

Having your property adapted:

A step-by-step guide to the process

Major adaptations are works to your property costing over £1000. They usually involve altering the structure or layout of your property in some way. Examples include:

- Level access shower
- Through floor lift
- Stair lift
- Ramp

The most appropriate adaptation for a disabled child or adult will be identified by considering their likely long-term needs and the available funds (the upper limit of the Disabled Facilities Grant is £30,000).

There are a lot of steps involved in assessing for, planning and obtaining funding for a major adaptation. Each case is different but this document provides a guide to the stages typically involved in planning an adaptation in a **privately owned property**.

The process for properties owned by a **Housing Association or Private Landlord** is slightly different – any information specific to those types of properties is written in **green text**.

For information on adapting properties owned by Brighton & Hove City Council, please ask your Occupational Therapist for the council leaflet, “*Adapting your home – A guide for council tenants*”.

1. Assessment of need:

Your social care occupational therapist (OT) will visit to gather more information from you and your child about what the current needs and difficulties are at home. They may also need to observe your child carrying out activities in the home environment and other environments they attend (such as school and respite).

Your OT will also need to assess your home environment to identify whether adapting the environment will reduce the difficulties you are having.

Your OT may also need to speak to other professionals involved in your child’s care to gain more information about their abilities now and in the future.

2. Agreeing the assessment:

Once completed, your OT will send you a copy of the completed assessment – you will be asked to read the assessment and return a signed copy to your OT (with any amendments required).

The signed assessment form needs to be returned to your OT for the process to continue.

3. Initial OT recommendations:

Your OT will complete initial recommendations for adapting your property. These will be sent to you for your approval and signature. You will also be asked at this point to choose a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) or private architect/surveyor to carry out the technical aspects of the adaptation and support you throughout the process of applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). There is a local HIA, Mears, with whom the council have a contract and families have also used Amber-Living Independently. They will both act as surveyors and project managers throughout the process. Their fee is covered by the DFG.

Initial recommendations will also be sent to the Housing Association/landlord at this point for their approval to proceed – as the owner of the property, they will be required to make the decision about which HIA/surveyor/architect to employ.

The signed initial recommendation needs to be returned to your OT, indicating your choice for DFG/technical support, before the process can continue.

The signed initial OT recommendation will be sent to the Adaptations Team (at Hove Town Hall). They will forward the recommendations on to the Mears HIA (if relevant). If you have elected to use a private architect, your OT will contact them about the recommendations once the Adaptations Team has given their agreement to continue.

4. Technical assessment of your property:

Your OT will arrange a joint visit to your property with a technical officer from the HIA or your chosen surveyor/architect. The purpose of this visit is for the technical officer to survey your property and identify what adaptations may be feasible to meet the needs identified in the initial OT recommendations.

5. Assessing options:

The technical officer/surveyor/architect will draw up plans of your property in its existing state and options for adapting your property to meet the identified needs. They will also provide estimated costs for any options identified. These options will be discussed with you to identify which option best meets your needs (also considering the cost-effectiveness of each option).

Your OT will then discuss this in supervision with a senior OT or OT manager to ensure the request is in-line with legislation and the service remit. The senior OT/OT manager may also suggest alternative solutions at this stage.

6. Adaptations panel:

If the identified adaptation is estimated to cost £10,000 or more, it must be presented to the Adaptations Panel by your OT

- The Adaptations Panel consists of senior members of staff from Housing, the Adaptations Service and the OT Service.
- The Panel meets once per month.
- Your OT will have to submit a report to this Panel prior to the meeting, outlining your current situation and identified needs and options for meeting those needs.

- The OT will then discuss this report with the Panel members, who will also look at any plans or estimated costs that the technical officer/surveyor/architect has provided.
- The Panel will review the request for funding for adaptations and decide one of the following:
 - The request is given “in principle” agreement to proceed (the DFG application will still be subject to scrutiny when submitted).
 - There are other options which should be explored and brought back to a future Panel meeting.
 - Further information is needed and should be brought back to a future Panel meeting.
 - The request is refused – this may be because:
 - the adaptations are not considered to be “reasonable and practicable” due to the age and condition of your property;
 - the adaptations requested are not deemed eligible for funding via the DFG;
 - an alternative solution (e.g. moving home) is considered to be more appropriate.

The adaptations process will only proceed once the Adaptations Panel have given their “in principle” approval. If refused, your OT will work with you to explore other options.

7. Developing proposals:

Any amendments required to the initial plans and proposals for adaptations will be requested from the HIA/surveyor/architect. These amendments may be identified by you, your OT or the Adaptations Panel.

