

Sefton Council

Disabled Facilities Grant

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Disabled facilities grant

What is a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)?

Disabled Facilities Grants are awarded by the Council and are available to pay for a range of works needed to help a disabled person to remain living independently in their home. Works may include:

Widening of doorways · Providing ramps · Installing a stair lift or hoist, Adapting bathroom facilities (e.g. level access shower). These are only examples and this is not a complete list.

Who can apply for a DFG?

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 adaptations or facilities must be for your main or permanent residence.

An applicant must either be the owner of the dwelling or be a Tenant, and be able to provide the Local Authority the necessary 'owners certificate' or 'tenants certificate'. This will not necessarily be the disabled person for whom the works are required. In such cases the applicant would make it clear on whose behalf the application is being made.

A landlord may apply on behalf of a disabled tenant.

When applying for a grant the applicant, whether owner occupier, tenant or landlord will be asked to sign a certificate stating the intention that throughout the grant condition period, currently 10 years (or such shorter period as the disabled persons health and other relevant circumstances permit) the disabled person will occupy the dwelling as his or her only or main residence.

Will I have to pay?

The Council will calculate how much the disabled person may have to pay towards the cost of the works. This is done through a test of resources which takes into account the income and capital of the disabled person and their spouse or partner. The amount of grant awarded will depend upon the outcome of this test and may result in you having to agree to meet your contribution before your application can proceed.

Where the disabled person is a child the means of the disabled person's parents are not taken into account and therefore there will be no contribution for you to make.

If an applicant receives a qualifying income related benefit there may be no contribution for you to make.

For further detailed information on the means test procedure, please contact the Home Improvements Service.

Who can help and advise me

Your local Health and Social Care Department employs Occupational Therapists who can assess what adaptations you particularly need.

If you are considering applying for a grant then you should contact in the first instance the Health and Social Care, Customer Access team on 0151 934 3737 to request an Occupational Therapist assessment and to initiate the process.

Sefton Home Improvements Service (SHIS) provide advice and practical help on improvements and adaptations. They also administer the application process and are able to help and support you throughout the grant application process. They will also assist you in employing a contractor from a Selected and Vetted list and in arranging for the works to be undertaken on your behalf. SHIS currently charge a 14% fee (based upon the net cost of all Grant aided works) for this service. This is a fixed fee which cannot be varied or changed even if you choose to manage the application yourself or employ an Independent Agent.

You may choose to employ the services of independent agents to help in your application and this may incur an additional charge. You may wish to deal with the application yourself and this is also acceptable providing you are fully aware of what this may entail. For further information and advice in respect of this, please contact Sefton Home Improvements Service.

How long will the process take?

It is difficult to quantify the exact time involved at the moment because works of different complexities can affect the overall time taken to complete the adaptation involved. However approximate target times for varying levels of need, (this is from when a referral is received from the Occupational Therapist to works commencing in your home) are shown below;

Straightforward (stairlift etc)	23 weeks
Intermediate (stairlift, level access shower & Ramp)	30 weeks
Complex (significant internal reconfiguration or build)	58 weeks

The Council aims to achieve these targets in 90% of all cases.

How do I apply?

Initially, contact the Health and Social Care customer access team on 0151 934 3737 to arrange for an assessment of your needs. They will then pass on your request to the relevant Occupational Therapy Service for prioritisation. In the early stages the OT service may contact you for further information and may also refer you to the Home Improvements Service for a preliminary test of resources. You should ensure, before ringing the service, that you have all the necessary documentation concerning your income/benefits/savings etc to hand. The service can then give you an indication if you will have to pay anything towards the cost of the grant by carrying out a ***Preliminary Means Test*** this process is normally conducted over the telephone. At this stage it is only an approximation and proof of all details supplied will be requested when a full application form is submitted. The procedure is useful because it saves you having to wait unnecessarily for an adaptation only to be told, following a preliminary (or full) means test that you do not qualify for grant assistance.

