



Adapting Your Own Home

A Step by Step
Guide for People
with Disabilities

A Guide for Major Adaptations in Public Sector Housing

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Acknowledgements

The DHSSPS and the Housing Executive would like to thank the following agencies who made a direct and valuable contribution to this booklet:

The Community Occupational Therapy Managers Forum (NI)

Disability Action NI

Eastern Health and Social Services Council
Northern Health and Social Services Council
Southern Health and Social Services Council
Western Health and Social Services Council

Adapting your Home to Meet your Needs

If you or someone living with you in your property has a disability and you are a Housing Executive tenant, an adaptation may help you to live more comfortably in your home.

This guide takes you through what will happen when a major adaptation is carried out to your Housing Executive home. A major adaptation can be the installation of a stair or through-floor lift, a heating adaptation or putting on an extension to your home.

There are other types of adaptations which are explained in the Glossary of Terms at the back of this leaflet.

The Northern Ireland Housing Executive and the Health and Social Services Trusts work in partnership to help you adapt your home.

The process for major adaptations can be confusing so we have tried to simplify it into 3 main steps and give general time-scales. There is a checklist at the end of each section to help you understand what is happening.

Who is Involved if the Work is Major?

A number of people may be involved (contact details are at the back of this leaflet) including:

Occupational Therapists (OTs)

Occupational Therapists (OTs) advise on what is 'necessary and appropriate' to meet needs.

They will assist you in choosing an adaptation design that will help you to be independent or help others to care for you.

The Housing Executive Area Welfare Officers

Once the recommendation is received from the OT, the Housing Executive Area Welfare Officers will coordinate everything that needs to be done to provide major work such as a lift, extension or heating to your home.

Technical Staff

Technical Staff draft sketch plans and final drawings, seek approvals and provide specialist advice on technical and practical issues.

This group will include people like architects, building surveyors and engineers.

Sometimes these people will be Housing Executive employees but on other occasions they may be engaged to work on your behalf as agents of the Housing Executive.

The Contractor or Builder

The Contractor or Builder will be engaged by the Housing Executive to complete the work required to your home.

How Long Does it Take if I Require Major Work like an Extension or Lift?

Step 1

Occupational Therapy Assessment of Your Needs

The Community Charter states that this Service aims to **initiate your assessment** within three months. Your local Health and Social Services Trust will strive to meet this standard but in practice it can take longer due to local service demand, the relative priority of your situation and staffing levels.

Step 2

Planning, Consultation and Approval

When the recommendation for adaptation is received from the Health and Social Services Trust, Housing Executive staff will look at the options with you, including whether you would be better to transfer to another more suitable property. If appropriate the adaptation is then designed and the necessary approvals are obtained. On average it will take less than 4 months to provide a lift and a minimum of 12 months before work will begin on site for an extension following receipt of the recommendation from the Health and Social Services Trust.

Step 3

Building/Structural Work

It will take up to 3 days approximately to install a lift or 3-6 months building work for an extension from the date the builder goes on site.

Even where everything goes relatively smoothly it can take approximately a year and a half from assessment to completion of building work to provide an extension to the property. In the meantime the Occupational Therapist may provide equipment or request minor adaptations to help alleviate difficulties in the home or Social Services may review your home care. Some types of minor work can be done without Occupational Therapy assessment relatively quickly for Housing Executive tenants. These are listed in the Glossary of Terms at the back of this leaflet. You should make enquiries directly to your District Office about these.



Heating

If you cannot manage your heating system you should contact your nearest Housing Executive District Office directly and they will take details which will then be forwarded to the Area Welfare Officer for a decision on whether you qualify for heating improvements.

The Area Welfare Officer's assessment of heating should take about 8 weeks and work should start about 8 months after that although this may vary according to demand and the availability of funding.

Following assessment your Area Welfare Officer will be able to advise of the likely time you have to wait.



Getting Started

If you are experiencing difficulty with everyday activities, (other than managing your heating system) you can request assessment by an Occupational Therapist from your local Health Trust. Up to date medical information from your GP or consultant will help the Occupational Therapist service to identify your needs more rapidly.

Step 1

The Occupational Therapy Assessment Process

When a referral is received and accepted, your Occupational Therapist will carry out an assessment, which looks at both your needs and where appropriate your carer's needs, to decide whether they can be met through a range of services.

The Occupational Therapist will then discuss options with you. These may include rehabilitation, referral to other Health and Social Services professionals, provision of daily living equipment, moving home or adapting your home.

In many instances where needs are less complex it will be possible to make a recommendation for an adaptation early on. On some occasions where needs are complex, more information may be needed from other Health and Social Services personnel to identify both short and long term needs. This may involve contact with people such as your hospital consultant regarding your condition.



The Occupational Therapy service aims to obtain this information within six months as stated in the Community Charter.

If adapting your home is an option, the Occupational Therapist will assess the layout of your property in order to help you with your daily living requirements or to enable you to care for the person with a disability. The Occupational Therapist will also work with special equipment suppliers where this is a necessary part of the adaptation.

Step 1 Checklist: Occupational Therapy Assessment

At the end of this stage the following should have happened:

1. Agreement with your Occupational Therapist about your needs and, where appropriate, your carer's needs following assessment
2. An assessment of your home environment and ideas about options for adaptation
3. An Occupational Therapy recommendation and brief has been sent to the Housing Executive Area Welfare Officer

Step 2:

Planning, Consultation and Approval

The Area Welfare Officer will receive a recommendation for adaptation from the Occupational Therapist and will call with you to discuss the options available to you. For example if your home is very unsuitable or you live far away from relatives or friends it may make more sense to move house rather than carry out a major adaptation. This will be discussed with you.

