



Westmorland
& Furness
Council

westmorlandandfurness.gov.uk

Disabled Facilities Grants



Purposes of a Disabled Facilities Grant

The Housing Technical, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 sets out a number of purposes for which a grant must be approved. The first stage is to assess whether the disabled person needs adaptations to meet any of the following purposes:

- Facilitating access to the home and garden – examples could include ramping, installation of a step lift or widening of doorways
- Making the premises safer
- Access to the principal family room or bedroom – examples could include widening of doorways, the installation of a stair lift or through floor lift
- Access to a toilet - examples could include widening internal doorways, installation of stair lifts or the installation of a toilet on the ground floor of a property.
- Access to a bath or shower - examples could include removal of a bath and the provision of level access shower or installation of alternative bathing facilities
- Access to a wash hand basin
- Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food
- Better heating – examples could include extending heating systems to provide additional radiators in rooms used regularly by the disabled applicant.
- Control of power, light and heat – examples could include lowering light switches and heating controls or raising electrical sockets
- Caring for others - examples may include any of the above that assist a disabled person to care for other members of the household



How to apply for a grant?

The Disabled Facilities Grant can provide financial assistance towards adaptations that will help the disabled person maintain independence within their home for as long as possible. The first step is to contact Adult Social Care on **0300 373 3301** who will forward the disabled persons request to the Occupational Therapy Team. They will arrange to visit the disabled person in their home to assess their needs. Once this assessment has taken place they will decide, in line with their guidelines, if the disabled person is eligible to be referred for a Disabled Facilities Grant. This referral is then forwarded to the Disabled Facilities Grant Team whereby the first point of contact will be with a Case Worker who can assist you with this process.

A grant is available to fund work that is assessed as the minimum work required to meet the disabled person's needs. The work must be deemed necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled person and reasonable and practicable based on the current layout and condition of the property.

Please be aware it is not always appropriate to adapt a disabled person's home and they may be advised to look for more suitable accommodation.

The Council can refuse a grant if it feels that the scheme does not fit the criteria described above. On some occasions a grant can be refused if the disabled persons home is in a poor state of repair or excessively cluttered, perhaps as a result of hoarding and remedial action may need to be taken before an adaptation can take place.

Feasibility

Once the recommendations have been received by the Disabled Facilities Grant Team the disabled person, or their nominated representative will be contacted, usually by telephone, to confirm how the grant process will work. Following this they will be issued with an application form, and depending on which grant applies to them, they may also be issued with a means test questionnaire. This may be a capital means test or a full financial means test depending on the available grant.

If they are in receipt of a means tested benefit the application will be "passported" through the initial financial assessment process. If the disabled person is a child, or dependent young person under 20 years old, then a financial assessment is not required and the work will be fully funded (to a maximum grant of £30,000).

We will make the appropriate checks to establish if the disabled person is in receipt of a relevant benefit as listed below:

- Universal Credit
- Income Support
- Job Seekers Allowance (income base only)
- Employment and Support Allowance (income related only)
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Reduction (Local Scheme)
- Child and working tax credits (with a qualifying income of less than £15,050)
- Pension Credit Guarantee (excluding Savings Credit)

At this stage it is important that the disabled person provides the information requested as quickly as possible. If they need assistance, or a home visit, we will be able to assist them.

Once we have received the information requested the appropriate financial assessment will be carried out and we will be able to tell them if the work will be fully funded or if they will need to contribute towards it. In some cases, their income and savings may mean that they do not qualify for any help at all.

The Application Process

To make a grant application, the following information is required:

- A recommendation from Adult Social Care
- A completed grant application form
- Landlord's agreement for the work to be carried out (where tenanted property)
- Proof of property ownership; which can include deeds or land registry documents. Joint owner consent will be required.

In addition, the disabled person may also be required to provide:

- A completed financial assessment form
- Evidence of the disabled person's capital, including their last three months bank or building society statements for all accounts held by them, proof of stocks and shares, proof of premium bonds, the value of any other properties held.
- Evidence of the disabled person's income; which could include earnings and pensions.
- If the disabled person is in receipt of one of the means tested benefits, as listed previously, they will not be required to provide evidence of their income.

