

Disabled Facilities Grant

Request

A copy of the policies and procedures and / or guidelines regarding Disabled Facility Grants.

Response

The information is below. It is section 5 of the Private Sector Improvement Services Home Improvement Grant Policy Manual as this is relevant to the request.

5.0 DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS

5.1 Introduction

- 5.1.1** Articles 50-55 of Part III of the Housing (NI) Order 2003 enables the Housing Executive to make a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) available.
- 5.1.2** The Disabled Facilities Grant is designed to assist towards works not only to dwellings but also to the common parts of buildings containing flats, where the disabled person is the occupant of one of the flats. The purposes for which grant is available are in principle the same as for works to dwellings, but in practice these are likely to be limited to works which would facilitate access to the dwelling through the common parts, or facilitating the use by the disabled person of a source of power or light in the common parts.
- 5.1.3** Disabled Facilities Grant is designed to address the adaptation needs to which the disabled person's disability gives rise and includes mandatory works to meet the basic housing requirements of the disabled person and discretionary works for a wide range of other items which go beyond these basic requirements.
- 5.1.4** Entitlement to the amount of disabled facilities grant, will be determined by a test of financial resources (Test of Resources TOR), on the "relevant" person(s) i.e. person with a disability.
- 5.1.5** Where a Disabled Facilities Grant is in respect of a dependent child, the parents/ guardians should not be subject to a test of resources (TOR) assessment, i.e. there is no TOR.

5.2 Purposes for which the Grant may be Given – Article 54

- 5.2.1** The purposes for which an application for a disabled facilities grant must be approved are the following:
- (a) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to and from the dwelling or the building in which the dwelling or, as the case may be, flat is situated;
 - (b) making the dwelling or building safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with them;
 - (c) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to a room used or usable as the principal family room;
 - (d) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room used or usable for sleeping;
 - (e) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a lavatory, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;

- (f) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a bath or shower (or both), or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
- (g) facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a wash hand basin, or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;
- (h) facilitating the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant;
- (i) improving any heating system in the dwelling to meet the needs of the disabled occupant or, if there is no existing heating system in the dwelling or any such system is unsuitable for use by the disabled occupant, providing a heating system suitable to meet their needs;
- (j) facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of a source of power, light or heat by altering the position of one or more means of access to or control of that source or by providing additional means of control;
- (k) facilitating access and movement by the disabled occupant around the dwelling in order to enable them to care for a person who is normally resident in the dwelling and is in need of such care;
- (l) such other purposes as may be specified by order of the Department.

5.2.2 An application for a disabled facilities grant may be approved, for the purpose of making the dwelling or building suitable for the accommodation, welfare or employment of the disabled occupant in any other respect.

5.2.3 If in the opinion of the Housing Executive, the relevant works are more or less extensive than is necessary to achieve any of the purposes set out in 5.2.1 above, or the purpose mentioned in paragraph 5.2.2, it may, with the consent of the applicant, treat the application as varied, so that the relevant works are limited to or, as the case may be, include such works as seem to the Housing Executive to be necessary for that purpose.

5.3 Necessary Works – Article 55

5.3.1 The primary legislation states, "The Executive shall not approve an application for a disabled facilities grant unless it is satisfied

- (a) that the relevant works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, and
- (b) that it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age, condition and necessary size of the dwelling or building".

(Section [8.13.3](#) of the Technical Policy Refers)

5.3.2 The assessment of whether the works are necessary and appropriate must therefore involve consideration of the need for the proposed adaptation or improvement to:

- enable any care plan to be implemented, and,
- permit the disabled occupant to remain in his/her home retaining or regaining as great a degree of independence as can reasonably be achieved.

5.3.3 The proposed works would normally be expected to meet the assessed needs of the individual and should take account of both their medical and physical needs.

5.3.4 The Housing Executive must consult with the local Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) (The Authority) to receive an appropriate recommendation from the Occupational Therapist to facilitate the processing of an application for grant, unless the relevant works are of such a kind as may be agreed between the Housing Executive and the Authority.

5.4 Successive Grants

5.4.1 Successive Grants may be a feature of the Disabled Facilities Grant especially when the disabled person has a degenerative condition. In relation to further grant, care should be taken to minimise the disruption to previously grant aided works and in this context the Occupational Therapist (OT) should take cognisance of the disabled person's needs (current and future) when making a specific recommendation.

5.4.2 Successive Grants have also ramifications for the Test of Resources (TOR). For full details, see TOR Policy and Procedural manual.

5.5 Impact on Family and Carers

5.5.1 Disabled Facilities Grants are specifically aimed at meeting the needs of the disabled person. In cases where adaptation works form part of a package involving care provided for the disabled person by others it will also be relevant to consider the impact of the proposed adaptations on the tasks of caring and in particular whether these tasks will be reduced or eased.

5.5.2 It is therefore considered that where the disabled person is wholly dependent upon the care of others any adaptations should equally reduce the burden of care for the carers.