After registration with the Occupational Therapy service your assessment of need will be arranged / prioritised and where appropriate, a referral will be sent to the Home Improvement Service. Depending upon the urgency of your need, you or your agent will then receive an application form which will need to be completed and returned. You will not get any grant assistance if you start work before the Council formally approves your application in writing, DFG can not be paid retrospectively.

Other Information

If you are disabled, grant is **mandatory** for essential adaptations to give you better freedom of movement into and around your home and to access essential facilities within it. The grant is limited to a **maximum of £30,000**, which is fully inclusive of all relevant technical / agency fees, VAT (where applicable) and any other associated charges. Where necessary, it also provides the essential facilities themselves. The types of work are:

- to make it easier to get into and out of the dwelling by, for example, widening doors and installing ramps;
- ensuring the safety of the disabled person and other occupants by, for example, providing a specially adapted room in which it would be safe to leave a disabled person unattended or improved lighting to ensure better visibility;
- to make access easier to the living room;
- by providing or improving access to the bedroom, and kitchen, toilet, washbasin and bath (and/or shower) facilities; for example, by installing a stair lift or providing an accessible bathroom;
- to improve or provide a heating system in your home which is suitable to the needs of the disabled person (this is subject to confirmation from a medical consultant that a room has to be kept at a constant temperature);
- to adapt heating or lighting controls to make them easier to use; and,
- to improve access and movement around the home to enable the disabled person to care for another person who lives in the property, such as a spouse, child or another person for whom the disabled person cares.

Discretionary Loan

Unfortunately, due to the removal of Government Funding for Housing related services the council is no longer able to offer any form of discretionary assistance. If this changes at any point in the future applicants will be advised at the time of their application.

Does the council have to give a grant?

When you apply to the council for a disabled facilities grant, they will check that the proposed works are: **necessary and appropriate** to meet the disabled person's needs and **reasonable and practicable** depending on the age and condition of the property.

The council needs to be satisfied about each of these matters, and the overall feasibility of the works, if they are to give a disabled facilities grant. A local authority can refuse a disabled facilities grant if they believe the scheme is not practicable. In these circumstances the council may recommend a number of alternative solutions and this may include you moving to a more appropriate dwelling and assistance may be available to assist with this.

When applying for a grant, you or your Agent will need to provide a minimum of two written estimates to the Council so that we can determine what costs will be allowed through the grant for you to complete the works. In some instances other works may be required which fall outside the scope of your grant approval. In these cases you may be required to meet the cost of these works in full if they are considered essential works. The Council will advise you of these facts should the situation arise. It is also important to note that you may have to meet any costs which exceed the mandatory grant limit.

The council must issue you with an **Approval of costs** within six months of receipt of a full and valid application for mandatory grant assistance. An application form is only considered valid by the council if all the relevant information required from the client, or their Agent is received. Once a valid application is received the Council must approve or refuse your application. Prior to Approval the Council must be satisfied that you have applied and obtained all relevant statutory consent i.e. Planning Permission, Building Regulation approval, Party Wall Act notices etc. Your agent will be able to assist you with this or if in doubt you can contact the Home Improvements Service for advice. It is your responsibility to ensure you have obtained all relevant consents before starting any works.

Grant will only be paid when the council are satisfied that the work has been completed to their satisfaction and in accordance with the Grant Approval, approved drawings and schedules of work. A very important point to note, however, is that you or your agent (where appointed) are responsible for ensuring that your builder meets the standard required by yourself and the council. If you do not employ an agent then it is your responsibility to manage the works and the contractor.

Following completion of the works a grant can only be paid on provision of an acceptable invoice, demand or receipt of payment. An invoice is not acceptable if it is for work or services provided by the applicant or a direct member of his or her family. Where the works are carried out by the applicant or a relative, materials or services only will be considered for payment. Legitimate invoices must be provided for these.

