



Disabled Facilities Grants



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Introduction

If you or someone living in your property is disabled you may qualify for a Mandatory 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 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 help available and how to go about applying for a grant.

Before applying for assistance

Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Services and Children, Schools & Families department employs Occupational Therapists who will assess what adaptations you need. You should contact them on **0300 123 4042** or **0300 123 4043** respectively to arrange for an assessment of your needs.

Applications for grant assistance will be dealt with by the Private Sector Housing Team at North Herts District Council. While grants for a range of works are **mandatory** you should not assume that you will automatically qualify for a grant, as they are **means tested**.

At the same time as contacting Adult Care Services or Children, Schools & Families you should request an informal test of resources form from the **Environmental Protection & Housing Team at North Hertfordshire District Council, Council Offices, Gernon Road, Letchworth Garden City, Herts SG6 3JF**. Tel. **01462 474000** or env.health@north-herts.gov.uk.

By completing and returning this form the Council will be able to advise you of any contribution you will have to make towards the cost of works that are eligible for grant aid. For more information on the means test refer to page 5 of this leaflet.

Who can apply for a grant ?

- An applicant must either be the owner of the dwelling or be 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.
- A landlord may apply on behalf of a disabled tenant.

When applying for a grant for someone else, the applicant, whether an owner-occupier, tenant or landlord will be asked to sign a certificate stating the applicant's intention that throughout the grant condition period, currently five years, (or such shorter period as the disabled person's health or other relevant circumstances permit) the disabled person will occupy the dwelling as his or her only or main residence.

What are Mandatory Disabled Facilities grants available for?

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

The mandatory grant has a limit of £30,000. The types of works are:

- to make it easier to get into and out of a dwelling by, for example, widening doors and installing ramps;
- ensuring the safety of the disabled person and other occupants by, for example, providing a specially adapted room in which it would be safe to leave a disabled person unattended or improved lighting to ensure better visibility;
- 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 stairlift or providing a downstairs 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; and
- 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.

The amount of grant and how it will be calculated?

All grant applications will be subject to a means test of the resources of the disabled person and their spouse or partners. The means test assesses how much, if anything, they must contribute to the cost of the works.

Applications in respect of a disabled person who is a child under the age of 16 or is a young person not in advanced education or in receipt of income support will not be subject to the means test of resources.

To ensure that grant goes to the most needy households, the amount of grant you will receive will be decided by the means test which will look at the income and capital of the disabled person and their spouse or partner.

The test calculates the disabled person's average weekly income, taking account of any savings above a certain limit (certain state benefits, including those which specifically recognise a person's disability are ignored). This is then set against an assessment of basic needs, which are recognised by a range of premiums and allowances.

If the disabled person's resources are **less** than this assessment, then they will not normally need to contribute to the cost of the works.

If the disabled person receives Income Support, Income-based Job Seekers Allowance, Pension Guarantee Credit, Housing Benefit or Working Tax Credit and /or Child Tax Credit with annual income of less than £15,050 or Income based Employment & Support Allowance they will not normally have

to make a contribution, although this will not necessarily be the case if anyone else is included in the assessment. All information will be treated with the strictest confidence.

If the disabled person's resources are **more** than the assessment, then a proportion of their income will be used to calculate the contribution they can afford to finance the works. This amount is then deducted from the amount of grant that the Authority is prepared to pay. The amount of grant should cover the reasonable cost of works up to the maximum permitted.

Please note, the maximum mandatory grant payable is **£30,000** and that a condition of a grant is the repayment of 33% of the total value where the grant is over £5,000, where the applicant has an owners interest in the property and disposes of it by sale, transfer, assignment or otherwise within 10 years of the certified date of completion of the works. The condition will be registered as a Local Land Charge and will be binding on any person who is for the time being the owner of the property.

Do the Council have to give assistance?

When you apply to the Council for a Mandatory Disabled Facilities grant, they will need to check that the proposed works are:

- **necessary** and **appropriate** to meet the disabled person's needs. They will consult an Occupational Therapist to make the assessment; and
- **reasonable** and **practicable** depending on the age and condition of the property.

The Council needs to be satisfied about each of these matters, and the overall feasibility of the works, if they are to give a Disabled Facilities grant. The Council can refuse a Disabled Facilities grant if they believe the scheme is not **necessary** and **appropriate**, **reasonable** and **practicable**.

How do I apply?

Once the Occupational Therapist has carried out an assessment of the needs of the disabled person they will advise the Private Sector Housing Team of the work that is considered necessary and appropriate. An Environmental Health Officer from the Private Sector Housing Team will

arrange to visit your home with the Occupational Therapist to assess if the works are **reasonable** and **practicable** and to discuss the grant process.

If you or your family are not in a position to make the grant application, which includes acquiring estimates, you may decide to use the services of an external agent to help you with making an application. The agent will act on your behalf, acquiring estimates, making the application, acquiring any necessary approval for building regulations or planning purposes and supervising the works. The reasonable cost of any agents fees can be considered for grant aid.

Following the visit to your home a schedule of works eligible for grant aid, together with an application form and other documentation you will need to support your application, will be forwarded to the applicant or the agent.

You will not normally receive any grant if you start work before the Council approve the application.

If the work is urgent, you should contact your Occupational Therapist and the Private Sector Housing Team and let them know the circumstances.

An application is only valid if it is made on the Council's form and if it includes all the information required.

Grant approval

The Council must give you a decision in writing within six months of receipt of a completed valid application including any additional information they may require. In a few cases a local authority may specify a date before which grant is not payable. This will be no later than 12 months from the date on which the application was made.

Grant payment

The grant will only be paid when the Council are satisfied that the work has been completed to their satisfaction and in accordance with the grant approval. Note, however, that you or your agent are responsible for ensuring that your builder meets the standard **you** require.

The 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 will be acceptable.

The Council may pay the grant in full on completion of the works or, if the grant is above a certain value, by instalments as the works progress.

The Council will pay the grant direct to your contractor or your agent. 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.

Getting advice

If you have any queries regarding anything in this document please contact:

Environmental Protection & Housing Team at North Herts District Council on Tel. **01462 474000** or email: env.health@north-herts.gov.uk

It is a good idea to get advice from a qualified person when considering the need to carry out works to your property. You should also consider how best to meet the costs.

In looking at possible options, advice may also be sought from the Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Services, Tel. **0300 123 4042**, Children, Schools & Families department, Tel. **0300 123 4043**, Private Sector Housing Team at North Herts District Council, Tel. **01462 474000** and Citizen Advice Bureaux.

Other relevant information

For small-scale works, such as the provision of grab rails, repairs to windows and doors, and provision of insulation a **Home Repair Assistance Grant** may be available from North Hertfordshire District Council. Further details are provided in the leaflet, **Home Repair Assistance**.

These documents and full details of North Hertfordshire District Council's grant policy is available in electronic form on the Council's website.

www.north-herts.gov.uk

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