

Housing Information for Children, Young People and Families

The document has had varying degrees of reaction from services users from being completely “understandable” to “it is very complicated” depending on who I ask. There are some very difficult paragraphs which need a lot of translating so I have broken the sections down to frequently asked questions and then a description of key words and phrases.

The frequently asked questions are based upon comments from 10 people who have no previous knowledge of the system and after they had seen the housing information document.

Frequently Asked Questions:

1. Who will help make changes to my home so that it is suitable and safe for my child's needs?

The Occupational Therapist can advise on suitable changes required to your home and will work with other professional involved in your child's care to identify possible solutions. The Home Improvement Agency will often be involved to see what options there are to make changes at home.

2. What will the Occupational Therapist do?

The Occupational Therapist will visit you at home to carry out a home assessment on your child's and family needs. Suggestions and solutions will be discussed to see what might work best at home.

3. When might there be a referral to the local housing team?

If a daily activity is becoming more difficult to carry out and strategies and equipment are no longer helping, a referral to the housing team might be made. The home situation can be assessed to see if the property could be adapted. If a property is deemed unsuitable to adapt, either through overcrowding or because it will not meet the longer term needs, the housing team can support a family to look at the alternative options.

4. What happens if it is decided that I need to move to another house more suitable for my child's needs?

The Occupational Therapist will complete a housing needs report to support with rehousing. The report is then forwarded, with permission, to the Housing Specialist who will support you further with the rehousing process. The Housing Needs Report also forms part of the application for rehousing under the Home Link scheme. If a family is buying a new home the Occupational Therapist can advise on potential houses to see if they could be adapted or are suitable as they are.

5. Can I apply for social housing if I own my own home?

Yes, but this is subject to certain criteria, the specialist housing adviser can support you with this

6. Can changes be made to my home if I am renting privately?

Yes potentially. Any adaptations will require your landlords consent before any work can be completed.

7. Can changes be made to my home if I am renting from a housing society?
Yes, if the housing association is in agreement, however it may be more practical to move to a property that better meets your needs. Social housing tenants can apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant to make agreed changes.
8. What does the Home Improvement Agency (HIA) do?
The Home Improvement Agency is a council service that consists of experienced surveyors and caseworkers who work with your Occupational Therapist to help find the right solution. The HIA will assist with the application of the DFG (Disabled Facilities Grant). They will complete the plans, permissions and oversee the works as they are completed. They will obtain builders quotes and assign a builder to complete agreed works. They charge a fee for this service which is up to 20% of the costs of the adaptations. This is payable from the Disabled Facilities Grant.
9. Can I pay for the changes privately or manage the changes myself?
The changes can be funded privately or they can be self-managed. The Grants Officer and Occupational Therapist can meet with you and explain the process and what documents will be required to support a self managed project.
10. What funding is available?
The Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a mandatory grant that can help carry out essential adaptations to access essential facilities and promote safety in the home. The maximum grant is £30,000 including all fees and charges. Other discretionary grants may be available to improve the repair of a home. Some top up funding may be available but this is means tested above the mandatory grant.
11. What kind of costs might be involved?
The costs depend on the adaptations and what is required. A height adjustable changing bench could be £3000, a level access shower £6000, or a small bathroom extension £30,000. There may be technical costs for surveyors, architects, building regulations and planning permission. Most extensions will unfortunately exceed the Grant allowance
12. How long will it take?
Some equipment can be installed within six weeks, other larger projects are likely to take 6-18 months.
13. What will I need to do or will it all be sorted out by professionals?
The Occupational Therapist will guide you through the process and other technical staff and professionals will also help decide what a good solution to a difficulty is and once agreed, ensure the adaptation is completed. If a family is self-managing there is a lot to do, if a Home Improvement Agency is managing the project there is much less for a family to sort out.

Key words and phrases

Rehabilitation: Activities to help regain skills lost through illness or injury or learning new skills to increase independence

Initial Assessment: The first step to gather information about a child's needs, the home situation, what is working well and what are the challenges for daily life and family routines.

Feasibility Visit: When a need has been identified, potential solutions are tested to see if these are practical and reasonable to do. This will include looking at options with in the house, or any options to extend a house, and consideration of the costs.

Assistive technology: Equipment that can support a person's independence such as sensor lights, alarms, talking clocks, or reminders

Necessary and appropriate: This refers to the clinical reasons for requesting an adaptation. Is it necessary based on the child or adults needs and is the solution appropriate to meet that need. For example a child needs an additional hand rail to support them on the stairs and meet the need, but a ground floor bedroom has been requested which would not be considered necessary or appropriate.

Practicable: The adaptation or solution is practical to do and the cost is within the available budget

Surveyor: A person trained in building design and construction. Their role is prepare scheme designs and costings with the knowledge of planning and building regulations

Grants Officer: The Grants Officer's role is to follow the legislation covering the Disabled Facilities Grant to ensure any funds awarded meet the criteria. The Grants officer holds the budget for a local council area and needs to ensure the best and most equitable use of funds. They have a duty to consult with Social Care before awarding funds, which is usually an Occupational Therapist.

Means tested: An assessment of family income, savings and any assets which can be taken into account when considering if a discretionary top up of funds above the £30,000 mandatory grant could be awarded.

Shortfall: The difference between the cost of adaptations and the available funds. For example a bedroom/bathroom extension costs £60,000 and the grant award is £30,000. The shortfall is therefore £30,000. A shortfall will prevent adaptations being carried out unless alternative funding can be sourced.

Schedule of works: A document detailing all the parts of a proposed building project. This will include preparation works, electricals, ironmongery, structural works, plumbing and anything else needed to complete the works.