5.6 Dual Residency

5.6.1 There is no provision for shared or dual residency under the Housing (NI) Order 2003; the DFG requirement states that an owner (or parent) must certify that he/she intends that the disabled occupant will live in the dwelling as his only or main residence. The Housing Executive considers that in cases of dual residency only one DFG can be offered due to the current statutory legislation provision and it is a matter for the parents to agree on who should obtain the benefit if a court agreement has not been finalised.

Advice received from the Housing Executive's Legal Services department suggests where custody or residency is equally split (where there is a joint custody order in place) then the matter becomes more complicated where the disabled persons are children and the court ordered that they live 50/50 with each parent. In cases such as these the Occupational Therapist referral should be submitted to the Policy Team at PSG.Policy@nihe.gov.uk. Guidance will be sought from DfC.

5.7 Receipt of Occupational Therapist's (OT) Recommendation

- 5.7.1** Upon receipt of the Occupational Therapists (OT) recommendation, the Contact Officer will register the applicant's interest in being considered for a Disabled Facilities Grant on GRS.
- 5.7.2** The Contact Officer when recording the relevant details provided within the OT recommendations on GRS must ensure that these details include a method of contact (telephone number or email address) and the date of birth of the disabled person. Where this is not available, they should contact the OT Service for such confirmation before referring the case for allocation to an appropriate Case Officer
- 5.7.3** The Case Officer on being allocated the case must make contact with the grant applicant to outline their role and take the applicant through the Initial Contact process aimed at establishing eligibility through a series of showstopper questions. See Paragraph 5.7 below for details.
- 5.7.4** On confirming that the initial conditions for eligibility have been satisfied, the applicant's ability to contribute towards the cost of any grant-aided works may be calculated by using the enquiry facility on Renovator.

5.8 Eligibility Criteria for Grant Aid

The Grants Office must initially satisfy itself that both the dwelling and the applicant are eligible for grant. The nominated Case Officer must therefore, as part of their initial information gathering contact with the grant applicant, establish whether they are eligible for grant aid. Where it becomes evident that the basic criteria such as the age of the applicant has not been met or the applicant's contribution is too high then the applicant should be advised that grant is not available and the reason given, using the standard letter.

5.8.1 Age of Applicant – Article 37

No application can be accepted unless the applicant is aged 18 or over on the date of the application (Initial Contact). In the case of a joint application, any applicant under the age of 18 shall be left out of account.

5.8.2 Age of Property Article 38

The normal age requirement of ten years from the date of construction or conversion for the renovation grant does not apply to the disabled facilities grant. In other words the disabled

facilities grant is available for a dwelling, which is, a completed dwelling i.e. signed off by Building Control as complete.

5.8.3 Eligible Persons Article 50

Eligibility criteria are:

- (A) the applicant has the relevant owner's interest in the dwelling (i.e. freehold, leasehold interest etc.)
- (B) a tenant can apply for a disabled facilities grant without having a repairing obligation.
- (C) Tenants of the Housing Executive are **not** eligible for grant and should be referred to their local District Office for assistance.
- (D) Tenants of Registered Housing Associations are **not** eligible for grant and should be referred to their own Association.
- (E) Tenants of Unregistered Housing Associations are eligible to apply for grant.
- (F) Crown, Government or Public Bodies are not eligible for grant.

5.8.4 Properties not rated as domestic premises on the LPS domestic valuation list are deemed not to be eligible for grant aid.

5.9 Test of Resources/Completion of Application Form

On confirming that the initial conditions for eligibility have been satisfied (5.7 refers), the Case Officer should arrange the following with the applicant:

- Carry out the Test of Resources assessment, and
- Completion of the application form.

5.9.1 Test of Resources (TOR Manual)

5.9.1.1 Entitlement to the amount of disabled facilities grant, will be determined by a test of financial resources (Test of Resources TOR), on the "relevant" person(s) i.e. person with a disability.

5.9.1.2 Where a Disabled Facilities Grant is in respect of a dependent child, the parents/ guardians should not be subject to a test of resources (TOR) assessment, i.e. there is no TOR.

5.9.1.3 Details of the responsibilities, rules and procedures involved in the assessment and calculation of the Test of Resources can be found in the Test of Resources – Policy and Procedural Manual.

5.9.1.4 The Test of Resources assessment, should be carried out by the Case Officer after confirming that the conditions for eligibility have been satisfied and the Relevant Person has been identified.

5.9.1.5 After obtaining the TOR details from the relevant person, during the initial contact and subsequent TOR interview the Case Officer must arrange for the financial information to be validated before determining the applicant's monetary contribution (TOR Manual refers).

5.9.1.6 The recording of the relevant details and assessment of the contributions is undertaken electronically through Renovator based on the policy guidance contained within the TOR Policy and Procedure Handbook.

