

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT

INTRODUCTION

If you are disabled and need to make changes to your home, you could receive financial help in the form of a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) from your local council.

The sort of changes that could be covered include:

- Widening doors and installing ramps
- Improving access to rooms and facilities - eg by installing a stairlift or a downstairs bathroom
- Providing a heating system suitable for your needs
- Adapting heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use

ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

You can apply for the grant if you or someone living in your property is disabled. Either you or the person you're applying for must:

- be the owner or tenant of the property
- intend to occupy the property as a main or only home during the grant period (currently five years).
- You can also apply for a grant if you're a landlord and have a disabled tenant.

The council needs to be satisfied that the work is:

- necessary and appropriate to meet the disabled person's needs
- reasonable and can be done – depending on the age and condition of the property

Community equipment, aids and minor adaptations that help people to

live at home or with daily living, and cost less than £1,000, should be provided free of charge in England.

In Wales, the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme aims to provide adaptations costing up to £350 within 15 days of a referral by a local authority or health worker.

The system in Scotland is different and whether the applicant receives the full 100% of approved costs depends on whether or not the person is receiving certain DWP benefits. In other cases, the minimum grant will be for 80% of approved costs.

PAYMENT

This is done in instalments, as the work progresses, or in full, when the work is finished.

The council may pay the contractor directly, or give you a cheque to pass on – they will agree this with you when they approve the application.

You will be paid either when the council is happy with the finished work or when you give the council the invoice, demand or receipt for payment from the contractor.

If you do the work yourself or ask a relative to do it, the council will only accept invoices for materials or services you've bought.

HOW TO CLAIM

Contact the housing or environmental health department of your local

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How much is the grant worth?

The amount you might receive will depend on your household income and your savings.

The maximum amount of grant that you can get is:

- £30,000 if you live in England
- £36,000 if you live in Wales
- £25,000 if you live in Northern Ireland

If you live in Scotland, contact your local council to find out what grants are available.

Depending on your income, you may need to pay towards the cost of the work to the property.

You might not get any grant if you start work on your property before the council approves your application.

A Disabled Facilities Grant will not affect any benefits that you're getting.

If you are applying for a disabled child under 18, the grant is worked out differently. Contact your local council for more information.

council and ask them to send you an application form.

HOW TO APPLY

Before applying you will need to find out:

- what changes are needed to your property
- the type of work that needs to be done
- the cost of the work

An occupational therapist can look at your circumstances and recommend the type of changes needed.

Return the completed application to your local council before work starts on the property.

The council will normally need two written estimates for the work. They may be able to give you a list of builders or advise you about employing one.

They must tell you the result of your application in writing within six months of the application date.

PLANNING AND BUILDING REGULATIONS APPROVAL

You will need to apply separately for any planning permission or building regulations approval.

The council may ask you to employ a qualified architect or surveyor to plan and oversee the work. If you get a grant, you can put it towards their fees.

APPEAL PROCEDURES

If you are refused a Disabled Facilities Grant, or are unhappy with the amount you've been awarded, you can appeal against the decision. Ask your local council for their appeals and complaints procedure.

If you appeal and you're still not happy, you can complain to the Local Government Ombudsman.

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