



Grants for housing adaptations

Adaptations, improvements or repairs to the home are a key part of making your home more accessible and safer. Often getting the right adaptations means that you can remain in your home for longer.

Local authorities have funds to help cover the costs of such improvements. Minor adaptations, such as handrails, are available through Social Services. In most cases, community equipment, aids and minor adaptations that help with living at home and cost under £1,000 should be provided free of charge in England by your local authority. This is a duty imposed on local authorities under the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act.

A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a local council grant to help towards the cost of adapting your home to enable you to continue to live there. A grant is paid where the council considers the changes necessary to meet your needs and is happy that the work is reasonable and practical.

A grant can be used for essential adaptations to give you better freedom of movement into and around your home or to provide essential facilities within it. This includes:

- ▶ Widening doors and installing ramps
- ▶ Providing or improving access to rooms and facilities - for example, by installing a stair lift, through-floor 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.

How do I get a grant?

Disabled Facilities Grants are 'means-tested' for adults. This means the government assesses and decides what level of benefit should be received. However, this is not the case for children. Local authorities also have discretionary powers which allow them to provide assistance to families.

To apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), you need to complete a form which you can get from your local housing authority. In order to see what adaptations, if any, are required in your home, Social Services will arrange for an occupational therapist (OT) to visit your home and assess the situation. They will then advise on whether or not a particular adaptation may be helpful and decide whether or not you qualify for grants towards the cost of any major adaptations. You can only get a DFG if the work you need done on your home is deemed to be:

1. necessary and appropriate to meet your needs. Your local authority will normally ask an occupational therapist for their opinion on whether or not you need the work done,
2. reasonable and practical, given the age of your home and the condition it is in. For example, if your home is in a serious state of disrepair, it might not be practical to do the work you need.



What to expect

Once you have applied for a grant, your local authority must tell you about its decision within six months of the application being lodged. If your application for DFG is successful, be aware that if you intend to carry out the work yourself, you will not be able to claim for the cost of your own labour.

The grant must be approved before work starts, and is paid in instalments or in full on completion of the work. Make sure you have agreed this in writing with the council before work starts.

The amount you contribute to DFG is determined by a means test of the applicant, i.e. the home-owner, private tenant, landlord. However, there is no means-testing if the adaptations are for a disabled child under the age of 19.

Depending on the outcome of this assessment, the amount of financial assistance offered can vary from nought to 100 percent of the cost of improvements. The maximum amount of DFG that local authorities are required to pay in England is £30,000. If the cost of the eligible works is higher, the council can use discretionary powers to increase the grant.

Disclaimer

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Here for you

The friendly staff in the care and support team at the Muscular Dystrophy UK's London office are available on **0800 652 6352** or **info@muscular dystrophyuk.org** from 8.30am to 6pm Monday to Friday to offer free information and emotional support.

If they can't help you, they are more than happy to signpost you to specialist services close to you, or to other people who can help.

www.muscular dystrophyuk.org

Muscular Dystrophy UK

Fighting muscle-wasting conditions

