

Oxfordshire grant-aided

Home adaptations

bringing independence to people with disabilities who live in privately-owned or rented housing



In partnership with



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Introduction

This booklet has been produced by Adult Social Care and the five Oxfordshire district councils. It is a jointly-agreed approach setting out how the authorities will assist disabled service users and their carers carry out adaptations to their homes.

Important

This booklet is not a legal document. It does not cover every case. If you are in doubt about your legal rights or responsibilities, you should seek independent advice from the Citizens Advice Bureau or a solicitor. They may be able to advise you if you are eligible for any help with all or part of the cost of legal advice under the Legal Aid scheme.



Ramp providing front door access

Adaptations to your home

What help is available towards adapting my home?

If you have a disability and are a resident of Oxfordshire you may be eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). This is a mandatory grant to adapt your home to enable you to be more independent, for example by:

- making it easier to get into and out of your home
- making it easier to get to your bedroom, bathroom, living room, and kitchen
- making it easier to use the toilet, bath and/or shower
- making it easier to prepare and cook food
- improving or installing a suitable heating system
- helping you control lighting, power and heating
- making it easier to get around your home to help you care for another person
- helping you to make your home safer for you and your carer
- helping you to access your garden.



Ramp providing shared access

More examples of adaptations that can make it easier for you to remain independent in your home...



Stair lift providing upstairs access



Stair lift providing upstairs access



Level access shower



Outdoor step lift



Bathroom adapted to provide wheelchair access



Adapted shower cubicle



Bath adapted to shower

Discretionary grants may be available to make your property 'fit for purpose' if it is in a poor state of repair or does not have basic facilities, e.g. an indoor toilet. You need to discuss this with your local council.

What is a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)?

Your local district council or city council may provide a DFG to help you pay for adapting your home so that you can live as independently as possible. The DFG is means-tested which means that your income and savings are assessed according to rules set out in government regulations. This means you may have to pay something towards the cost of the work. The adaptations must be "necessary and appropriate" and "reasonable and practicable" as set out in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

Who can apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant?

Owner-occupiers, landlords and a wide range of tenants and licensees can apply for a DFG. The DFG must be for a person who is, or could be, registered as a disabled person. The disability can be caused by physical illness or injury, a major sight, hearing, speech, or mental-health problem, or a learning disability. You can apply if you are a disabled person, the landlord of a disabled person, or someone living with a disabled person. If you live in council housing, or your landlord is a housing association, you may be able to ask your landlord to carry out the adaptation work.

Each district council/city council or housing association will be able to give you advice about their policy on adaptations for tenants. Some councils operate their own Disabled Facilities Grants policy.

Can a child apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)?

If you are under 19 years of age and have a disability, you are entitled to be assessed for a Disabled Facility Grant which will **not** be means-tested. Your parents or carers must be receiving Child Benefit for you. This assessment should include your family's needs in supporting you. You may need to pay for the service and maintenance of some equipment. You will be given advice regarding this.

How does the Disabled Facilities Grant process work?

See '*Applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant*' on p9 of this booklet. The city or district council will normally consult with Adult Social Care. This consultation is likely to lead to the offer of an occupational therapy assessment.

What is an occupational therapy assessment?

An Occupational Therapist from Adult Social Care or Children's Therapy Service will visit you at home to make an assessment of your needs. The Occupational Therapist will ask you about your disability and may need to consult with your doctor. She/he will make an assessment of how you carry out day to day activities. This will include your mobility around the house and how you manage

personal and domestic tasks. The needs of those who live with you or care for you will also be taken into consideration. In most cases this first assessment will take about one hour; if your needs are complex more than one visit may be required. Following the assessment the Occupational Therapist will discuss the options for meeting your needs with you. These might include advice about equipment which may solve your difficulties without alterations to your property, or the option of alternative accommodation. Cost will be taken into consideration.

Why do I need to see an Occupational Therapist?

The Occupational Therapist is qualified to assess your needs related to your disability and to comment and advise on whether the work you are proposing to carry out is both “necessary and appropriate” to meet your needs. If the Occupational Therapist decides that your needs are best met by an adaptation, he/she will send their recommendations to the district or city council.

What will the district /city council do?

On receiving the recommendation from the Occupational Therapist, an officer from the city or district council will contact you to discuss the Occupational Therapist's



recommendation and to ask you to complete a grant application form. This officer will carry out a financial assessment (they may call it a test of resources) to see if you have to make a contribution towards the cost of the adaptations. The amount you may be expected to contribute will be referred to as your notional loan. Under current legislation, the grants officer has a duty to assess your property to make sure that the proposed alterations are “reasonable and practicable”. If the district council or city council believes the adaptation scheme is not ‘reasonable and practicable’ or “necessary and appropriate” they can refuse a grant.