5.9.1.7 Following the assessment of the applicant's contribution by the Case Officer, a 100% check of non-pass ported cases must be carried out by the Senior Officer before any TOR contribution notification letter is issued to the grant applicant.

The Senior Officer must also carry out a 10% check of pass-ported cases at approval stage.

5.9.2 Application form (Future Occupation Certificates) Articles 52 & 53 refer

The appropriate application form, containing the relevant future occupation certificate, should be completed and signed by the applicant:

- (A) Owner Occupier Application - should complete the DFG Owner Occupier Application Form (DFG OWN).
- (B) In the case of a tenants application a DFG Tenants Application Form (DFG TEN) should be completed. In addition, the landlord's consent will be required for the execution of the adaptation works with an Owners Certificate (Intended Letting DFG5) completed by the landlord. However, the Housing Executive may exercise its discretion not to seek an Owners Certificate DFG5 (landlord's version).
- (C) A landlord can apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant on behalf of a tenant for both Mandatory and Discretionary Works. In such cases the landlord should complete the DFG Landlord Application Form (DFG LAN)

5.10 Home Improvement Agency's (HIA's)

5.10.1 There are two HIA's within Northern Ireland, who offer additional assistance to process applications for Disabled Facilities Grants. These agencies are Radius and Gable. They provide free advice and assistance.

5.10.2 On appointment, by the grant applicant, the HIA provides advice and assistance with the completion of the documentation associated with their DFG, the selection of a suitable architect to prepare appropriate plans and the selection of a suitable contractor to undertake the adaptation works. Their remit does not however include any involvement within the test of resources process, as their staff are not qualified to make comment on any financial details provided by their client. The TOR process should be co-ordinated through the Grants Office directly using the nominated Case Officer.

5.10.3 Following the initial registration of the application on the System the Case Officer must establish from the grant applicant whether they wish to use the HIA services. To ensure that the applicant has fully understood the level of assistance, which the HIA provides the Case Officer, should again, when the List of Grant aided works package has been issued, check

whether they wish to avail of the service and record details of their response within the System.

- 5.10.4** To register their interest in obtaining assistance on GRS the Grants Office must have received a completed written undertaking from the grant applicant authorising the appropriate HIA to act for them in all aspects relating to the completion of their DFG application (excluding the TOR process). On receiving this undertaking, the Grants Office can deal directly with the HIA on all aspects of their application.
- 5.10.5** Where the grant applicant wishes to dispense with the services of the HIA they must confirm their decision to the relevant Grants Office in writing after which all correspondence relating to their application will be issued directly to the grant applicant.

5.11 Proof of Ownership or Tenancy

- 5.11.1** The proof of title or the tenancy certificate is included in the relevant application form (para 5.8.2 refers). Applications from prospective purchasers should be accepted in line with the Renovation Grant Policy.

5.12 Technical inspection

- 5.12.1** The Case Officer during the initial contact with the grant applicant must arrange a mutually agreeable date on which the condition survey of the property can be undertaken. The appointment date should be confirmed in writing.
- 5.12.2** When rescheduling an appointment it is important that the appropriate GRS procedures are followed to ensure that a history of the processing of the application is retained within GRS for audit purposes.
- 5.12.3** The DFG process is not initiated until receipt of the OT's recommendation by the Grants Office. An agreed inspection date will normally be arranged within 10 working days of receipt of the recommendation.
- 5.12.4** The aim of the inspection is to establish the suitability of the dwelling for the OT recommended works. The Grants Office may in some instances wish to liaise with the OT and/or arrange a joint visit.
- 5.12.5** The Technical Officer will determine the general condition of the dwelling and carry out the necessary measurements to enable the processing of the DFG. In doing so the Technical Officer need only measure whatever is necessary for the processing of the DFG. In some cases this will necessitate measuring items of repair as part of the DFG. Therefore, Technical Officers do not need to determine the fitness of the house unless the exceptional circumstances criteria (See paragraph 2.15) are considered to apply.
- 5.12.6** Dwellings which are unfit for human habitation, may receive a disabled facilities grant where an appropriate recommendation has been received from the OT.

