



NORTH YORKSHIRE COUNCIL

Disabled Facilities Grant
A Client Handbook

northyorks.gov.uk

Contents

Introduction & Quick Overview	2
1. Who is involved and what do they do	3
2. What can you get a grant for	4
3. How much grant is available	6
4. Terms and Conditions of the grant	8
5. Frequently asked questions - How long does a grant take?	9
6. - What works and who does it?	11
7. -What is a “discretionary” grant?	13
8. - What if I need to complain?	13
Notes	14
Contacts	15

Introduction

The purpose of a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is to pay for adaptations for vulnerable people so they may continue to live independently in their own homes.

This booklet will outline the application process and tells you:

- Who will be involved and what do they do
- What can you get a DFG or 'grant' for
- How much grant you can get and how this is decided
- What conditions apply to the grant
- How to apply for a grant
- Frequently asked questions.

Quick Overview

What is a Disabled Facilities Grant?

DFGs are for people who have a disability, and their home needs to be adapted in some way so that the disabled person can use all the main facilities with as much ease, comfort, and independence as possible.

It is a mandatory grant awarded through the Council to help adapt properties to the needs of disabled persons. The maximum grant that can be awarded is £30,000, but most are nowhere near this amount. The grant is available for homeowners, landlords and tenants (private or those of Registered Providers such as Yorkshire Housing, Sanctuary Housing etc...)

How do I apply?

You will first have to have an assessment from an Occupational Therapist to arrange an assessment of your needs.

Contact North Yorkshire Council's Health and Adult Services (Tel 01609 780 780)

OR Contact your GP who can make a referral.

The process for applying for a grant is quite complex and there are several stages that an application will need to go through before it can be said to be a 'valid' or a 'completed application'. This is because the process must comply with legislative requirements. For this reason, we would recommend that applicants use the services of the Council's Housing Adaptations Team who will guide you through this process. There is a charge for this service.

1. Who is involved and what they do

The Role of the Occupational Therapist:

The Occupational Therapist (OT) is a person who is skilled in assessing the functional needs of disabled people. The Adaptations Team asks North Yorkshire Council's Health and Adult Services for advice about the needs of a disabled person. The OTs working for the Council provide this advice and they will also discuss your needs with you before making a recommendation.

It is possible that the Occupational Therapist may recommend that you do not need to have an aid or adaptation at the present time or that you need only a small item which their Care and Support services may supply for you without you having to apply for a grant.

The Role of the Housing Adaptations Team

The Housing Adaptations Team has the responsibility for Disabled Facilities Grants and administers the procedures. North Yorkshire Council makes the final decision about what will and will not be supported by a grant and how much grant will be paid in line with legislation and the Housing Renewal Policy applicable at that time.

Disabled Facilities Grants are dealt with by the Housing Adaptations team which includes caseworkers and a Technical Support service delivered by Bowman Riley Architects Ltd who have expertise in this area of work.

Because the application process can be quite complex the Housing Adaptations team can help you throughout the whole process of your application. Bowman Riley will prepare a schedule of work based upon the recommendations of the Occupational Therapist. The Caseworker will help you complete any necessary means testing forms and help you get the documents you will need for your application to be valid.

Both your caseworker and Bowman Riley will visit you in your home, obtain estimates for the work on your behalf and oversee the work to make sure that it is done properly. This service is chargeable, and North Yorkshire Council charges a 15% fee (Plus VAT) based on the cost of the work. This charge can be included in the cost of the work and in most cases will be covered by any grant assistance offered.

You do not have to use the Housing Adaptation services if you do not want to. However, this will mean that you will have to complete all forms and provide all necessary information yourself without assistance.

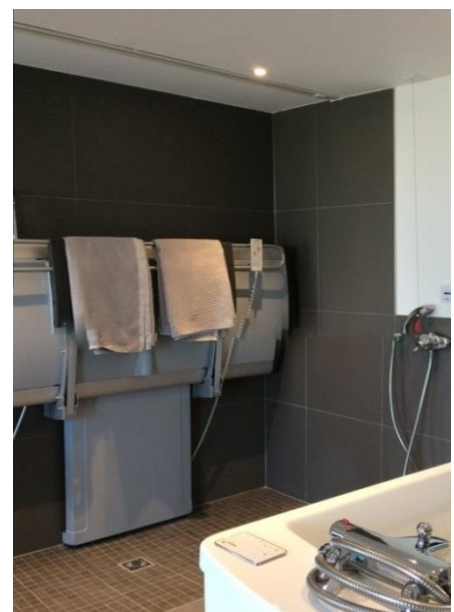
2. What you can get a grant for

a) Adaptations

The law states that a disabled facilities grant can only be made to:

- Get into and out of their home and to be able to use the main family room, a bedroom, a bath or shower and a toilet.
- Prepare and cook food.
- Move around the home.
- Care for their spouse, dependent child or other.
- Live in a safe home free from hazards.
- Live in a warm home.
- Easily use heating or lighting controls
- Access the garden where this is reasonable and practicable

The Occupational Therapist will not recommend an aid or adaptation unless it is for one of these purposes. The most common grant funded works include stair lifts or wet floor/level access showers, ramps and widening doors. Please see below for examples of these.



b) Discretionary Assistance

Subject to the availability of funding, we provide additional resources to DFG applicants where there is an evidenced outcome which contributes towards a more efficient, effective service and/or facilitate discharge from hospital, access to care and/or hospital treatment, alleviates the risk of injury or the disabled person or carer are terminally ill.

Examples of these works would include:

- No requirement for a means test for Emergency Adaptations requested by health or social care
- No requirement for a means test for Stair lifts, specialist toilets, ramps (modular and stone) and associated minor works up to a value of £7,000
- Discretionary Grant - Eligible works:
 - Temporary relocation costs
 - Moving costs including removal expenses, legal fees etc.
 - Feasibility studies
 - Boiler replacements
- Discretionary Loan – Eligible works:
 - Electrical repairs
 - Damp
 - Structural repairs
 - Measures to tackle excess cold within dwellings including heating upgrades, additional insulation, windows etc.

Our Director of Services (in consultation with the Lead Member) has the authority to consider exceptional Discretionary payments recommended by the Independence Team Manager NYC Health & Adult Services.

c) 'Necessary and appropriate' works

The law says that the Council has got to be satisfied that the adaptation recommended by the Occupational Therapist is 'necessary and appropriate' for the needs of the disabled person. In practice it is rare for the Council to question the Occupational Therapist's judgement on this matter but grant applicants should be aware that the Council could refuse a grant for this reason.

d) Works to a suitable property

Most properties can be adapted, however some older properties can be difficult and sometimes impossible to adapt successfully. Other properties may simply be unsuitable for the needs of the client whatever adaptation work might be done to it, perhaps because rooms and corridors are just too small. In other cases, it may not be possible to get planning permission for the work. In these cases, alternative accommodation options and an application for a Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant towards relocation costs could be considered.

3. How much grant is available?

The maximum Disabled Facilities Grant available is £30,000. In addition, but only where the property has been assessed as containing Category 1 and high Category 2 hazards a Discretionary Disabled Facilities Home Repair Loan may be available up to a maximum of £15,000.

Will I have to pay for the works?

Under the law Disabled Facilities Grant applications for adults requiring the adaptation must be checked to see whether the household can afford to pay anything towards the cost of the work. If the Means Test shows that a contribution can be made, then this contribution is taken off the amount of grant that otherwise would have been paid. Sometimes the calculated contribution will be more than the cost of doing the work and in these cases no grant will be paid.

The Council will let you know at an early stage whether a means test is required and if you are likely to have to contribute and roughly how much it would be.

Who is Means Tested?

The disabled occupant (or '**relevant person**') who requires the adaptation and, if applicable, the disabled occupant's partner is subject to a test of resources – commonly known as a Means Test. However:

- a) if the adaptation is for a child or young person under 19 who is in full time education (up to 'A' level standard or equivalent) there is no means test for the parents.
- b) if disabled occupant is in receipt of one of the following income-related benefits they will NOT have a contribution towards the grant:
 - Income Support
 - Housing Benefit
 - Guaranteed Pension Credit
 - Universal Credit
 - Income-based Job Seekers Allowance
 - Working Tax Credit
 - Child Tax Credit
- c) If the application is for a stair lift and/or specialist toilet and associated minor works less and/or a ramp (modular or stone) at a total value of works is less than £7,000 then an application may be made for a Discretionary Disabled Facility grant and **no** means test will be applied
- d) If the Independence Team Manager (North Yorkshire Council Health & Adult Services) has notified the Housing Adaptations Team that your works are an Emergency Adaptation to facilitate discharge from hospital, access to care or hospital treatment; to alleviate the risk of injury or you/your carer are terminally ill – then an application may be made for a Discretionary Disabled Facility grant and **no** means test will be applied.