The council will ask you to provide proof that you are the owner or tenant of the property. If you are not the disabled person, you need to make it clear on whose behalf you are making the application, e.g. as the parent of a disabled child. You may be able to get help with making an application by contacting your city/district council team for assistance.

Once the grants officer has all the completed paperwork - the valid application, two quotations, and plans if needed – they must give you a written decision about a grant within six months.

Who will be financially assessed?

The district council may carry out an initial ‘test of resources’. This will tell you how much they think you will need to contribute. If you are 19 or over, and you and/or your spouse or partner receives a passport benefit benefit, you will be fast-tracked through the means test process without needing to provide any further information, and you will not have to contribute to get the grant. If you do not receive these benefits, the district council will carry out a means test on your income and savings.

An official ‘test of resources’ is carried out when you actually apply for the grant. If an

initial 'test of resources' was carried out and your financial circumstances have changed, the amount of grant or your financial eligibility could also change.

If the 'test of resources' shows you must pay the whole cost of the adaptation work, you may still benefit by applying for what is known as a "nil grant". Your contribution to the previous work can be taken into account if you need to adapt your home again within 10 years (or five years if renting your home). To be eligible, you must have filled in the grant application and carried out the work to the district council's satisfaction.

If you are under 19, and your parent(s) or carer(s) receive child benefit for you, they will not have to be means-tested when they apply for a mandatory DFG. For a discretionary DFG, the amount you need to contribute depends on your local authority's policy.

What if I can't afford my assessed contribution (notional loan)?

Other sources of funding may be available. Discuss this with your Occupational Therapist and district/city council.

When will I have to pay my assessed contribution?

This will vary depending on your local council. The grants officer will explain this fully to you. You should ensure you have the resources to fund your contribution in place prior to work starting.

Can I start the work before the grant is approved?

You **should not start any work** on adapting your home until the grant has been fully approved and you have received written confirmation from your district council, because **funding cannot be awarded once the work has started.**

Can I get any help with designing the adaptation work?

Your Occupational Therapist in conjunction with the district/city council officers will usually be able to help you to plan minor alterations such as showers, stair lifts, ramps and minor kitchen alterations. If major alterations are needed, such as an extension to your property, you will need the services of an architect or surveyor. Some of the district councils have 'in house' technical services that can help or you can use a Home Improvement Agency.

If you choose to find someone who specialises in this kind of work, discuss this with your Occupational Therapist or grants officer (if you get a grant, their fees can be included in the cost of the works). It is necessary for the Occupational Therapist to work closely with you, the architect/surveyor or agency, and the grants officer, to ensure that the proposed work will fully meet your needs.

If you do not get a grant you will normally be responsible for these fees. In some situations other financial help to cover these fees might be available. In some instances, architectural advice and support may be available through your local council or housing association. There may also be a Home Improvement Agency in your area to help you - your council will be able to advise you on this.

What do I need to know if I am employing my own architect, surveyor, builder, or anyone else?

If you use an architect, architectural technician or surveyor, you should make sure that they are members of an appropriate professional organisation such as the Royal Institute of British Architects, the Chartered Institute of Architectural Technicians, or the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors. We recommend that they have previous experience of adapting homes for disabled people. The district council may be able to give you information that helps you to select the right people.

You should consult your district/city council grants officer to check what level of fees you can claim as part of the DFG before you appoint an architect or surveyor and agree fees. If you do not get a grant you will normally be responsible for these fees. In some situations other financial help to cover these fees might be available.

Will I need planning permission or building regulations approval for the work?

You may need either or both. If an architect, surveyor or agency is working on your behalf they will be able to advise you about this. If in doubt you should contact the relevant department of your local council before starting any work.



How long will it take for the adaptation to be completed?

It can be a lengthy process. Please discuss the time scale with your grants officer. Some of the factors which can affect the length of time it will take to complete an adaptation are:

- the complexity of your needs and the time needed to identify all the risks and suitable options;
- agreeing a solution and obtaining plans that will meet your needs;
- obtaining the landlord's permission (if appropriate);
- providing proof of the ownership of the property (proof of title);
- rectifying existing structural faults;
- obtaining planning permission;
- Party Wall Act agreements;
- obtaining quotations;
- availability of funding;
- availability of builders;
- obtaining final grant approval (the council must agree or refuse a grant within six months after receiving your valid application).

Will the work be checked?

While work is in progress your council should make sure that it is monitored. When the works are finished the occupational therapist and/or grants officer will want to check with you that the works have been carried out as agreed in the plans, and that the adaptation has met your identified needs.



Who pays for maintaining, repairing and insuring the adaptations?

