



Adapting your home

A guide for disabled
people living in the
private sector



Brighton & Hove
City Council

If you or someone living in your property is disabled you may need your home adapted to meet your needs.

Adaptations can give you better freedom of movement into and around your home and where necessary can also provide essential facilities within it.

The types of work include:

- widening doors and installing ramps
- providing or improving access to rooms and facilities – for example, by installing a stair lift or providing a level access shower
- 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

This guide gives an overview of the funding that may be available and takes you through the process of adapting your home. The process is broken down into four key steps, with an indication of how long each step may take:

Step 1 – assessment

Step 2 – design of the adaptation

Step 3 – getting funding

Step 4 – building work

Overview of funding

If you or someone living in your property is disabled you may qualify for a **disabled facilities grant** (DFG) towards the cost of providing adaptations and facilities to enable the disabled person to continue to live there.

The DFG is a means tested grant administered by the council. When you apply, we will need to check that the proposed work is **necessary and appropriate** to meet the disabled person's needs, and that the work is **reasonable and practicable**. We also need to be satisfied about the overall feasibility of the work.

Who can apply for a grant?

To apply, you must be either the owner of the property or a tenant. The applicant doesn't need to be the disabled person for whom the work is required, but the applicant must state who the application is being made for. A landlord may apply on behalf of a disabled tenant.

How much is a grant?

The maximum amount of grant that can be paid is £30,000, and the amount you will get is decided by a means test. The means test looks at the income and savings of the disabled person and their spouse or partner. Currently there is no means testing if the disabled person is under the age of 19.

In Brighton & Hove, we carry out an initial assessment called a provisional test of resources, to see if you are likely to have to pay a contribution. We do this when your case is referred to the Housing Adaptations Service. We will write to you to advise you about the outcome. When you make an application, we will carry out a full test of resources to confirm whether or not you have to contribute to the cost of the work.

You will not normally be awarded a grant for any work you start before we confirm your grant application has been approved. We must give you a decision in writing within six months of receipt of a valid application.

For more information...

About the **DFG** and how to apply:

- www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants
- **Housing Adaptations Service**

Telephone: 01273 292420 or 293365

Email: adaptations@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Extra help that might be available

In some circumstances, for example where the cost of the work exceeds the maximum amount of the grant, or if making a

contribution would cause you hardship, you may be able to get financial help from social services.

Charitable organisations – some charitable organisations fund adaptations on the basis of an assessment and recommendations from an occupational therapist (OT).

Self-funding – if you are funding adaptations yourself, for example where you do not qualify for grant aid, or for any financial assistance from social services, you are still entitled to an assessment and specialist professional advice from an OT.

For more information...

About social services for **adults** in Brighton & Hove

- **Contact Access Point**
- **Telephone:** 01273 295555
- **Email:** accesspoint@brighton-hove.gov.uk

About social services for **children**

- **Seaside View Child Development Centre**
- **Telephone:** 01273 265825

About ways the council can help you live more independently in your home: **www.brighton-hove.gov.uk**

Step 1 – Assessment

Adults

The first point of contact in Brighton & Hove for advice and information about social services for adults is the Access Point. Access Point will carry out an initial assessment of your needs and advise you about the services available to you.

If you need major adaptations to your home, you will be referred to the Housing Adaptations Service for a specialist assessment by an occupational therapist (OT).

The OT from the Housing Adaptations Service will arrange a home visit and assess what adaptations are needed. The OT will discuss options

for meeting your needs with you. These include adapting your home, your housing options such as moving to more suitable accommodation, and information about other health and support services.

You will hear from the OT within 12 weeks from the date of the referral, and within two weeks if your needs are assessed as urgent and critical.

Children aged 18 and under

For children, the first point of contact is Seaside View Child Development Centre, Integrated Child Development and Disability Service.

If your child is already known to a professional (for example, a social worker, OT or physiotherapist), they can make a referral on your child's behalf or you can speak to the duty social care OT for advice.

If eligible for a service, a children's social care OT will arrange a home visit to assess what your child's needs are and options for meeting them.

Step 2 – Design of the adaptation

If adaptations are the best way of meeting your needs, the occupational therapist (OT) will provide initial recommendations about the type of work required and discuss the design options with you and your architect, surveyor or technical adviser. The OT will normally provide you with initial recommendations within four weeks.

Once a detailed design brief has been agreed with you, the OT will draw up final recommendations and agree these with you.

Whether or not the work is grant-aided, it is important the work gets done properly and at a reasonable price. For major work, it may be best to employ a qualified architect or surveyor to plan and oversee the work. If you get a grant, the cost of their fees can be included in the cost of the work.

Timescales for this part of the process can vary a great deal depending on the complexity of the adaptation and any planning considerations.

You can employ the qualified technical support you need directly or you can use the local home improvement agency to provide you with technical support and help with the grant application.

You will also need to employ a reputable builder – the council keeps a list of local businesses that are members of a trade association.

For more information

About finding a reputable builder, go to:

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/finding-builders

About the local **home improvement agency:**

Mears Home Improvement Ltd:

Telephone: 01273 820895

Email: MHI.brighton@mearsgroup.co.uk

About home improvement agencies in general:

wwwFOUNDATIONS.uk.com

Step 3 – Getting funding

Applications for grant assistance are dealt with by the Housing Adaptations Service. When applying, we require two written estimates before deciding on the cost of the work eligible for grant, and will need to check that the proposed work is:

- **necessary and appropriate** to meet the disabled person's needs, and
- **reasonable and practicable**

The council need to be satisfied about each of these matters and the overall feasibility of the work if it is to give a disabled facilities grant. The council can refuse a disabled facilities grant if it believes the work is not reasonable or practicable.