- 5.12.7** Where the dwelling is unfit and the adaptations required are inextricably linked to the unfitness elements within the dwelling, consideration should be given to the processing of a parallel discretionary Renovation or Home Repairs Assistance Grant. Any final decision on the availability of discretionary grant will however rest with the ECC subject to an exceptional circumstances referral being submitted by the Grants Manager, See ECC criteria at section 2.15.
- 5.12.8** The legislative provisions contained within Article 54(1)(b) of the Housing (NI) Order 2003 enables non adaptation works which are required to make a dwelling or building safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with him/her to be considered for disabled facilities grant. Such works should however be limited to those which are linked to the adaptation works and which would be regarded as a serious danger to the occupants if not addressed, for example, the replacement of a dangerous electrical installation. Where however there are major fitness issues contributing to the risk to the occupant's safety consideration should again be given to the processing of a parallel discretionary renovation grant. Such a decision should be made in consultation with the Exceptional Circumstances Committee. Paragraph 2.15 refers.
- 5.12.9** In relation to a fit dwelling, the Grants Office should consider whether a Renovation Grant would be appropriate to remedy any disrepair simultaneously with the Disabled Facilities Grant where the disrepair detracts from the disabled "access" works. Paragraph 5.23 refers.
- 5.12.10** Where a recommendation is made to carry out certain adaptations, the Grants Office must in the first instance, decide whether the works are acceptable for the purposes of grant. It must then decide whether the works are of a Mandatory or Discretionary nature. Where the works are not considered acceptable the Grants Office should contact the OT and arrange a site meeting to discuss potential alternatives.
- 5.12.11** Any "challenge" function will in the main be restricted to challenging the range of options recommended by the OT under the lesser cost principle, e.g. the installation of a lift may provide the same effect as the provision of ground floor bathroom/bedroom etc. (Paragraph 5.23 refers).
- 5.12.12** The Housing Executive should however normally accept the professional recommendation of the OT unless the solution is not technically feasible having regard to the layout of the dwelling.
- 5.12.13** Any decision to refuse the offer of a mandatory DFG should be made in consultation with the local Health & Social Care Trust to ensure that all reasonable efforts have been made to achieve a compromise solution.

5.13 Urgent Works Approval

- 5.13.1** The Grants Manager or Senior Technical Officer may at their discretion consent to the applicant carrying out urgent adaptation works prior to formal approval but only where the OT recommendation has been received. In such cases, the applicant should be made aware that they might have to make a contribution following a TOR assessment.

5.14 Grant Eligible Works

- 5.14.1** Any decision as to what works should be regarded as eligible for grant must be made in the light of the circumstances and specific OT recommendations of each individual case. In this context the works will attract either mandatory or discretionary grant aid and taking into consideration of the parameters of the OT recommendation.
- 5.14.2** There can be no allowance within disabled facilities grants for work of an improvement or repair nature outside the OT recommendation unless the works relate to items as defined under paragraph 5.11.8.

5.15 Parallel Grants

- 5.15.1** There will be instances where, because of the restrictions placed on the types of works considered eligible for disabled facilities grant, an additional grant type may require to be considered due to the works required being inextricably linked. This can occur at either, initial inspection stage or while a current grant application is being processed and requires that both grants be processed in parallel.
- 5.15.2** Where practicable and to satisfy customer service requirements both applications should be allocated to the same Case Officer and Technical Officer at the outset to ensure that all documentation received is cross referenced to both applications
- 5.15.3** Estimates submitted should detail separately the costs associated with the works relevant to each particular application.
- 5.15.4** In relation to professional fees, Paragraph 2.9 of this policy (General Principles) details the maximum amounts applicable. When apportioning professional fees within parallel grants account should be taken of whether the architectural plans provided relate primarily to the works contained within a specific grant type or whether they are appropriate to both grant types.
- 5.15.5** Where they are specific, or mainly specific, to a particular grant type then the appropriate fees together with any statutory approvals should be calculated and allocated to that particular grant type. Where the plans are specific to both applications the percentage fee applicable to each grant type should be based on the ratio of the cost of the works for each grant type to the combined cost of all of the works. The combined fees payable under both applications must not exceed the maximum allowable amount referred to within Paragraph 5.14.4 above. This must be calculated manually and input as required.
- 5.15.6** Where there are charges associated with, for example, fees for the provision of a certificate of title such charges should not be apportioned to each grant type but be included, based on the maximum allowable amount, within the primary application costs. It must be stressed however that care must be taken to ensure that such fees have not been duplicated within both applications.

5.15.7 The Economy of Scale (EOS) calculation should be based on each individual grant application. It is no longer necessary to apply an EOS to the combined cost of the linked applications.

5.16 Mandatory Works

5.16.1 The common theme to the mandatory works within disabled facilities grant is that of access, this includes access into and around the dwelling and to essential amenities and facilities. They may also extend to the provision of certain facilities where this is more appropriate or the only available option.

5.16.2 The term facilitating "access" is intended to carry the principle that the adaptation work should remove or help to overcome whatever obstacles are preventing the disabled person from enjoying the use of the accommodation or facilities in its present state. The following details provide aspects of adaptation works which can be grant aided under the 'access' policy remit.

5.16.3 Living Rooms, Bedrooms, Bathrooms – facilitating access

- (a) to and from the dwelling or the building in which the dwelling or as the case may be flat situated;
- (b) to make the dwelling or building safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with him.
- (c) to a room used or usable as the principal family room; (living room)
- (d) to a room used or usable for sleeping or alternatively for provision of such a room (bedroom) for the disabled occupant. Such a bedroom can be at either ground floor or first floor level etc.