When work has been funded by a Disabled Facilities Grant, the person who applied will usually be fully responsible for maintaining, repairing, insuring, and removing the adaptations. The Home Improvement Agency or the architect, surveyor or builder you are using can give you advice on maintenance and guarantees. You should check the guarantee period available to you, and should consider taking out a contract with the manufacturer to maintain equipment that needs regular servicing, such as home lifts, specialist toilets or baths. If you live in rented accommodation you should check with your landlord whether he/she will take on any responsibility for service or maintenance of the adaptations in the future.

It is advisable to inform your household insurance company of works carried out so they can upgrade your insurance accordingly.

Responsibilities

District / city council

The district/city council must ensure that all stages of DFGs are processed and agree that the proposed adaptations are “necessary and appropriate” and “reasonable and practicable”. The council must consult Adult Social Care or the Children’s Therapy Service about whether the work is “necessary and appropriate” for your needs. Once these conditions are met the council must approve and fund a mandatory DFG.

Occupational Therapists and other social care assessors

It is normally the role of the Occupational Therapist or social care assessor to:

- assess your needs on behalf of Adult Social Care or the Children’s Therapy Service and help to find a solution to those needs.
- Ensure that the proposed work is the most cost-effective solution to meet your needs (this may involve considering other housing options).
- Work in partnership with the district/city council advising them what work he or she considers “necessary and appropriate” for your needs (this will usually include commenting on plans and agreeing the final work).
- Advise on the funding that may be available through Adult Social Care or the Children’s Therapy Service.

Our legal responsibilities

Some of the relevant legislation to which we work includes the following:

- Care Act 2014 (Adults)
- The Children Act 1989, Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (children)
- Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
- Regulatory Reform Order 2002 (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales)
- Equality Act 2010

Applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

The checklist below shows what is involved in applying for a DFG. The order in which events happen may change. You can find more information in the 'Disabled Facilities Grant' booklet available on the Communities and Local Government website: **www.communities.gov.uk**.

The organisations involved will try to make the process as simple and as fast as possible, but there are quite a lot of steps involved. We estimate the whole process will take up to 12 months, but this depends on the scale of the work and the funding available. Complicated work can take considerably longer.

Applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

Checklist – Applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant		
Stages (not always in this order)	Who is responsible	Date complete
Initial assessment of need <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • early indication of needs. • discussion about financial eligibility. 	Social and Health Care Team Adult Social Care Occupational Therapist Officers of district/city council	
Assessment by Occupational Therapist or social care assessor: to <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assess the person who will use the facility • identify what is “necessary and appropriate” to meet their needs (see page eight for an explanation of the role of the Occupational Therapist or social care assessor) • consider other housing options 	Occupational Therapist or social care assessor.	
Referral to city/district council - Recommendation by the Occupational Therapist or social care assessor <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • identification of assessed needs. • confirmation in writing of what is considered “necessary and appropriate” to meet the needs of the person who will use the facility. A copy is sent to the applicant. 	Occupational Therapist or social care assessor.	
Provisional ‘test of resources’ (ToR) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the financial ‘test of resources’ gives an indication as to whether the person applying will have to contribute to the cost of the work (see page 5 for an explanation of the grants officer’s role) (The maximum amount of grant is £30,000)	Grants officer at the district/city council (or other agents on the council’s behalf)	
Home visit by grants officer/home improvements agency The home visit is to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • find out how much work needs to be done • confirm that the proposed work is “reasonable and practicable” and “necessary and appropriate” 	Grants officer, and depending on complexity of work may also involve: Occupational Therapist/social care assessor, Home Improvement Agency or independent surveyor, registered social landlord/housing association	
Agreement on the proposed work <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confirmation of the work agreed with the service user and agreement on plans and specifications where appropriate 	You (the person applying), Occupational Therapist/social care assessor and grants officer	
Grant application process A grants application form is completed to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • confirm that the proposed work and agreed plans qualify for a DFG • confirm who owns the property, and get permission to carry out the proposed work • confirm financial eligibility 	You (the applicant) and the grants officer/Home Improvements Agency	