As part of the grant application, the disabled person will need to declare that they intend to stay in the property for at least 5 years. If they intend to move, then they are not eligible for grant assistance, although once they have moved they could be assessed in their new home and apply for a grant.



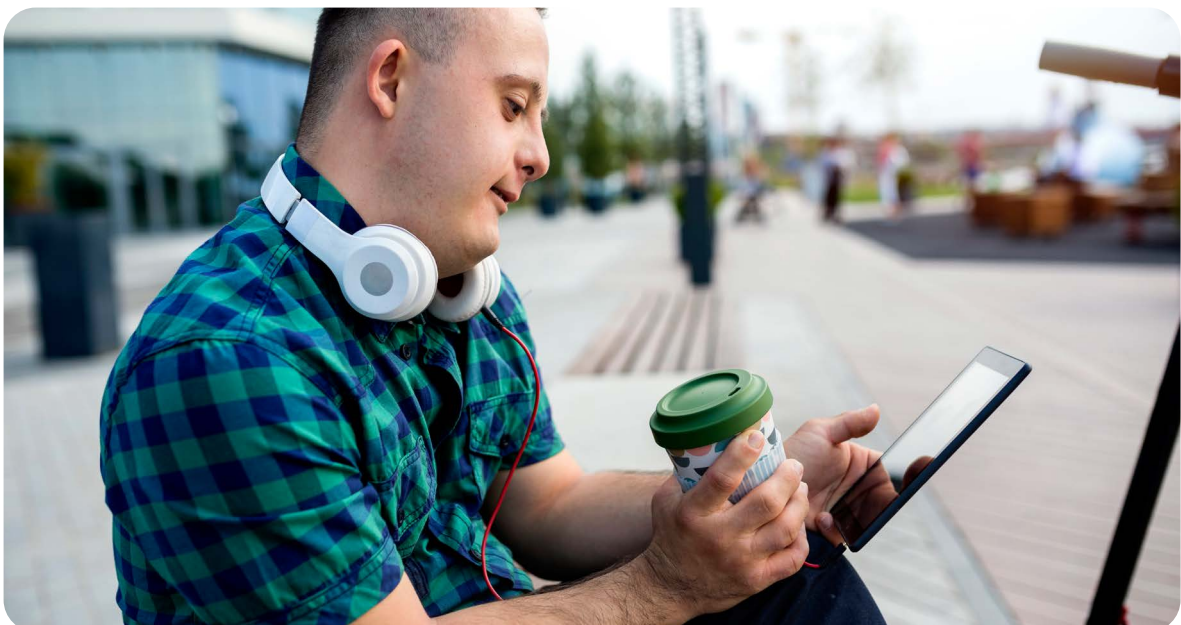
Grants Available

- **Disabled Facilities Grant (mandatory)**
- **Adapted Homes Grant** – the Adapted Homes Grant is intended to assist disabled people by making the grant process more flexible. It is for those people who would not be eligible for a mandatory grant through the full means testing process but have been referred by an Occupational Therapist to have an assessed need for an adaptation.
- **Relocation Assistance** – to provide discretionary assistance to enable disabled persons to move to a more suitable property within Westmorland and Furness Council area, when they are eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant, but it would not be appropriate, reasonable and/or practicable to carry out the eligible work in their current home.
- **Ancillary Top Up Grant** – to top up a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant where the cost of the eligible work exceeds the statutory mandatory maximum grant.
- **Urgent Care Grant** – to support hospital or hospice discharge patients enabling them to remain in, or return to, their homes for end of life care.