How does the means test work?

The 'Means Test' works by looking at the **income** of the disabled occupant (or '**relevant person**') and their partner (where applicable) **and** how much they need to live on. Income includes any wages, benefits, pensions, savings and investments and any rent from a second home. We would then assess **how much we think your household needs to live on** based on a calculation and values set by the Government. If your income is more than or **more than** what the Government calculates you need to live on, then you will have to make a contribution based on how much you would be able to raise as a loan using your "excess" income.

If you are in receipt of income support, income-based employment and support allowance, pension credit guarantee, housing benefit, universal credit or you receive tax credit **and** have a taxable income of no more than the current threshold then you will not have to pay a contribution.

If you have a contribution to pay, the Council may offer you a discretionary grant (subject to the availability of funding) whereby we will "disregard" the first £5,000 of a contribution requirement.

If the contribution is higher than £5,000 we will request payment of your contribution (more than £5,000) which will be held in a "holding account". Upon satisfactory completion of the work the Council will then pay the contractor your contribution and the Council will pay the contractor the balance using grant monies.

What if I can't afford to pay my contribution?

If you feel that you can't afford to pay the contribution requested, you should let the Housing Adaptation team know. With your consent, your caseworker can approach your landlord and/or Health and Adult Services to seek financial help. If you can't get this help, the Council regrets that it would not be able to approve your application.

What if my contribution is more than the cost of the proposed work?

In these cases, you would not be entitled to grant assistance. If, in the future, there is a strong likelihood that further adaptations will be required it may be beneficial to carry on and make a formal grant application even though the outcome will be a nil grant because the contribution you pay will be offset against any future applications. The Council will be able to advise you whether it is worth pursuing a nil grant.

What happens if the cost of work exceeds the £30,000 maximum grant?

If the work required does exceed £30,000 then the position does become more complicated. The Council will not approve a grant unless all the funding for the required work is in place. The higher the required amount above £30,000 the more difficult it will become to bridge the funding gap.

The options available are for the client to:

- Pay the amount more than the grant
- Apply to charitable organisations for financial help with assistance from the Housing Adaptations Team and/or client to seek charitable funding
- Apply for Discretionary Additional Grant of up to £15,000 (subject to the availability of funding)

Failing this, North Yorkshire Council will investigate the provision of 'Top up' funding. ***It should be noted that this is means tested and therefore there is no guarantee that funding would be available.***

If additional funding is not forthcoming then it may be necessary to consider an option that, whilst not fully meeting your needs, is capable of partially meeting needs provided this can be achieved within the limitations of the Council's Housing Renewal Policy. If there is no other option than the original scheme and funds cannot be found then, regrettably, the Council will not be able to help you and will not be able to issue an approval for grant assistance.

4. Terms and conditions of the Grant

Disabled facilities grant and charges on property

If you own the property and the cost of grant works is more than £5,000 then there will be a repayment condition attached to your approval. If the property is disposed of (through sale, transfer etc.) within 10 years of the completion of the grant works, the Council will reclaim the grant amount more than £5,000 up to a maximum repayment amount of £10,000. For example, a grant of £8,000 would require £3,000 repayment if the property was sold within 10 years but a grant of £18,000 would require £10,000 repayment if sold within 10 years.

The Council will place a local land charge on the property for 10 years **for each grant applied for.**

All grant applicants, whether they own or rent, are required to confirm the intention that the disabled person for whose benefit the works are to be done, will remain living in the property for 5 years. The Council may seek to reclaim any grant paid if the disabled person moves within 5 years of the date works were completed unless their move is due to ill-health or other relevant circumstances.

5. Frequently asked questions – How long does a Grant take?

How long will it be before work is carried out?

This will depend upon the nature of the work. If you have already been assessed by an Occupational Therapist and the adaptation is straightforward (for example, a stair lift) then the whole process should not take more than a few weeks. However, if your needs are complex and require, for example, major building work, then the process will take much longer. You can help speed up your application by making sure that any information requested is provided as quickly as possible and by contacting the Council or your caseworker straight away if you are having difficulties with anything.

How can I get the work done quicker?