Where the OT recommends a bedroom as a Mandatory item the Housing Executive must look carefully at the recommendation and ascertain if this is the best course of action e.g. a stair lift may suffice for mandatory access purposes. (Paragraph 5.24 refers).

- (e) to a room in which there is a lavatory, bath, shower or wash hand basin or alternatively the provision of such a room (bathroom/shower room) for the disabled occupant or facilitating their use of such amenities;

5.16.4 Kitchen - facilitating access for the preparation and cooking of food by the disabled occupant

This provision covers a wide range of works to enable a disabled person to cater for him or herself:

- (a) Re arrangement or enlargement of the kitchen for use and ease of manoeuvre by a wheelchair user.

- (b) other works such as specially modified or designed storage units (cupboards), gas, electrical and plumbing fixtures.

Grants Offices should sympathetically consider adapting the kitchen even where the responsibility for the disabled occupant is not normally preparation and cooking of food but would be required to make drinks or light meals.

Examples

Cupboards low level or knee hole cupboards.

Gas/Electrical – re-fixing of socket outlets at a convenient level, additional socket outlets, relocation of main switches for gas or electricity.

Plumbing Substitution of lever for screw down taps, re-fixing of taps at convenient level, relocation of central valves for mains water supply.

5.16.5 **Heating, Light and Power**

- (a) Heating

People with limited mobility who remain in one room for long periods of time usually need more warmth than mobile people. In some cases the particular condition from which the disabled person suffers may mean that certain types of heating are unsuitable e.g. where solid fuel has to be carried into the dwelling by the disabled person, who is physically incapable of doing so, from outside.

Change/upgrading heating should not be considered unless the person is permanently and severely disabled and has severely limited functional ability. However, the O.T. will assess the situation and make any appropriate recommendation.

In this context therefore in relation to a room or rooms (living room, bedroom, bathroom) principally used by the disabled person and the heating facilities in the room(s) is inappropriate for the disabled person then a suitable heating system may be provided upon a recommendation from the OT.

The installation of central heating or replacement of one type of heating by another should only be considered when the health of the disabled person would otherwise be affected.

Note however, that in the absence of an OT recommendation for Central Heating the Housing Executive on strategic grounds can award a renovation grant for properties that are at least 10 years old for provision of central heating for the first time, or repair of an existing system. See technical policy for further details. Please further note that if the dwelling is unfit for human habitation and a renovation grant is in the 'frame' the dwelling must be made fit.

(b) Light and Power

This relates to the provision of additional light sockets/plugs or relocation of existing light switches/plugs to accessible positions.

Permission of the landlord of the building will be required for such adaptation works to the Common Parts of the building.

5.16.6 Dependent Residents

This caters for the situation where there may be no specific works required in the dwelling for the disabled person(s) but there is an adaptation requirement for the disabled person to care for a more severely disabled occupant or perhaps a young child. Such works will usually be in the form of access from one part of the dwelling to another.

5.16.7 Common Parts (Mandatory Works)

Where the dwelling is a flat within a building, recommended mandatory works for access purposes may be required to the Common Parts of the building outside the flat(s).

Mandatory works may be as follows:

- (a) Relocation of heating, lighting and power controls to accessible positions, or providing means of control.
- (b) Relocation of pre-payment meters if they are situated in inaccessible positions.
- (c) Provision of ramps and handrails.

5.16.8 General Alterations

Extensions or alterations to provide bathroom, WC or bedroom etc. with level or suitably ramped access.

5.16.9 Garaging and External Facilities

Widening of garden paths

Carport and/or undercover access to dwelling if practical

Remote control garage door opener to existing garage used by disabled driver

5.16.10 Approaches to Entrance Doors

Fixed ramp in place of steps

Modification of steps, for example to widen treads or incorporate half steps

Handrails or balustrades to ramps or steps (also in other parts of dwelling, where necessary)

Door call and entry phone system

Automatic door opening systems.

5.16.11 Doors and Windows

Widening or re-hanging of doors to permit wheelchair manoeuvre
Substitution of sliding or bi fold doors for side hung doors
Suitable ironmongery, for example lever in place of knob handles, pull handles and rails to doors, kicking plates
Protective edging to door frames
Remote control window openers
Conversion of window to French window where no other wheelchair access to garden is available
Alterations to windows to give satisfactory sight lines for people in wheelchairs

5.16.12 Staircases and Vertical Circulation

Additional handrails to staircases
Gate at head and foot of stairs

5.16.13 Water Services

Substitution of lever for screw down taps
Re-fixing of taps at convenient level
Remote control valves for taps
Thermostatic control for shower
Relocation of control valve for mains water supply

5.16.14 Electrical and Heating Services

Re-fixing of socket outlets at convenient level
Additional socket outlets
Rocker light switches
Alarm call
Loud bell for hard of hearing people
Relocation of pre-payment meters
Relocation of thermostat, or heating controls
Relocation of main switches for gas or electricity
Central heating or supplementary radiators to existing installation
Fixed heating appliance (gas or electric) in place of open fire or other solid fuel appliances
Fluorescent lights in kitchen, bathroom and working areas for visually impaired people
Warning systems for people who are hard of hearing, e.g. flashing lights