At this time, your OT may also need to gather quotes for any specialist equipment required (such as lifts and hoists) – two quotes for each piece of equipment are required for the DFG application. Your OT will need to carry out joint visits to your property with providers of this equipment to discuss what is needed and request quotations.

8. Schedule of works:

The HIA/surveyor/architect will provide plans to address any necessary amendments identified and a schedule of works, which breaks down everything required as part of the adaptation. The OT will check the schedule of works to ensure it matches what is requested in the OT recommendation and does so in the most cost effective way. The OT is likely to request your input at this stage to ensure you are happy with the proposals/schedule/plans.

9. Final OT recommendations:

Once the schedule and plans are agreed by you and your OT, your OT will write detailed final recommendations of the adaptations required. These will be sent to you for your approval and signature.

The signed final recommendation needs to be returned to your OT for the process to continue.

Final recommendations will also be sent to the Housing Association/landlord at this point for their approval to proceed.

10. Tendering process:

The signed OT recommendations will be sent to the Adaptations Team and the HIA/surveyor/architect. The HIA/surveyor/architect will then contact two/three building contractors to provide quotes for the work. The building contractors will contact you to arrange a time to visit your property so that they can assess the works required and quote accordingly. The tendering process usually takes a minimum of three weeks.

11. Analysis of quotes:

The HIA/surveyor/architect will analyse the three quotations to check that they meet the OT recommendations. They will then select the most appropriate quote.

12. Applying for the DFG:

You will then need to complete a DFG application for the funding for the adaptation. If you are using a HIA, they will guide you through this process, support you with completing the forms and inform you of the documents you need to provide to support your application. If you have not employed a HIA, you will need to contact the adaptations service to request the forms. They may be able to support you with completing the forms if you are having difficulty.

In a Housing Association/privately rented property, the HIA will contact your landlord to request that they make a landlord's DFG application (instead of you as the tenant making the application). If they do not want to make a landlord's application, you can still apply for the DFG as the tenant of the property.

However, as maintenance of equipment becomes the responsibility of the person awarded the DFG (after any warranties/maintenance contracts have expired), it is preferable for the Housing Association/landlord to complete the DFG application so that they take on this responsibility.

13. DFG approval process:

The DFG application and all supporting documentation are then submitted to the Adaptations Service. The Adaptations Service then has a statutory time limit of six months to make a decision about whether the DFG request is "reasonable and practicable" and, therefore, whether to award the funding.

14. DFG approved:

Once the DFG is approved by the Adaptations Service, you will be sent a letter to inform you of this. The Adaptations Service will also inform the HIA/surveyor/architect and OT. The HIA/surveyor/architect will then contact the building contractor to arrange a start date for the works (to be negotiated with you). It may be necessary to have a meeting at your home with the OT and the HIA/surveyor/architect (and possibly building contractor) prior to starting the adaptation. This is to agree the practicalities of the adaptation (such as daily start and finish times of contractors) and identify whether and for how long you will need to vacate the property during the building works. If it is identified that you need to vacate the property, you will need to find alternative accommodation for that period.

If you live in a Housing Association property, they may be able to offer you alternative housing whilst the adaptation works are being completed.

15. Adaptation on site:

When the building works are being carried out, your HIA/surveyor/architect will act as project manager for the adaptations and any concerns or queries should initially be directed to them. If changes to the agreed adaptations are deemed necessary, your OT will need to be contacted to assess whether the changes will meet the identified needs. They may also need to contact the Adaptations Service about this (especially if additional funding is required).

16. Adaptation complete:

When the adaptation works are finished, the OT and HIA/surveyor/architect will need to visit the property to inspect the works and ensure that the work that has been carried out matches the OT recommendations and specification of works. When you, your OT and the HIA/surveyor/architect are in agreement that the works are completed to a satisfactory standard (and any snagging issues have been addressed), the works will be signed off and the Adaptations Service will make final payments to contractors.

For more information on the DFG, please visit the following websites:

<http://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/scenario.php?csid=163>

<https://www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants>

You can also ask your OT for the Council leaflet entitled:

Adapting your home: A guide for disabled people living in the private sector or download from www.brighton-hove.gov.uk/content/housing/general-housing/housing-adaptations

Useful telephone numbers:

Social care occupational therapists at Seaside View - 01273 265825

Adaptations Service BHCC- 01273 293293

Mears Home Improvement Agency - 01273 427690

Amber Living Independently - 01273 410836

Amaze - 01273 772289