Survey Visits

In most cases the Technical Officer will also need to visit the disabled persons home to assess the works required before requesting quotes from a minimum of two contractors. The disabled person will be contacted and arrangements will be made to organise a suitable date to survey the property. The Technical Officer will then look at the disabled person's home to see if the recommended adaptations are possible. At this point the Technical Officer may take photographs and measurements of the property. In carrying out an adaptation we have to look to use the available space where possible. Sometimes the disabled person may want a ground floor extension, but their needs may be met by utilising their existing rooms. For example they may need a ground floor bedroom and they have a dining room that can be used, or they may want an extension but the recommended works may be for a stair lift and a level access shower conversion in their existing bathroom.

If the adaptation is more complex than originally thought the Technical Officer may need to discuss the suitability of grant funding and the Council may require additional financial details in addition to the ones originally provided in the application process.



Quotes

Providing the disabled person qualifies for a grant, the next stage is requesting quotes for the grant work. The Technical Officer will have drawn up plans for basic internal adaptations and will create a schedule of works. The Occupational Therapist will visit the disabled person to discuss the plans to ensure they are happy with the layouts proposed.

Remember that the grant only covers the minimum amount of work to provide the facility you need; for example, the grant will not replace sanitary wear that is in good repair. If the disabled person wishes to add some of their own money to further upgrades they can discuss this with the contractor directly.

At least two quotes are required. The disabled person will be given a list of companies who have previously carried out adaptation works. The grant also allows the disabled person to employ a contractor of their choice to carry out the adaptation. In this instance the Council will require full details of the company. If the disabled person chooses to employ a relative, or carry out the work themselves, the Disabled Facilities Grant will pay only invoices for materials or services bought in.

The Technical Officer will send out the existing and proposed plans, along with a schedule of works, to all chosen contractors. We ask the contractors to return quotes within two weeks for general adaptations, like level access showers, and allow longer for major work such as extensions. Once the quotes arrive the grant amount is determined by the lowest compliant quote.

For example:

- Contractor A quotes £3,500
- Contractor B quotes £4,000

The grant awarded will therefore be £3,500, however the disabled person is employing the contractor, so if they preferred Contractor B, they must advise the Case Worker. The disabled person will have to pay the difference themselves directly to their chosen contractor (in this example that would be £500).

Larger schemes (such as extensions) may need input from professionals such as architects and engineers. Again, the Technical Officer can help the disabled person if they don't know who to use and it may be possible to include the cost of these fees in the grant. If the disabled person uses their own professionals they will need to have the plans checked by their Occupational Therapist and the Technical Officer. They will need to obtain two quotes before the grant can be approved.

Remember that work cannot start until a grant has been formally approved. Where planning permission and building regulations are required it may take several months before quotes can be requested.

If the adaptation works are part of a larger project the disabled person is liable for any fees not associated with the grant aided works.

The contract of work is between the disabled person and the contractor. The Council's responsibility is to facilitate this process.

The Case Worker will inform the disabled person and the contractor of the approval of the grant in writing whereby a suitable start date can be arranged. Work **MUST NOT** begin until the grant has been approved. If the work commences before the grant has been approved, the disabled person will be responsible for the cost of the work in its entirety and no grant will be provided.

