



Disabled home adaptations

Home adaptations can help older people and disabled people to live independently in their own homes. This info guide describes the help available to pay for significant changes to the structure of your home.

Disabled Home Adaptations

Housing adaptations can:

- Reduce the risk of accidents at home.
- Reduce the need for home care or going into a care home.

If you are disabled, or someone in your home is disabled, you may get help with a wide range of adaptations to your home. Examples of adaptations include:

- Replacing a bath with a level access shower.
- Making it easier to get into and out of the house by widening doors or making a ramp.
- Fitting lower worktops in a kitchen.

There are different arrangements for getting help with other smaller changes, like fitting grab rails or getting help with equipment, such as a shower chair.

Your local social work department will be able to explain more about these options.

Where do I start?

- It depends on who owns your home.
- In most cases as a starting point you should **contact your local council and ask for an Assessment of Need**, which is usually done by an Occupational Therapist (O.T.).
- You will only be considered for financial help if the assessment decides that the work needed is **essential**.
- **Local Authority tenants**
Local councils have their own local policies on the help they provide.
- **The help available will vary depending where you live.**
- Cases are usually given high, medium or low priority, depending on the level of need and risk to your health, wellbeing and independence.
You will get more details on this during your assessment.
- Limited budgets (money available) might also delay any work starting.

If it is agreed after your assessment that a major adaptation is the best way to meet your need, then the local council will seek to fund the work.

Sometimes it may not be possible to adapt your current home to meet your needs. This may be because:

- There is not enough space to make the changes needed.
- The way your house is built may make it very difficult or impossible to change.

In some situations the local council may suggest other answers, such as moving to a different property.

Housing Association tenants

If you are a housing association tenant

- The housing association or local social work department will give you information and advice on what support is available to you.
- They will also tell you how to get your needs assessed.
- Your housing association will make any essential changes to your home to meet your assessed needs, (if funding is available) and they should consult you during the design process.

Homeowners

If you own your home

- Money to carry out major adaptations might be available from your local authority (Council).
- They will decide, after an assessment of your needs, if the changes needed

to your home meet the conditions for **'essential work'**.

The **Help to Adapt** pilot scheme is a Scottish Government initiative set up to help home owners aged 60 or over to make adaptations to their house. You pay by using the equity in your home, with the loan being repaid when the house is sold. See <http://linkhousing.org.uk/what-we-do/help-to-adapt/> for more information.

Local councils now provide help under the **Scheme of Assistance**. The help could be

- information, advice, guidance or practical help
- or through financial help, like grants or loans.

'Mandatory Grants'

Most changes to a building are covered by a 'mandatory grant'

- This means **that the council must give you a grant as long as you have been assessed as having a 'priority need'**.
- Mandatory grants allow for up to 80% funding of the total cost of any alteration. Any grant level above 80% is calculated on a means tested basis.
- The scheme also aims to encourage home-owners to take more responsibility for the state of their homes, to make sure private housing in Scotland is kept in a decent state of repair.

Financial help is based around the following principles:

- Owners are responsible for the costs of maintaining their properties.
- Owners must use all reasonable means at their disposal to meet those costs, which includes using their savings and affordable commercial lending.

Private tenants

If you are a private tenant you can

- Contact your local authority for an **assessment** to see whether the changes needed to your home meet the conditions for **essential work**.
- **You must ask for permission from your landlord.**
- You should also say if you intend to put the property back to its original state when you leave.
- Your landlord must not 'unreasonably refuse to give their consent' (ie must not say no without very good reasons.)
- If your landlord does say no, **they must tell you in writing why they have said no.**

Care and Repair

Care and Repair services operate throughout Scotland. They offer

- Independent advice and assistance to help homeowners repair, improve or adapt their homes so that they can live in comfort and safety in their own community.
- The service is available to homeowners, private tenants and crofters

who are aged over 60 or who have a disability.

- Some Care and Repair services also include home-owners of any age group with physical or mental disabilities, private rented sector and crofting tenants (particularly in the Highlands and Islands).
- Contact Care and Repair services at www.careandrepairsotland.co.uk or by contacting your local council.

Scottish Welfare Fund

You may be able to get a **Community Care Grant** from **the Scottish Welfare Fund** if:

- You are moving out of a care home, hospital or similar place and need to get your home adapted so you can live there independently, or
- You need to get your home adapted so you can stay there instead of moving into a care home.
- Usually you have to be on **benefits** before you can get a Community Care Grant but you may be considered if you are on a **low income**, whether you are working or not.
- To apply, **contact your local council.**

A list of telephone numbers and email addresses for each local council is available on the Scottish Government website at

<http://www.gov.scot/Topics/People/fairersotland/scottishwelfarefund/howtoapplytothescottishwelfarefund>

What if I want to do the adaptations myself?

- If you do not own your home, you will need to write to the council, housing association or private landlord to ask for **permission** first.
- Your landlord 'cannot withhold their consent unreasonably', but they can make certain **conditions**.

Some building work to a disabled person's private home may also be **VAT exempt**. Call the VAT helpline for more information on **0300 200 3700** or contact us for a copy of our **Claiming VAT exemption on disability products** info guide.

Advocacy support

If you feel that you might need some support to help you through the process, you can ask for the help of an **advocate**. Search for your local advocacy services at www.siaa.org.uk or call **0131 556 6443**.

Unhappy with the decision?

If you are not happy with the decision regarding your eligibility for a disabled home adaptation, you can complain to the council. To make a complaint, contact the person you last spoke to about it, or to the local authority's Complaints Officer. Contact your local Social Work office for details.

How do I appeal?

If you think the council or housing association has been unreasonable, you can

- Ask the **Sheriff Court** to look at their decision and order them to change it.
- **Seek advice immediately** from your **local citizens advice** bureau or a solicitor as there are tight deadlines regarding appeals.
- Contact the **Equality Advisory Support Service** on **0808 800 0082**.



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