5.16.15 Entrance Halls

Letter cages
Delivery shelf
Relocation of clothes hanging rails (also in bedrooms)

5.16.16 Kitchens

Alterations to provide fixed storage units, worktops and sink units at convenient levels
Waste disposal unit to sink

5.16.17 Bathrooms and WC's

Shower unit in place of/or to supplement bath
Shower cubicle
Suitable bath
Suitable WC fixture
Suitable washbasin
Bidet
Raising of WC fixture
Sluice sink
Support rails to walls by bath or WC, or other fixed supports
Platform at head of bath

5.16.18. Storage

Storage provision for wheelchair

5.17 Mandatory + Discretionary Works

5.17.1 Where a mandatory disabled facilities grant is required for access purposes there may also be instances where works to facilitate the welfare, accommodation, or employment of the disabled person are required. In these circumstances, the works are discretionary.

5.18 Discretionary Works

5.18.1 The Housing Executive has wide discretion to approve disabled facilities grant in respect of works to make a dwelling or building suitable for the accommodation, welfare or employment of the disabled occupant. In this context, the Housing Executive should ensure that the relevant works are necessary, reasonable and practicable. The discretionary grant is designed to cater for a wide range of circumstances concerning the welfare, accommodation and employment needs of the disabled person.

5.18.2 Examples of "welfare" needs might include a safe play area for a disabled child or sterile facilities where procedures such as peritoneal dialysis can be performed.

5.18.3 The most obvious example of "employment" is adapting or providing a room which might be used as an office for someone who is housebound but able to perform work from home.

5.19 Unsuitable Dwellings

5.19.1 Disabled Facilities Grants whether mandatory or discretionary will not be available for caravans. In the case of non-traditional structures, adaptations should be limited to in-shell solutions. Technical Policy Section 8 refers.

5.20 Ineligibility for Grant

5.20.1 Article 55(3) of the Housing (NI) Order 2003 specifies circumstances where the Housing Executive shall not approve an application for a disabled facilities grant unless it is satisfied:

- that the relevant works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant, and
- that it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age and condition of the dwelling or building

5.20.2 There may therefore be exceptional circumstances where the Housing Executive is unable to accept an OT recommendation for either Mandatory or Discretionary grant e.g.

- Where a dwelling cannot be technically adapted because of its size (narrow terraced houses), listed by the Council's Planning Service negating major adaptations etc.
- Applicant may not be able to demonstrate the required legal interest in the dwelling.
- Lack of landlords consent.

5.20.3 In all cases, the responsibility to provide assistance for the disabled person rests with the Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) (The Authority), where grant aid is either inappropriate or not pursued.

5.21 Diminution of Property Value

5.21.1 In cases where the proposed adaptations would significantly diminish the value of the dwelling, the Grants Manager may wish to bring this to the attention of the applicant and discuss possible alternative solutions with them, subject to OT consent.

5.22 Unfit Dwellings

5.22.1 Grants Managers should, where possible and subject to appropriate funding being available, encourage occupiers to make the dwelling fit for human habitation either:

- (a) Via the disabled facilities grant e.g. provision of specialist bathroom with level deck shower etc. may achieve this aim.
- (b) Through making the dwelling or building safe for the disabled occupant and other persons residing with them, or,

- (c) With a parallel (or separate) discretionary renovation grant to address the items of unfitness. See paragraph 2.15 relating to exceptional circumstances

5.22.2 The DFG List of Grant Aided Works should only contain those works required to satisfy the recommendation of the OT while ensuring the safety of the disabled occupant within the property.

5.22.3 In the situation where the dwelling is grossly unfit, and the grant applicant does not wish to address the unfitness aspect, Grants Managers must then give consideration whether it is reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant DFG works.

5.22.4 In cases of unfit properties, alternative forms of discretionary grant assistance may be available subject to the grant applicant satisfying the criteria for exceptional circumstances. See paragraph 2.15. These include:

A. Discretionary Renovation Grant

1. Where the dwelling is unfit, a Renovation Grant and a Disabled Facilities Grant can be processed in parallel if appropriate to make the property fit upon completion of all relevant works. See paragraph 5.14 for details.

Where the Renovation Grant is to be processed in parallel with the Disabled Facilities Grant approval for the processing of the discretionary the Renovation Grant must be sought through the ECC (see para. 2.15). Care must be taken to ensure that the works required are consistent e.g., works are tailored to optimise the use of both grants.

In cases where the disabled occupant is not, a joint title holder/tenant a further Test of Resources assessment will be required in respect of the Renovation Grant.