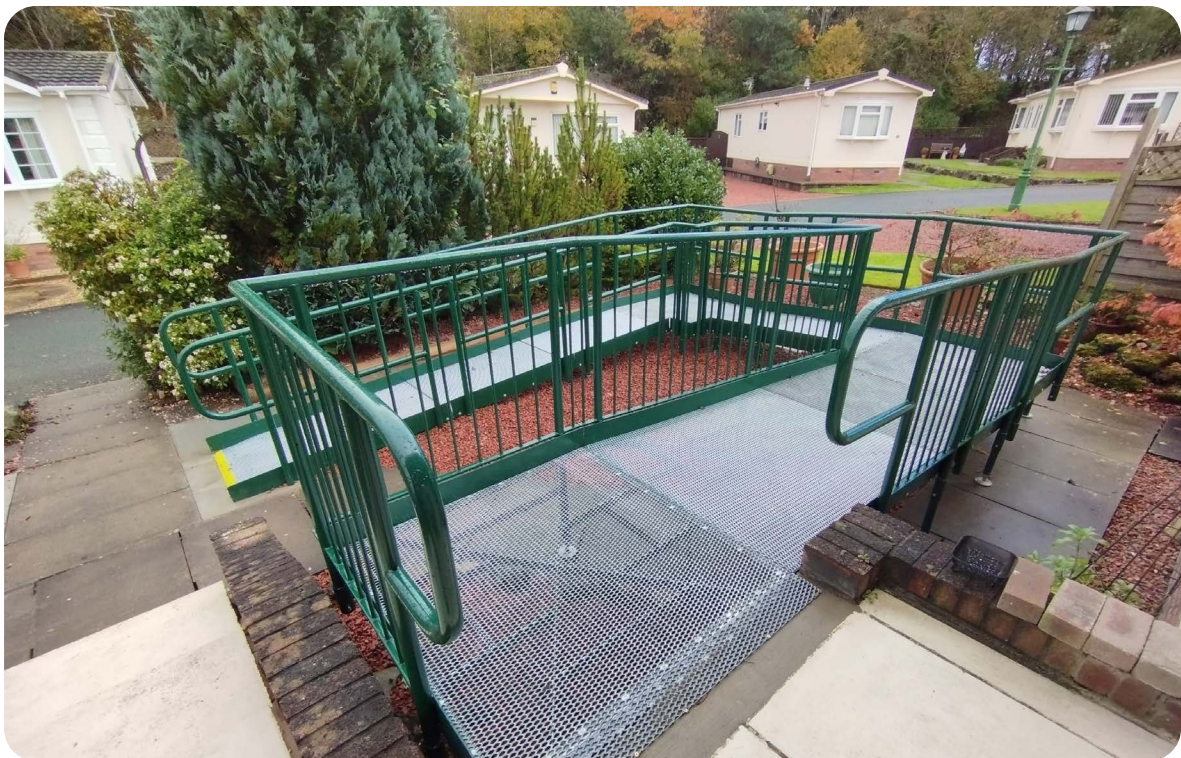
Work in progress

Once the grant has been approved, the contractor will contact the disabled person to arrange a convenient start date. How long this will take depends on how busy the contractor is. The disabled person may want to arrange alternative accommodation, at their own cost, if they are having major adaptations carried out. The grant remains open for 12 months after the approval date and work should be completed by this date.

Once the work has started, a straightforward bathroom adaptation should be complete in 10 working days.

A straight stair lift takes about 2-4 weeks to make and a curved stair lift can be 6-8 weeks. Once manufactured, the installation will only take a day in both cases.

Larger work such as extensions can take several months to complete.



Completion

For minor adaptations such as level access shower rooms, modular ramping, wash dry toilets and stair lifts, the contractor will send their final invoice, the signed approval and photographs to the Technical Officer who will then contact the disabled person. In some instances we may arrange to visit the property to inspect the works. We will also advise the Occupational Therapist that the adaptation is complete and they will contact the disabled person to complete a final assessment and ensure the disabled person understands how to use and transfer to and from the equipment.

If the work is an extension, the Technical Officer or your Project Manager may call to inspect the work in stages. This type of adaptation can be costly and the contractor may require interim payments which the Technical Officer will arrange.

Payment

The contractor will be paid once the Council are happy that the work has been satisfactorily completed.

Aftercare

The Disabled Facilities Grant is a single payment to provide the disabled person with the adaptation needed. It does not offer a repairs or maintenance service, however the Council does have a Handy Person Scheme which may be able to assist you. There is no funding available to remove the adaptation and return the home to its original state should the adaptation no longer be necessary. If the disabled person experiences problems outside the specified defects liability period then they will need to carry out an necessary repair and maintenance at their own expense. If the disabled person is unable to afford an extended warranty or service agreement then they may be able to contact Adult Social Care to potentially assist with these costs.

The disabled person must advise their home insurance provider if they have had any specialist equipment installed.

A maintenance and operations manual will be provided at completion of the works to provide guidance on maintaining the new installation along with warranty documents and useful contacts.

Frequently Asked Questions

What do we mean by “level access shower”?

