

Disabled Facilities Grants

Guidance for applicants not using the Home Improvement Agency

This leaflet is intended to help disabled residents and their families understand the process of applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant. It is particularly useful for those who will not be carrying out works with the help of the Council's Home Improvement Agency.

Housing Operations

Civic Centre
44 York Street
Twickenham
TW1 3BZ



INVESTOR IN PEOPLE



LONDON BOROUGH OF
RICHMOND UPON THAMES

HOUSING

Translation advice

If you have difficulty understanding this booklet, please visit Housing Services at the address below where we can arrange a telephone interpreting service.

Albanian

Nese keni veshtersi per te kuptuar kete botim, ju lutemi ejani ne receptionin ne adresen e shenuar me poshte ku ne mund te organizojme perkthime nepermjet telefonit.

Arabic

إذا كانت لديك صعوبة في فهم هذا المنشور، فنرجو زيارة الإستقبال في العنوان المعطى أدناه حيث بإمكاننا أن نرتب لخدمة ترجمة شفوية هاتفية.

Bengali

এই প্রকাশনার অর্থ বুঝতে পারায় যদি আপনার কোন সমস্যা হয়, নিচে দেওয়া ঠিকানায় রিসেপশন-এ চলে আসুন যেখানে আমরা আপনাকে টেলিফোনে দোভাষীর সেবা প্রদানের ব্যবস্থা করতে পারবো।

Farsi

اگر در فهمیدن این نشریه مشکل دارید، لطفاً به میز پذیرش در آدرس قید شده در زیر رجوع فرمایید تا سرویس ترجمه تلفنی برایتان فراهم آورده شود.

Gujarati

જો તમને આ પુસ્તિકાની વિગતો સમજવામાં મુશ્કેલી પડતી હોય તો, કૃપયા નીચે જણાવેલ સ્થળના રિસેપ્શન પર આવો, જ્યાં અમે ટેલિફોન પર ગુજરાતીમાં ઇન્ટરપ્રિટિંગ સેવાની ગોઠવણ કરી આપીશું.

Punjabi

ਜੇਕਰ ਤੁਹਾਨੂੰ ਇਸ ਪਰਚੇ ਨੂੰ ਸਮਝਣ ਵਿਚ ਮੁਸ਼ਕਲ ਪੇਸ਼ ਆਉਂਦੀ ਹੈ ਤਾਂ ਹੇਠਾਂ ਦਿੱਤੇ ਗਏ ਪਤੇ ਉੱਪਰ ਰਿਸੈਪਸ਼ਨ 'ਤੇ ਆਓ ਜਿੱਥੇ ਅਸੀਂ ਟੈਲੀਫੋਨ ਤੇ ਗੱਲਬਾਤ ਕਰਨ ਲਈ ਇੰਟਰਪ੍ਰਿਟਰ ਦਾ ਪ੍ਰਬੰਧ ਕਰ ਸਕਦੇ ਹਾਂ।

Urdu

اگر آپ کو اس اشاعت کو سمجھنے میں کوئی مشکل ہے تو، براہ کرم نیچے دیئے ہوئے ایڈریس کے استقبال پر جا کر ملیئے، جہاں ہم آپ کیلئے ٹیلیفون انٹریپریٹنگ سروس (ٹیلیفون پر ترجمانی کی سروس) کا انتظام کر سکتے ہیں۔

If you would like a copy of this document in Braille, in large print, on audio tape or in a community language, please contact us on 020 8891 7436.

Who can apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)?

You can apply for a DFG if you are one of the following

- A disabled person who is an owner-occupier (you live in and own your own home).
- A disabled person who is a tenant, including a housing association tenant.
- An owner-occupier or a tenant, applying on behalf of a disabled person who is sharing your home.
- A landlord applying on behalf of your disabled tenant.

In all cases, the disabled person must be registered, or eligible to be registered, as disabled and their needs must be assessed by an Occupational Therapist (OT).

The property to be adapted must be the only or main place of residence of the disabled person for five years following the completion of the grant-aided work. Grants are awarded under Part I of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996.

How much grant will I receive?