To help make decisions it may be necessary to undertake a technical survey to decide whether the recommended works are technically feasible.



If the decision is made to proceed with the adaptation, an architect or other technical person will be asked to draw up sketch plans and these will be explained to you. The Occupational Therapist will also see the plans to ensure they meet your requirements.

If the work is so extensive that you will not be able to live at home while the work is in progress, the Area Welfare Officer will ask District Office staff to investigate the possibility of finding alternative temporary accommodation for you.

Following this there will be a time where although you may not have much contact with your Area Welfare Officer, a lot of work is being done on your behalf. This is the period when sketch plans will be made into formal working drawings, the cost of the scheme will be worked out and statutory approvals such as Planning Permission and Building Control Approval will be applied for. Once all these details are known, the final decision for approval of your adaptation will be the responsibility of the Area Manager.

At all times the Area Welfare Officer will help you understand what is happening and you can contact them at any point during the process. Sometimes, however, there are delays which are outside the control of the Housing Executive, for example, obtaining planning permission.

At the end of this stage the Housing Executive will appoint a contractor to carry out the work for you.

Step 2 Checklist: Planning, Consultation and Approval

At the end of this stage the following should have happened:

1. Your Area Welfare Officer, Housing Executive Technical staff and your Occupational Therapist have all agreed with you the best way forward
2. Formal working drawings and costs will have been drawn up by the architect
3. Where it is essential, alternative temporary accommodation will have been requested for you
4. All Planning and Building Control Approval will have been received
5. The Area Manager has approved the work and a contractor has been appointed

Step 3: Building Work

Following appointment, the contractor may visit you to discuss the nature of the work and a start date. As adaptations are individually tailored to each person's needs, each job may be different and involve different people. The Welfare Officer can explain the role of these people.

On rare occasions unexpected problems can arise during construction. If this happens the Area Welfare Officer, Occupational Therapist and Architect will have to agree, in consultation with you, the best way to resolve the problem.

On completion of the work, Housing Executive staff will advise the Occupational Therapy department and where necessary, the Occupational Therapist will visit to provide equipment such as a shower chair to help you use your new facilities.

Step 3 Checklist Building Work

At the end of this stage the following should have happened:

1. You have a start date for the contractor to commence work

2. Once work has been completed, the Occupational Therapist will be informed



Your Local Contacts

Northern Ireland Housing Executive Area Office Contact Numbers

Belfast	(028) 9031 7000
North East	(028) 2565 3399
South	(028) 3834 1188
South East	(028) 9182 0600
West	(028) 7137 2000
	<i>(Collon Terrace, Waterloo Place, Waterside, Limavady District Offices)</i>
West	(028) 8224 6111
	<i>(Strabane, Omagh, Magherafelt, Cookstown District Offices)</i>

Your Local Northern Ireland Housing Executive District Office Contact Number

District Office:

Tel:

Health and Social Services Trust Occupational Therapy Service Contact Number

Address:

Tel:

Glossary of Terms

Major Adaptation

This would include bedroom or bathroom extension, heating, vertical lift or stair-lift, major internal re-arrangement, provision of ground floor toilet.

Minor Adaptations Which Require an Occupational Therapy Assessment

A number of minor adaptations require assessment by an Occupational Therapist. Examples would include a shower, a ramp, graduated steps, grabrails, etc.

Minor Adaptations Which can be Done Without an Occupational Therapy Assessment

There is a list of minor work which may be carried out for public sector tenants directly by the local Housing Executive District Office without recommendation by Occupational Therapist. The list includes items such as:

- Handrail at front or rear of dwelling or Housing Executive communal pathways

- Provision of whirly clothes line or path to clothes line
- Widening of garden paths for wheelchair users or persons with walking aids
- Defining in curtilage (outside your home) steps for people with visual impairment
- Replacement or re-siting of coal bunkers
- Outdoor lighting for disabled clients with visual or mobility difficulties
- Paved areas for wheelchairs
- Additional continuous handrail to staircase (or other parts of dwelling if required)
- Changing door knobs to lever handles as required
- Lowering of Yale Locks
- Re-siting of socket outlets or switches at a convenient level
- Provision of rocker light switches

- Provision of adequate internal lighting
- Relocation of clothes hanging rails
- Provision of letter cages or delivery shelves in entrance hall
- Provision of additional cupboards for storage
- Lowering of cooker mains switch
- Accessible window openings or, if not feasible, installation of extractor fan with accessible controls
- Provision of lever taps at wash basin in kitchen or bathroom

While this booklet outlines many of the steps involved in a major housing adaptation, it does not attempt to describe the total process.

Local service providers will offer specific advice depending on your individual circumstances.

Please note that lists of adaptation types contained in this document are given as examples only and are not intended to be definitive lists of what is available.

Calls are welcomed via BT Text Direct for text or minicom users. Insert 18001 in front of the number you wish to dial.

This information can also be made available in alternative formats. Contact:

Maurice Rooney
Principal Officer
Housing and Regeneration
Northern Ireland Housing Executive
The Housing Centre
2 Adelaide Street
Belfast BT2 8PB

Tel: (028) 9024 0588

Translation services are available via a telephone service called Language Line in each Housing Executive office.

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Executive**

December 2002
www.nihe.gov.uk