A level access shower is a walk-in-shower. The shower area will slope slightly towards the waste outlet and special non-slip flooring will cover the whole room. Grab rails and a floor length weighted shower curtain will be fitted and if required new thermostatically-controlled shower. Under the Council's policy glass shower screens and shower cubicles are not allowed under the Disabled Facilities Grant. This is due to safety reasons and to ensure that they can use the facility for as long as possible. Extractor fans, lighting, and heating will be fitted as required to current building regulation standards.

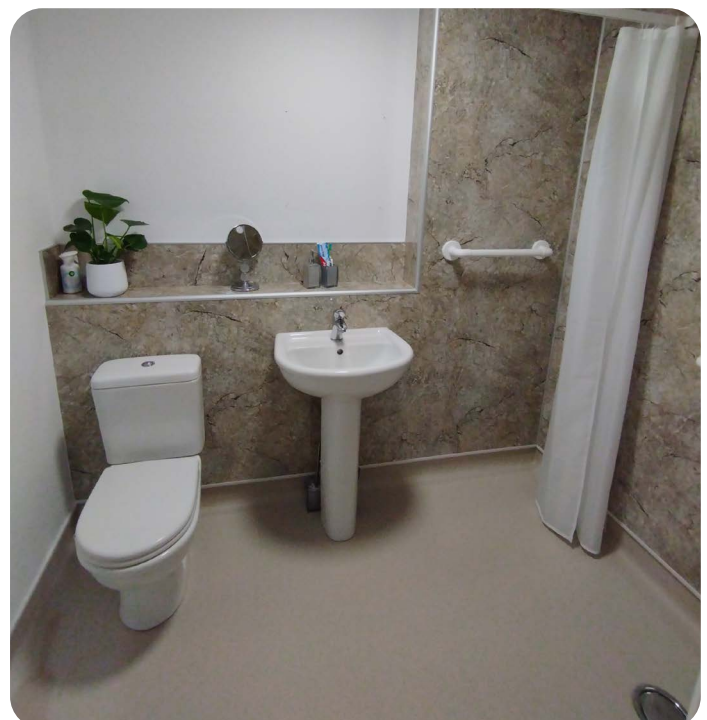
Shower chairs or stools to assist with bathing will be supplied by contacting Adult Social Care on completion. During the process the contractor will endeavour to ensure the disabled person has access to toileting facilities throughout the day. Toileting facilities will always be available during the night.

What if I don't want what is offered?

The recommendation will be made for the minimum, essential, reasonable and practicable option. If the disabled person still wants to have something more, such as an extension, they may have to undertake this privately.

In some circumstances, the disabled person may be able to receive funding towards the cost of their own project. This will be the equivalent of the cost of providing the minimum adaptation, and funds will be provided once the work has been inspected and it has been confirmed that the adaptation is appropriate.

Please note that a grant must be approved before work starts, so it is important that the disabled person speaks to the Technical Officer as they will not receive any assistance for work which has already started.



What if something goes wrong?

If something goes wrong during the adaptation, then the contractor should be able to put things right. If the problem is complex or would result in extra costs, the contractor should contact the Technical Officer, who will visit and agree a solution, which may mean that the grant amount is revised to include unforeseen costs.

Occasionally, some existing problems are uncovered once work starts and normally these can be dealt with by the Technical Officer. Sometimes the problem may be something that can't be covered by the grant and the disabled person may need to carry out remedial works at their own expense. In these circumstances, the work will be halted whilst they rectify the problem and the Technical Officer will then request the adaptation be resumed.

What if the work is going to cost more than £30,000

Larger adaptations such as extensions can cost more than £30,000. If the application is approved, the professional fees are also normally included in the total grant amount. If the total cost of the necessary work is more than £30,000 then the disabled person may be eligible for further assistance. The Technical Officer will discuss this further with them and, if applicable, will offer an Ancillary Top Up grant of up to £10,000. The Ancillary Top Up grant is means tested in all cases and therefore the disabled person will need to provide financial details for assessment. This grant is subject to the works exceeding £30,000 and the disabled person having been assessed for the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant and having a contribution of less than £5,000.