	18 years and over	under 18 years
Method for deciding on grant amount	The amount of grant you will receive is decided by a means test which will look at the income and capital of the disabled person and their spouse or partner. This 'test of resources' is set by government.	No means testing is applied if the disabled person is 18 or under at the time of application.
The amount of grant should cover the reasonable cost of works up to the maximum mandatory grant available	Max. £30,000.	Max. £30,000. An additional discretionary grant may also be awarded.

What works can be considered for grant aid?

Mandatory DFGs are payable for work to help you to live more independently in your own home.

A grant can pay for essential adaptations to give you better freedom of movement into and around your home. It is also available for essential facilities in your home. Some examples of the type of work paid for by grant aid include work to do the following:

- make it easier to get into and out of your home, for example, by widening doors or putting in ramps
- make access easier to the living room, bedroom, kitchen and bathroom, for example, by putting in a stair lift or floor lift
- provide suitable bathroom and kitchen facilities, for example at wheelchair height, so that you can use the facilities independently
- adapt heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use, or
- improve access and movement around your home so that you can care for someone who lives with you.

However the works must be the most reasonable, practicable and economic means of meeting your needs.

Where possible the adaptations should be undertaken in the home in its present state. Very occasionally we will agree to an extension if this is the only way to meet your needs. However if the overall cost is likely to exceed the maximum mandatory grant limit of £30,000, then additional funds will need to be identified before works can proceed.

What are the first steps in applying for a grant?

STEP 1

The OT will firstly assess what works are required to meet your needs. This information will then be passed to our Home Improvement Agency (HIA). Contact details for the OTs and the HIA are on the last page of this leaflet.

STEP 2

An HIA caseworker will then arrange to visit you at home to do the following:

- complete an application form for a DFG
- gather financial information for a means test
- outline various options to you
- consider your wider needs and make referrals to other organisations, and
- provide you with information about services provided by other organisations.

STEP 3

We will write to you following the caseworker's visit and let you know if you have to contribute towards the cost of the works. If you are required to contribute, we will tell you how much and ask you to let us know if you are willing to pay this sum and whether or not you wish to proceed with your grant application.

You must notify us immediately of any change in your financial situation at any time prior to the grant approval, in which case we may need to carry out a further assessment before the grant is approved.

If you are a tenant, the landlord's permission must be obtained before the works can proceed. Work to common areas will need the approval of all interested parties.

If you wish to proceed, a surveyor will contact you to arrange an inspection of your property. This is to decide which works, if any, are eligible for grant assistance. Only works deemed necessary to provide access to your home and its facilities will be eligible.

What happens when the surveyor visits my home?

If your property is suitable for a grant, the surveyor will send you and your OT an outline scheme setting out the works which will be grant-aided. You may discuss the extent of the works with the surveyor.

You may choose an alternative or more extensive scheme providing it meets the requirements determined by the OT. However only the cost of our surveyor's scheme will be included in the calculation of your grant. You will be responsible for paying the difference in cost for any enhancements, including the cost of any unforeseen works.

We strongly advise you to appoint a private architect or surveyor, known as an agent, at this stage. Their fees will normally be included in the grant, but you may be liable for their costs if a grant is not approved. You will be liable for any fees associated with works that are not part of the grant scheme.

We can provide you with a list of agents and contractors but the inclusion of contractors, surveyors or architects on our list does not serve in any way as a guarantee of the quality of their work or their conduct on site.

Alternatively, our HIA can offer assistance in obtaining estimates and helping you through the grant process. Please see our separate leaflet for details about this service, and contact your caseworker if you would like your grant to be managed by the HIA.

When is the grant agreed?

Your agent will be responsible for drawing up a detailed schedule of works, based on our surveyor's outline scheme. This schedule must be agreed with the OT and the surveyor. Your agent will also prepare plans, obtain planning permission and/or building regulation approval as appropriate, and arrange for party wall agreements if necessary.

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.

In line with statutory grant regulations, a DFG will not be approved unless both the Council and your OT deem that a scheme for adaptation is necessary, appropriate, reasonable and practicable.

The Council has six months in which to either approve or refuse your application. The six months starts when we receive the following:

- a properly completed application form
- a certificate of future occupation (a legal document confirming your intention to remain at the property for five years)
- proof that you own the property (land registry records) or permission for the works from your landlord
- at least two suitable estimates for the works to be undertaken
- approval from Building Control and/or the Planning Division, if appropriate
- party wall agreements, if appropriate.