Managers may proceed with the Renovation Grant separately from the DFG application. It is essential however that those works contained within the Renovation Grant which may impinge on the adaptation should not be undertaken until the recommendation has been received and proposed adaptations agreed.

Managers in processing parallel applications should seek to minimise the volume of documentation required. The following is a guide to relevant requirements regarding the two applications.

- Separate List of Grant Aided Works of Works
- Combined Estimate detailing works relating to each grant type separately.
- Separate Formal Application
- Separate TOR Form(s) – where title variations occur
- Separate Formal Approvals

- Separate Future Occupation Certificates

Documents such as Plans, Planning Approval, Building Control Consent, Landlord Consent etc. should cover both Grants.

As a general rule the same contractor should be used for all the works.

2. Renovation grant aid is not available for dwellings less than ten years old. If the dwelling therefore is less than ten years old (and unfit) it may have to be made fit without grant aid (either before or concurrently with the Disabled Facilities Grant). If the dwelling is covered by the NHBC/FMB 10 year guarantee, the applicant should be advised to contact the NHBC/FMB direct.

With regard to TOR in the case of the parallel processing of a Renovation Grant and Disabled Facilities Grant, the following procedure should be followed:

- a) the DFG contribution should be determined in the first instance prior to that in respect of the renovation grant.
- b) the principle of taking into account previous contributions within the specified period, e.g. ten years in the case of owner occupier, should be followed.
- c) Where the disabled applicant and the owner of the property are the same person, Grants Offices should apply the date at which the final TOR contribution regarding the DFG grant is "locked".

Where the renovation grant application is completed within 12 months of the DFG the contribution assessed for the DFG should be used. If this period exceeds 12 months, a new TOR should be undertaken for the renovation grant.

Where the disabled person has a joint owner's interest in the property, the contribution at DFG stage will also be used for the purposes of the Renovation Grant calculation.

When the relevant person for the DFG differs from the relevant person for the Renovation, each TOR will be calculated independently.

If clarification is required for any other permutations, the Grants office should contact the TOR Officer for discussion.

B. Discretionary Replacement Grant

1. Where the dwelling is unfit a discretionary replacement grant (where appropriate as an alternative to a renovation grant) and disabled facilities grant (DFG) can be processed concurrently.
2. The procedure should broadly reflect that of the renovation grant outlined at A.

C. Discretionary Home Repairs Assistance Grant

Exceptionally, if the dwelling is unfit by virtue of an aspect of minor repairs work then a Home Repairs assistance grant may make the dwelling fit. However approval for the processing of any discretionary Home Repairs Assistance grant must be sought through the ECC (Paragraph 2.15 refers).

Reference should also be made to relevant parts of the Home Repairs Assistance Grant section of this policy (Section 7 refers).

- 5.22.5** The applicant should be advised of the Housing Executive's decision and the Occupational Therapist informed accordingly.

5.23 Fit Dwelling (Renovation Grant in Conjunction with a Disabled Facilities Grant)

- 5.23.1** Whether a discretionary renovation grant in conjunction with disabled facilities grant should be considered to a dwelling, which is fit, will be dependent upon the particular circumstances surrounding the case and the budgetary constraints, which are in place. Any such requests must be referred by the Grants Manager to the Exceptional Circumstances Committee (ECC) for consideration. Paragraph 2.15 refers.
- 5.23.2** Examples of such referrals may include situations where a dwelling is fit but in disrepair and the items of disrepair may need to be addressed in order that the adaptation works can be carried out successfully. Grants Managers should give careful consideration to such requests especially where the required adaptations are mandatory items and forward their recommendations to the ECC for consideration.
- 5.23.3** These two grants can proceed in parallel or separately as appropriate. For procedural guidance, see previous advice given within the unfit dwelling remit.
- 5.23.4** Note that the ten-year rule for Renovation grant eligibility still applies.

5.24 Lift Provision

- 5.24.1** Grant aid towards the installation of through floor lifts (Vertical lifts) and stair lifts should be limited to the cost of structural alterations i.e. floor/ceiling openings, staircase adaptations, strengthening joints and joists, modifying lintels etc. Other works within the remit of "structural alterations" can be included at the discretion of the Grants Manager.
- 5.24.2** The cost of providing the lift and any incurring insurance, servicing, maintenance costs etc. must be borne by the Health and Social Care Trust (HSCT) or the applicant whichever is applicable. In the circumstances where a lift provision is being considered it is essential that the Grants Office receive a firm commitment from the Trust that a vertical or stair lift will be installed before becoming involved with grant aiding the structural aspects.