If the Disabled Facilities Grant was for a child's adaptation and therefore not means-tested, the top up grant WILL be means tested with all of the parent(s) or guardian(s) income being taken into consideration. If, as a result of this financial assessment, the assessed contribution to the works is £5,000 or above the disabled person will not qualify for the Ancillary Top Up Grant.

Please note that any Ancillary Top Up Grant is subject to a land charge which is fully repayable if the property is disposed of (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) within 10 years from date of grant completion.

What if I can't afford my assessed contribution or don't qualify for a grant at all?

If the disabled person can not afford the assessed contribution, we can always wait before ordering the work to give them time to save up. Once the grant is approved, it stays open for 12 months.

The disabled person may look elsewhere for top-up funding if saving is not possible or they do not qualify at all. There are other organisations, including charitable organisations, that may be able to help such as the Alzheimer's Society; or employment-related organisations such as the British Legion or the Police / Military Benevolent Fund. There are also age-related organisations or there may be organisations based in the disabled person's locality. As there are many options, the disabled person should seek advice from a formal advice agency such as Citizens Advice.

What if I have to move?

A full assessment of the disabled person needs will be carried out by the Occupational Therapist before a recommendation is made. The Technical Officer will also assess the property to ensure that the adaptation is feasible. In some circumstances, it may not be possible to adapt the property and the disabled person may be advised to look for more suitable accommodation. If you live in a Housing Association property they will be able to assist.

Will I need to pay anything back?

If the disabled person has had adaptations carried out and later move, then there is a repayment amount attached to certain grants which is called a land charge. If the disabled person owns their own home (or if the adaptation has been carried out for a child and the parents own their own home) then they will have to pay back any amount over £5,000. The total repayment amount is capped at £10,000 (see table below) and is repayable if the property is disposed of (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or otherwise) within 10 years. This may be in the form of a sale, or by way of transfer of ownership where no money changes hands.

Amount of Grant	Amount of Local Charge
Up to £5,000	No charge registered
£6,000	£1,000
£10,000	£5,000
£12,000	£7,000
£15,000 and above	£10,000

What happens to my stair lift or modular ramping if have to move?

Essentially, the grant is a single payment to allow the disabled person to purchase the equipment or facility that they need. The equipment then becomes theirs and it is entirely up to them what to do with it if they need to move.

If the disabled person has had a stair lift fitted, it may be advisable to contact the stair lift company to see if they will come and remove it for them as it could be reconditioned for someone else to use. It may also be possible to have it refitted in their new home.

What if the disabled person is still not satisfied?

We aim to settle as many complaints as possible through our complaints procedure.

Appeals regarding the decisions of the HIA in administering the grants covered within this document should be made in writing to the Senior Manager of Housing Standards and Services within 21 days of the date of the decision letter.

A copy of the Council's Complaints and Compliments Policy can be found on the Council's website. This sets out full details on the complaints process. Hard copies can be requested by contacting 0300 373 3300.

However, if the disabled person feels they need to take their complaint further they can ask the Local Government Ombudsman to investigate the complaint. They can complete an online complaint form via the Local Government Ombudsman website.

The Ombudsman is an independent person who investigates complaints about local Councils.

The Ombudsman contact details are:

The Local Government Ombudsman
PO Box 4771
Coventry CV4 0EH
Telephone: 0300 061 0614

Contact us:

Telephone number **0300 373 3300**

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للوصول إلى هذه المعلومات بلغتك، يرجى الاتصال **0300 373 3300**

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如果您希望通过母语了解此信息，请致电 **0300 373 3300**

Jeigu norėtumėte gauti šią informaciją savo kalba, skambinkite telefonu **0300 373 3300**

W celu uzyskania informacji w Państwa języku proszę zatelefonować pod numer **0300 373 3300**

Se quiser aceder a esta informação na sua língua, telefone para o **0300 373 3300**

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde görmek istiyorsanız lütfen **0300 373 3300** numaralı telefonu arayınız

