for a child you or your social worker can contact the child's occupational Therapist directly.

Whilst grants for a range of works are mandatory you should not assume you will automatically qualify for a grant, as they are means tested. Your Occupational therapist will talk to you about your financial situation and may request an early test of resources be carried out. The test of resources assesses your income and determines if you will have a contribution towards the cost of the adaptations or not.

Applications for adaptations for children are exempt from the means testing process.

## **Assessment stage**

Your Occupational Therapist will visit you and carry out an assessment to determine the adaptations that are necessary to help you to remain living in your home more independently.

All children's cases are considered at Children's Social Care Panel before any recommendation for DFG will be made.

If your Occupational Therapist is unsure whether the required adaptations can be carried out to your home they will request a feasibility visit is carried out by a Housing Surveyor from the councils Home Improvement Agency. The Housing Surveyor will provide advice to the Occupational Therapist on whether your home can be adapted and if so the most reasonable way to achieve the adaption to meet your needs.

## **Who is eligible to apply for a DFG**

In order to apply for a DFG an applicant must be either the owner of the property or a tenant. This will not necessarily be the disabled person for whom the works are required. For example, where an elderly person lives with a relative who is the owner of the premises, the relative will make the application.

In such cases the applicant should make it clear on whose behalf the application is being made.

All applicants must be over the age of 18.

### **What type of adaptations does DFG fund?**

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants are available for a range of works that are necessary to help a disabled person to remain living more independently in their home.

The mandatory grant has a maximum limit of £30,000 and can be used to fund the following types of work:

- to make it easier to get into and out of a dwelling by widening doors and installing ramps;
- to make access easier to the living room;
- by providing or improving access to the bedroom, kitchen, toilet, washbasin and bath (and/or shower) facilities; for example, by installing a stair lift or through floor lift or providing a downstairs bedroom or bathroom
- to improve or provide a heating system 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.
- to provide access to a garden area.

### **Referral to Home Improvement Agency**

Once your Occupational Therapist has assessed your needs and identified the adaptations that are necessary to meet your needs they will make a referral for a DFG to the Home Improvement Agency (HIA).

#### **Application stage**

Within 15 working days of the HIA receiving your referral, a caseworker will visit you and help you complete the application form and associated paperwork. If you are a tenant or you are living with relatives, the owner of the property will be required to sign an owners certificate to say they are happy for the adaptations to be carried out at the property. Work to your home can only proceed if the owner of the property gives their permission.

The Caseworker will carry out the test of resources based on the information you provide at the visit and will let you know of the likely contribution you may have to pay to the cost of the work if any.

If you do have to pay a contribution and cannot afford it the Caseworker will discuss all

other funding options with you.

Mandatory DFG's for children's adaptations are not means tested however if the cost of the works exceeds the maximum grant limit of £30,000 the grant applicant would be responsible for funding the excess. The caseworker can help in sourcing funding in these situations if required.

Within 25 working days of the HIA receiving your referral, the Housing Surveyor will visit to carry out a survey and prepare a schedule of works. If the work required involves an extension to your home, the Housing Surveyor will arrange this with an Architect.

If the work required to your home is a ramp, a shower, a through floor lift or a stair lift the Caseworker will liaise directly with the contractor who will visit you to assess the work and provide their estimate to the Home Improvement Agency.

In all other cases, the Housing Surveyor will invite three contractors to provide estimates for the work. The return time for estimates is 15 working days.

When all the paperwork is complete and estimates have been received, your application will be submitted for approval.

### **Approval stage**

Once the HIA has a full application, which is made up of completed application paperwork; relevant design; plans where necessary; and two estimates from different contractors, they will aim to approve the DFG within 5 working days.

### **Works stage**

Once the DFG is approved, the HIA will work with the appointed contractor to ensure that works can start as soon as possible. It is usual practice to hold a pre-start meeting before the work starts. This is where everybody involved discusses how the work will proceed and any issues can be resolved. A works start date and programme of work will also be agreed.

Once the work starts, the housing Surveyor will make regular visits to ensure it is progressing well and in accordance with the schedule of work. If any unforeseen work is found to be necessary, the contractor will liaise with the Housing Surveyor to agree costings and how to proceed.

For larger works, or where the works involve more than one contractor, contractors can request payments at various stages of the work. The council makes all DFG payments directly to the contractor.

## **Completion stage**

When the adaptations are complete, the Housing Surveyor will inspect and confirm that works have been carried out to a satisfactory standard and the OT will confirm that the you needs have been met in accordance with the original assessment.

When the HIA receives the invoice and all certificates and warranties from the contractor the council will make payment directly to the contractor.

Where a property has been extended and the cost of works exceeds £15,000 a local land charge will be registered against the property for a period of 10 years. The charge will be for a maximum of £10,000.

A satisfaction questionnaire will be sent to you in order to gather your feedback. This is essential to improving the service of the HIA in providing DFG's to all clients.

## **Other issues**

### **What if there is a funding shortfall**

HIA caseworkers will explore various forms of alternative funding where the cost of eligible works exceeds the DFG maximum or where you have an assessed contribution and are unable to afford it. Sources of alternative funding can vary from time to time and can depend on your financial situation and employment history. Funding may be available from a number of sources including (but not limited to) the following;

- The client or the client's family
- Charitable funding
- The property owner where the client is a tenant
- Benevolent funding linked to the client's previous employment
- Loan funding from the Council's Financial Assistance Policy

### **What if an applicant had a preferred scheme?**

The DFG will be based on the most reasonable and practicable option however you may prefer to have your own option, for example the HIA and OT may agree your needs can be met by installing a through floor lift and you might prefer to build a ground floor bedroom and bathroom. In this instance, the DFG will be approved for the lift and you can use that to part fund your own scheme as long as it meets your needs as assessed by your OT.

## **Re-housing assistance**

In some cases, a property may not be suitable for adaptation and in such cases DFG funding can be used towards the cost of purchasing a more suitable property. Funding will only be available for properties that the OT and Housing Surveyor consider to be suitable accommodation or more suitable for adaptation than the existing property.

## **Insurance and Legal claims**

In some cases, a grant applicant may receive an insurance or damages claim payout after grant aided works have been carried out. In such cases, the Local Authority can reclaim the grant amount from the client.

## **Minor adaptations**

Minor adaptations, which are generally works costing less than £1000, are not funded with DFG they are funded by the OT service and delivered by the handyperson service.

## **Review and Appeals**

If anybody raises any issues through the process which require a multi-agency response, a review panel will be called. The review panel consists of HIA, OT and all other professionals involved and you.

There is no appeal procedure within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, however you have the right to challenge the outcome of your DFG application through the Councils corporate complaints procedure.

## **Useful Numbers**

**Durham and Darlington Home Improvement Agency (DDHIA) 03000 268000**  
**Email ddhia@durham.gov.uk**

**For Adult and Childrens OT services if you do not know your OT's phone Number**

**Social Care Direct 03000 267979**  
**Email scd@durham.gov.uk**