Stages (not always in this order)	Who is responsible	Date complete
<p>Getting approval for funding from other sources if needed (e.g. if cost of work is going to cost more than the amount of DFG awarded or you have been assessed as having to make a contribution);</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • this is to confirm how the extra money will be paid (for example, the applicant's contribution, charitable contributions, loans, or a contribution from Adult Social Care or the Children's Therapy Service) 	People providing the funding (e.g. you, charities, district/city council, Adult Social Care, landlord or CYPF)	
<p>Detailed work specification</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • describes in detail the work the contractors will carry out • is used to obtain any necessary statutory approvals (e.g. building regulations, planning permission) 	Technical officer from the district or city council or home improvements agency, registered social landlord, your agent or an independent surveyor	
<p>Getting quotations for the work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • two or more quotations for the specifications are required in order to process the DFG application 	You, technical officer from the district or city council or home improvements agency, registered social landlord, your agent, or surveyor	
<p>Approval of the grant application</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to confirm that the work can start (the district/city council has up to six months to approve a completed grant application). • once approved you have 12 months to complete the work and claim the funding 	District/city council grants officer	
<p>Agreement on start date</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • so any support plans can be in place before work starts • you may be asked to sign a formal contract 	You, the Occupational Therapist/social care assessor, the grants officer, and the technical officer, home improvements agency, registered social landlord or surveyor	
<p>Carry out the adaptation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to adapt the property 	Contractor	
<p>Inspection of the standard of work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to confirm that the work is satisfactory 	You, the grants officer, and the technical officer, home improvements agency, registered social landlord or surveyor	
<p>Checks on the work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • to confirm that the final adaptation meets the disabled person's needs • NB: in some circumstances it will not be necessary for the Occupational Therapist/social care assessor to check the completed adaptation. This will be agreed with you following assessment. 	You and/or Occupational Therapist/social care assessor.	
<p>Advice on maintenance and guarantees</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • so that you know how to arrange your own maintenance and repairs 	Home improvements agency, registered social landlord or surveyor	

Who to contact

Oxfordshire County Council Social and Health Care Team

PO Box 780
Oxford
OX1 9GX
Tel: 0345 050 7666
Fax: 01865 783111
socialandhealthcare@oxfordshire.gov.uk

Cherwell District Council

Bodicote House
Bodicote, Banbury
Oxfordshire OX15 4AA
Tel: 01295 221658
www.cherwell.gov.uk

Oxford City Council

PO Box 10
Oxford OX1 1EN
Tel: 01865 249811
www.oxford.gov.uk

South Oxfordshire District Council

Environmental Health
135 Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Abingdon
OX14 4SB
Tel: 01235 422403
www.southoxon.gov.uk

West Oxfordshire District Council

Elmfield
New Yatt Road
Witney
Oxfordshire OX28 1PB
Tel: 01993 861000
www.westoxon.gov.uk

Vale of White Horse District Council

Environmental Health
135 Eastern Avenue
Milton Park
Abingdon
OX14 4SB
Tel: 01235 422403
www.whitehorsedc.gov.uk

Notes/useful names and addresses

Occupational Therapist/social care assessor

.....

Grants officer

Home improvement agency/Landlord.....

Contractor.....

Others.....

Glossary of terms

Social and Health Care Team: Contact point for social and health care, responsible for carrying out an initial (phone) assessment of need.

Community care: Helping people to live in their own homes.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG): If you or someone living permanently in your property is disabled you may qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant towards the cost of providing adaptations. The grant is provided by the local district council and is means tested

Grants officer: The district/city council housing officer who is responsible for processing DFG applications.

Home Improvement Agency (HIA): Work alongside some district/city councils to advise on improvements and adaptations.

Mandatory grant: A grant which the district/city councils must make if various conditions have been met and the work is for the specific purposes set out in the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

Occupational Therapist (OT): Employed by Adult Social Care or Children's Therapy Service to assess the needs of disabled people.

Social care assessor: Social care officer carrying out assessments under the NHS and Community Care Act 1990, Care Act 2014 and Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 on behalf of Oxfordshire County Council.

Adult Social Care (ASC): the Social Services Directorate of Oxfordshire County Council.

Test of resources (ToR): This assessment tells you how much you need to contribute towards the adaptation.

For information on equipment to help you to be independent at home see:

'Direct Access to Equipment' service:
www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/otequipment

The information in this document can be made available in other languages, large print braille, audio tape or electronic format on request. Please contact 0345 050 7666

Jeżeli chcieliby Państwo uzyskać informacje w innym języku lub w innym formacie, prosimy dać nam znać. 0345 050 7666

ਜੇ ਇਹ ਜਾਣਕਾਰੀ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਭਾਸ਼ਾ ਵਿਚ ਜਾਂ ਕਿਸੇ ਹੋਰ ਰੂਪ ਵਿਚ ਚਾਹੀਦੀ, ਤਾਂ ਇਹ ਸਾਥੋਂ ਮੰਗ ਲਓ। 0345 050 7666

如欲索取以另一語文印製或另一格式製作的資料，請與我們聯絡。0345 050 7666

اگر آپ کو معلومات کسی دیگر زبان یا دیگر شکل میں درکار ہوں تو برائے مہربانی ہم سے پوچھئے۔
0345 050 7666

This booklet has been jointly produced by all the partner agencies listed on the front cover.

We welcome any feedback or comments on this booklet. Please send these to the Social and Health Care Team. (Address page 12).