We endeavour to complete all grants in a timely manner, however, there are situations beyond our control that inevitably adds additional waiting time for the completion of an adaptation. Examples of this include where Planning Approval is needed or where specialist equipment needs to be manufactured.

Only if the Independence Team Manager (North Yorkshire Council Health & Adult Services) has notified the Council that your application is for an **Emergency Adaptation** to facilitate discharge from hospital, access to care or hospital treatment; to alleviate the risk of injury or you/your carer are terminally ill – then we will prioritise processing of your application, not carrying out a means test and immediately progressing to the full application stage.

Stages of a Disabled Facilities Grant and estimated timeline

Stage one: Grant Enquiry

- The Council accepts Occupational Therapist (OT) referral and notifies client
- The Housing Adaptation Team Caseworker visits and obtains information for a provisional Means Test
- The Council carries out the Means Test and lets the client know outcome
- The Council refers case to Bowman Riley and requests Design Visit

2 - 3 weeks

Stage two: Grant Application Preparation

- Technical Services (Bowman Riley) carries out Design visit and
 - Sends draft Plans and Schedule of Works to OT & Client for approval
 - When approved – Submits final plans/Schedule of Works for other approvals required e.g., Planning, Building Notices, landlord etc.
- The Council obtains Fixed Price Quotations and Caseworker visits to advise client of outcome/costs and to complete/collate all necessary paperwork.
- The Council assesses the completed Grant Application

10 – 20 weeks

Stage three: Grant Approval and Award of contract

- Council approves Grant Application & notifies client
- Contract awarded and start date agreed with client

2 - 3 weeks

Stage four: Commencement and completion of works

4 - 20 weeks

Please note that the above is an estimated timeline only and is subject to change due to situations and delays beyond our control.

6. Frequently asked questions – What works and who does it?

Who will get quotes for the proposed work?

If you are using the Council's Housing Adaptations service we will obtain quotes on your behalf. If you do not use the service it will up to you to obtain quotations for the work, however all contractors must be approved by the Council and this process will take at least 2-3 weeks.

The Housing Adaptations team will get a minimum of 2 fixed price quotations for works under £10,000 and 3 fixed price quotations if over £10,000. The Housing Adaptations team will consult you on the choice of contractor before any works begin.

The Council will normally choose the lower quote. If you would prefer the contractor supplying a higher quote to do the work then you have this option if you are willing to pay the difference. You will be asked to confirm that you have the funds to pay the difference and if the Housing Adaptations team is acting on your behalf the Council will put this money in a holding account so that the contractors can be paid on satisfactory completion of the work.

If you are not using the Housing Adaptations service and the quotations received are deemed by the Council to be too high you may be asked to obtain further quotations. Alternatively, the grant will be calculated on the Council's estimate of the reasonable cost of the work, and you will be responsible for funding any difference in cost.

If the grant includes stair lifts and specialist equipment the Occupational Therapist will obtain the quotes for this aspect of proposed work.

Can I choose what work is done?

In practice, individual client choice is limited by considerations of cost and by how the law says we should administer disabled facilities grants. The Council can only consider works recommended by the Occupational Therapist (OT) and for the limited number of purposes as detailed on Page 5 under the mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant. However, under the Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants we can consider other works but ONLY if recommended by the Occupational Therapist.

Cost puts the biggest restriction on client choice. The Council, through its Housing Adaptations service, aims to ensure that any adaptation provided with grant assistance will be fit for purpose and right for the client's needs. It is important though that any adaptation is value for money and is no more elaborate than it needs to be to do the job. For example, if you need a ground floor bedroom which can be met by dividing a suitably sized existing downstairs room then it will be presumed that this is what the grant will pay for, rather than providing a new bedroom extension.

The Council believe that most people will see this as being fair. If there are several options available to meet client needs these will be considered, however, unless there are significant drawbacks the most cost-effective solution is likely to be the one upon which any grant assistance is based. Most cases are not overly complex. There is usually one clear solution – for example a stair lift or a level access shower – which all the parties, including the client, agree upon. So, in most cases client choice can be easily met.

What happens if the Occupational Therapist recommends something that I am unhappy with?

Whilst the Housing Adaptation Team does not have to accept the recommendation of the Occupational Therapist it would be very rare for them to go against their advice and make a grant for something they have not recommended. If you are unhappy with the recommendation you should first raise the matter with the Occupational Therapist and your recommendation may change as a result. Or, if you are still not happy with the recommendation you can ask for it to be reviewed by the Occupational Therapist's line manager.