The council may pay the grant in full on completion of the works or by installments as the works progress. The council will normally pay the grant direct to the contractor via your Agent. If you do not use an Agent then the payment will be made to the contractor unless otherwise advised.

All works should be carried out to your satisfaction and you will be asked to verify this upon completion. If the contractor has not carried out works satisfactorily, then you should notify the council so that they can withhold payment, if appropriate, whilst the situation is resolved. It is important that you are aware that the contract for the works is formed between you and your contractor. Any disputes therefore must be taken up directly with the contractor concerned. If you have appointed an agent, they may be able to assist you in this.

Maintenance of Adaptations

Disabled Facility Grant can only be used for adaptations to a disabled person's home. It cannot be used for the maintenance of a piece of equipment or previous adaptations. You need to be aware that all costs incurred in servicing and maintaining the equipment / adaptation will be your responsibility once the initial warranty period expires. If you are a private tenant, you or your landlord will be responsible for any servicing and maintenance costs. You should clarify the situation with your landlord as and when the equipment is installed so that there is no confusion should a situation arise.

Grant Repayment Conditions

With effect from 1st October 2009 Sefton MBC implemented **REPAYMENT** conditions in relation to mandatory disabled facilities grants. The aim of this is to assist the Council in recycling resources to meet ever increasing demands.

Repayment of disabled facilities grants will be required in the following circumstances:

i) The grant award is for a sum exceeding £5,000.

ii) The applicant has a qualifying owner's interest in the premises on which the relevant works were carried out.

iii) The applicant disposes (whether by sale, assignment, transfer or other) of the premises in respect of which the grant was given within **10 years** of the certified completion date.

The amount of repayment which will be required is that part of the grant that exceeds £5,000, but is **subject to a maximum repayment of £10,000**.

If you would like further copies of this booklet or any other format, please contact the

Sefton Home Improvements Service
3rd Floor, Magdalen House
30 Trinity Road
Bootle, Merseyside
Liverpool L20 3NJ

Telephone: 0151 934 3599/3528/3536

Email: housing.improvements@sefton.gov.uk

Visit us online at... www.sefton.gov.uk

Useful Contact Numbers

Health and Social Care Customer Access Team
0151 934 3737

Building Control Department
0151 934 4622

Sefton MBC Customer Contact Centre
0345 140 0845

We are committed to ensuring that services are accessible to all, regardless of racial and ethnic origin, gender, sexuality, disability, age, language or religious beliefs.

This leaflet is a general guide and is not a full and authoritative statement of the law. We believe that this leaflet is correct at the date published. Changes in the law or Council policy may affect its accuracy.

Comments, Complaints & Appeals

The Council welcomes any comments and suggestions about changes or improvements to its adaptation policy. Such comments or suggestions will be carefully considered and where appropriate they will be incorporated in any future revisions of the policy and this booklet.

An appeal against the policy in respect of an individual case will be considered by the appropriate Service Director.

Appeals must be in writing and include the specific grounds on which the appeal is based. Appeals will only be considered on the following grounds:

- The policy has not been applied correctly
- A particular case is exceptional and justifies assistance by the local authority

An appeal will not be considered where the applicant only disagrees with the policy.

The appropriate Director will provide a written response to the applicant within 28 days of the receipt of the appeal. If the Director finds that neither of the grounds of the appeal has been satisfied then the appeal will be refused with no further appeal allowed. Where the Director finds that one of the grounds of appeal is satisfied then he will make the decision, which may authorize a grant/loan or other assistance as an exception to the policy.

Decisions to authorise assistance on the grounds of 'exceptional circumstance' will be made by the appropriate Director only.

All comments, complaints & appeals must be in writing and should be addressed in the first instance to:

**Principal Housing Improvements Officer,
Sefton Home Improvements Service,
3rd Floor, Magdalen House,
Trinity Road,
Bootle,
L20 3NJ.**