Works must **not** start before the grant is approved.

Once the grant is approved, you must complete all the work within 12 months. If an amended approval is issued, it is still the date of the original approval which is relevant and not the date of any amendment.

What information do I receive when the grant is approved?

The amount of grant aid that we approve is for the reasonable cost of adapting the property, including fees and VAT, based on our scheme of works. The approval document will confirm if you have to pay for some of the works. This may be because

- the test of financial resources requires you to make a contribution and/or
- your contractor's quotation is higher than the reasonable cost determined by the local authority.

If any items on your contractor's schedule are not covered in the grant or if costs are not met in full, information about the shortfall will be included as an appendix to the approval.

The approval letter will also set out if the cost of works exceeds the current grant maximum of £30,000.

You must make your own arrangements with the main contractor regarding payment of any costs not covered by the grant.

Can I change contractors?

You must use the services of the contractor(s) who provided an estimate as part of your grant application. If you wish to change contractor(s) for any reason you must write to the Council giving the reasons for the proposed change and obtain written agreement to the change prior to your new contractor commencing work. You must ensure that your new contractor will satisfy the requirements of the Council.

Any increase in the cost of works occurring as a direct result of a voluntary change of contractor will not be included in your grant. If the cost of the works is reduced as a direct result of a change of contractor your grant will be reduced accordingly. The grant will be re-approved to reflect the revised costs and we will provide you with an explanation for the change to the grant amount.

What happens about unforeseen works?

Essential works which become evident during the course of the contract may be treated as unforeseen works providing the following criteria are met:

- works are eligible for grant assistance and they could not have reasonably been foreseen and
- you and your contractor agree a price for the unforeseen work with the surveyor prior to it being undertaken, and an estimate is submitted accordingly.
- an estimate is provided for the work.

The reasonable cost of undertaking agreed unforeseen works will be added to your grant, subject to the current grant limit. The grant cannot include works undertaken without prior approval.

If unforeseen works are agreed, the grant will be re-approved to reflect the revised costs and we will provide you with an explanation for the change to the grant amount.

How are payments made?

You must let us know at the grant application stage if you want us to make grant payments direct to the contractor. Otherwise payments will be made directly to you and it will then be your responsibility to pay the contractor.

Payments will only be made upon receipt of an acceptable invoice and after our surveyor has inspected the works, and confirmed they have been carried out to a satisfactory standard. Normally payments will be processed within four weeks.

What are the applicant's responsibilities?

You should advise your house insurers that you are having building work carried out.

As you are the legal recipient of the grant you are the employer of the contractor(s) and ultimately responsible for all contractual matters arising, and for all costs which are not met by the grant. All arrangements regarding commencement of works, programme of works, working hours, use of private facilities etc. are strictly matters between you and your contractor(s). We strongly advise you and your contractor to sign a contract agreeing responsibilities, such as the Chartered Institute of Building Minor Works contract.

When work is in progress, you or your agent must liaise with all the professionals who are involved in your grant e.g. OT, building control, surveyors etc., as well as the contractor(s).

You are responsible for ensuring works are undertaken to your satisfaction, although we will try to help you to resolve any difficulties. However, if the works have been carried out to a reasonable standard and the contractor has met the requirements of the OT, payment will be made.

Most works for a person with disabilities are exempt from VAT and the contractor(s) may ask you to complete a VAT exemption form.

How do I make compliments, suggestions and complaints?

If you have any comments, queries or complaints about DFGs, please contact us using the details below.

We will send you a customer satisfaction survey to monitor our service when the works have been completed. Please take the time to fill in this form, as we want to hear what you think about the process. This will help us continue to improve the service we provide.

Home Improvement Agency

By post: Home Improvement Agency
Ground Floor, Civic Centre
44 York Street, Twickenham TW1 3BZ

Telephone: 020 8487 7436

Fax: 020 8831 6404

Email: hia@richmond.gov.uk

Occupational Therapists (via Access Team)

By post: Regal House
London Road, Twickenham TW1 3QB

Telephone: 020 8891 7971

Fax: 0800 014 8359

Email: adultsocialservices@richmond.gov.uk

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