At this stage you will need to complete a disabled facilities grant (DFG) application form. The estimates must be included with your application. If you have employed the local home improvement agency, they will

complete the application with you and submit it on your behalf. You will need to provide the supporting information and documents asked for with the application form.

If you are not receiving help from the home improvement agency, we can provide a limited casework service, help completing the application, advice and information.

We will give you a decision in writing within six months of receiving your completed valid application. If the grant is refused, we will discuss your options with you.

If you want to know about the progress of your grant application, contact our technical team on 01273 292420.

Step 4 – Building work

Whether or not the adaptation work is grant-aided, it is important the work gets done properly. It is best to employ a technical adviser to plan and oversee the work, and to employ a reputable builder.

If the work is grant-aided, you must have confirmation of the grant approval before you start work. Once the council approves the grant, you or the home improvement agency acting on your behalf, can instruct the selected contractor. At this stage you can agree a date with the contractor for the work to start.

If major work is needed, it may not be safe to stay in your home while the work takes place and you may need to arrange alternative accommodation.

Once the work has been completed, the occupational therapist and a technical officer will need to check the adaptation meets the needs of the disabled person and the work has been carried out to a satisfactory standard.

The grant is only paid when the council is sure that the work has been satisfactorily completed and meets the grant criteria.

Service and maintenance of equipment

Some adaptations require regular servicing and maintenance. In most cases, provision will be made for this under the grant for a specified time.

We would also advise you to check with your mortgage and insurance companies whether the adaptations and equipment installed affect your cover and re-adjust them accordingly.

FAQs

Where can I get advice and info about social services and adaptations?

For adults, contact Access Point on 01273 295555, who will refer you to the Housing Adaptations Service if you need major adaptations. For children, contact the Seaside View Child Development Centre on 01273 265825.

How quickly will I see an occupational therapist (OT)?

For adults, the Housing Adaptations Service aims to assess your case within 12 weeks, or within two weeks if the need is urgent. For children, cases are prioritised according to date of referral as well as risk.

Can I employ a private OT?

You can use a private OT to provide the OT assessment and recommendations. The fee for a private consultation can be claimed back from the disabled facilities grant (DFG) if approved.

What help is available to fund adaptations that I need?

As well as the DFG, you may also be able to get help from social services or charitable funds in some cases.

For more information:

- visit www.gov.uk
- for adults, call Access Point on 01273 295555 or email accesspoint@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- for children, call the Seaside View Child Development Centre on 01273 265825

Will a DFG affect my other benefit entitlement?

No, your other benefits will not be affected.

How long will it take?

If you make a DFG application, the council must give a decision within six months, then work can start.

What if I need help getting a builder to do the work and help with the grant application?

The local home improvement agency can provide casework and technical support. The Housing Adaptations Service can provide limited assistance with the grant application. If you want to know about the progress of your grant application, contact our technical team on 01273 292420.

Can I do the work myself?

Yes, but you need to be aware of DFG application requirements – the grant will not pay for work or services provided by the applicant or a member of their family. Where the work is carried out by the applicant or a relative, the grant will only cover invoices for materials or services bought in. You must keep all receipts for materials for submission at the final payment stage.

Thank you to the Fed Centre for Independent Living for their input in to the design and content of this leaflet.

Useful website links

www.brighton-hove.gov.uk

For local planning and building regulation advice and information

www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants

For information on DFG and other government services

www.architecture.com

The website of the Royal Institute of British Architects, where you can find an architect under 'Directory Search'.

www.trustmark.org.uk

A not for profit organisation, licensed by government and supported by consumer protection groups, where you can find a trustworthy and reliable tradesperson.

www.buywithconfidence.gov.uk

A Trading Standards approved scheme to find local, trustworthy and reliable tradespeople.

www-foundations.uk.com

The national body for home improvement agency and handyperson services.

Summary of steps in adaptations process

Step 1: Assessment

- an assessment of your needs and home by an occupational therapist
- details of what funding you may be entitled to
- permission from the owners of your home, if you do not own it yourself

Step 2: Design of the adaptation

- final recommendations from an occupational therapist agreed by you
- drawings (if necessary) to illustrate the proposed adaptations

Step 3: Getting funding

- at least two estimates for the cost of the works
- planning and building regulations permission if required
- proof that you own your home or written evidence of permission for the adaptation from the home owner
- a completed application form for the disabled facilities grant

Step 4: Building work

- formal notification of funding
- a date for the builders to start and complete the work
- grant paid on satisfactory completion of the work

Translation? Tick this box and take to any council office.

ترجمة؟ ضع علامة في المربع وخذها إلى مكتب البلدية. Arabic

অনুবাদ? বক্সে টিক চিহ্ন দিয়ে কাউন্সিল অফিসে নিয়ে যান। Bengali

需要翻譯? 請在這方格內加別, 並送回任何市議會的辦事處。Cantonese

ترجمه؟ لطفاً این مربع را علامتگذاری نموده و آن را به هر یک از دفاتر شهرداری ارائه نمایید. Farsi

Traduction? Veuillez cocher la case et apporter au council. French

需要翻译? 请在这方格内划勾, 并送回任何市议会的办事处。Mandarin

Tłumaczenie? Zaznacz to okienko i zwróć do któregokolwiek biura samorządu lokalnego (council office). Polish

Tradução? Coloque um visto na quadrícula e leve a uma qualquer repartição de poder local (council office). Portuguese

Tercümesi için kareyi işaretleyiniz ve bir semt belediye bürosuna veriniz Turkish

other (please state)

This can also be made available in large print, Braille, or on CD or audio tape