What happens if I am generally happy with the work that is being recommended but would like to vary or add things?

There are two golden rules. Firstly, that the Council will not support anything that in the opinion of the Occupational Therapist is not suitable for you. Secondly, that individual preferences will not be supported with any additional grant money if it will cost more than the alternative.

These principles continue to apply if you want to make major changes to a recommended scheme of work. For example, if you wanted a level access shower to be installed in a separate room next to your bedroom rather than in your bathroom this could be done so long as the Occupational Therapist confirms that the location and layout is equally well suited to your needs. If it is, the second consideration is whether it will cost more to put it there. If the cost is the same or less than the cost of putting the shower in the bathroom then your choice can be supported. If the cost is more, your choice can only be supported if you are prepared to pay the additional cost.

What if I want additional work done?

If, when the contractor has been selected, you decide that you want to take advantage of having a tradesman at your home by having extra works undertaken at the same time, you will need to agree a price with the contractor and make it clear that you are the person liable for payment of those works.

What if I change my mind?

If there are up-front costs, for example, if plans must be commissioned for an extension, these costs can form part of the grant aided work. If for any reason you have agreed for plans to be drawn up and then decide not to pursue grant assistance you will be liable for these costs.

7. Frequently asked questions – What is a “discretionary” grant?

What is the difference between a Disabled Facilities Grant and a *Discretionary* Disabled Facilities Grant?

The Council has published a policy and has used its powers under Regulatory Reform (England and Wales) (Housing Assistance) Order 2002 to provide “discretionary grants” to provide additional support, speed up the process and prevent worsening conditions. Examples of when we can give discretionary assistance are:

- Temporary relocation costs whilst works are carried out to the home
- Relocation costs where an alternative home is necessary and appropriate
- Feasibility studies – to inform subsequent applications for grant eligible works
- Minor works and measures to improve the warmth, energy efficiency of the home and reduce trip hazards
- Loans to fund works to alleviate Category 1 and high Category 2 hazards under the Housing, Health and Safety Rating Scheme.

Conditions and Requirements apply to each aspect of Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants and unlike the Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant – Discretionary grants are subject to the availability of funding.

8. Frequently asked questions – What if I need to complain?

North Yorkshire Council’s Health & Adult Services and Housing Adaptations Services who work in partnership to deliver the Disabled Facilities Grant programme and it may be confusing to customers as to who they should contact if they are not happy with something relating to their adaptation. Broadly speaking where the complaint is about:

- your assessment of what you need – please contact Your Occupational Therapist in the first instance – who will work to satisfy your complaint but if unable to do so will refer the matter.
- the work being carried out at your home – please contact your Caseworker in the first instance who will work to satisfy your complaint but if unable to do so will refer the matter.
- the grant process – the time it is taking or anything else – please contact your Caseworker or Manager in the first instance who will work to satisfy your complaint but if unable to do so will refer the matter.

Your complaint will be dealt with under the North Yorkshire Council’s Complaints procedure.

Contacts

North Yorkshire Council

1 Belle Vue Square
Broughton Road
Skipton
North Yorkshire
BD23 1FJ

Tel: 01756 700 600

North Yorkshire Council Customer Services Team

North Yorkshire Council
County Hall
North Allerton
North Yorkshire
DL7 8AD

Tel: (General enquiries) 01609 780 780

Jodie Jagger – Acting Housing Adaptations Manager

Tel: 01756 706 392
Mobile: 07719 079582
Email: jodie.jagger@northyorks.gov.uk

Housing Adaptations Team

Email: adaptations@northyorks.gov.uk

Or contact your Caseworker direct:

Hannah **BOOTH**
Tel: 01756 706256
Mobile: 07719 079 577
Email: hannah.booth@northyorks.gov.uk

Sophie **LUBY**
Mobile: 07784 921 199
Email: sophie.luby@northyorks.gov.uk

Catherine **DAVISON**
Email: catherine.davison@northyorks.gov.uk

This handbook is available in larger print by visiting www.northyorks.gov.uk or by contacting North Yorkshire Council direct. We can arrange a visit to talk through the contents of this leaflet if required.

To find out more, visit <http://www.northyorks.gov.uk>