5.25 Disruption of Existing Accommodation

- 5.25.1** Where the provision of adaptation results in the persons loss of facilities or amenities such as in kitchen or bedroom accommodation to make way for vertical lifts or bathroom facilities then the replacement of the lost facility or bedroom accommodation may be grant aided. Relocation of the lost facility or bedroom can be Grant aided within the mandatory work remit as they are deemed "access" works for policy purposes.
- 5.25.2** Where the loss of space such as a bedroom materially affects someone, other than the disabled person, who is ordinarily resident in the dwelling, grant aid can be considered towards works required to provide a satisfactory internal arrangement. Such works might include for the extension of a dwelling to provide the necessary additional accommodation. Such alterations/extensions are deemed discretionary works for policy purposes.
- 5.25.3** Integral garages should be considered as part of any internal solution unless the applicant provides a satisfactory reason why it is still required.

5.26 Sketch Plans

- 5.26.1** Proposals based on OT recommendations which do not involve extensions, major layout changes or structural alterations, should, where appropriate and with the approval of the grant applicant, be prepared by the inspecting Technical Officer to limit unnecessary expense to the applicant. These can then be issued to the OT for comment or approval prior to the preparation and issue of any List of Grant Aided Works including copies of approved sketch plans.

In such instances, the applicant should be advised that the plans are prepared without prejudice to the NIHE, and, should they wish, the applicant can have plans prepared by an architect of their choice, for which reasonable professional fees may be recoverable subject to the receipt of appropriate invoices.

- 5.26.2** Where the OT recommendations are of a more complex nature, i.e. extensions, major layout changes or structural alterations, are required the Grants Office should not unduly delay the issue of the List of Grant Aided Works by seeking OT approval of a basic scheme in advance. The List of Grant Aided Works should, in such cases, be issued with a request that the grant applicant, through their appointed architect, submit sketch plans of their proposals to the Grants Office for approval.
- 5.26.3** On receiving the proposed sketch plans the Grants Office should assess the proposals to determine whether they are considered to be enhancement or not. In assessing the proposals the TO must be satisfied that they are acceptable from a grants perspective and do not contravene any Grants Policy. Where there is a clear contravention of policy guidelines then the proposals should be rejected prior to making any referral to the OT.
- 5.26.4** Where the proposals are considered to be enhancement or an alternative less expensive solution is feasible the TO should prepare alternative sketch proposals detailing the basic grant aided solution. This solution together with the enhanced solution should be clearly

identified and both proposals forwarded to the OT for assessment ensuring that appropriate comments are obtained on the suitability or otherwise of both proposals

5.26.5 On receiving the OT response to the proposals, the Grants Office must advise the grant applicant, using the appropriate sketch plan letter of the acceptability or otherwise of the proposals ensuring that any detail provided by the OT is included within the response.

5.26.6 Where the proposals are considered enhancement this must be clearly identified to the grant applicant using the appropriate letter advising of our guidelines for non-grant aiding enhanced works. The Grants office should also forward to the grant applicant a copy of any agreed grant aidable solution for their information and discussion with their nominated architect.

5.26.7 Where full detailed plans (when completed) differ from the agreed sketch plans, these should be referred back to the O.T. for further scrutiny and comments (if applicable).

5.27 Warranted Builders Scheme

5.27.1 Disabled Facilities grants, must be carried out by a Warranted Builder where the approved cost of the works exceeds £5,000 (excluding VAT). The Warranted Builder must be a member of a recognised Insurance Warranty scheme. Paragraph 2.11 refers.

5.27.2 When works are being carried out in respect of specialist recommendations for a disabled person a Warranted Builder is only required when the actual building works exceed £5,000. In this context, therefore the works relevant to the specialist installer/specific disabled adaptations should be excluded from the costing assessment used to identify the use or non-use of a Warranted Builder.

5.28 Issue of Grant Aided Works Package

5.28.1 The DFG List of Grant Aided Works package should be issued, together with the HIA flyer using the appropriate letter requesting relevant documentation. This documentation should generally be returned within six months of issue. Reminder letters should however be issued as the required documents are submitted or, where no documents have been submitted, after 4 months. Where after six months a reply has still not been received, a further reminder letter should be issued. In instances where after twelve months the application is still not completed the file may be closed and the applicant and OT advised accordingly.

5.29 Receipt of Formal Application

5.29.1 The relevant DFG formal application should only be considered as being completed upon receipt of all of the following documents:

1. Completed and signed appropriate formal application form containing the Proof of Ownership or tenants certificate or owners certificate of intended letting (as appropriate)

2. Estimate from a warranted builder where appropriate
3. Relevant drawings and statutory approvals (where necessary)
4. Landlords consent (where appropriate)
5. Completed TOR

5.29.2 The date of the formal application being complete is the date from which the 6 month legislative requirement for issuing the DFG formal approval commences. To establish this date the Grants Office must establish the following:

- The date that the last document required to complete the DFG application was submitted – **docs' complete date**.
- The date on which all of the necessary documentation required to validate and assess the applicant's contribution was submitted - **the critical date**.

The formal application complete date should be recorded within GRS as the latest of the above two dates on the basis that the Grants Office has all of the necessary documentation required to have the Statutory Application complete and to validate the TOR.

5.29.3 Where the doc's complete date is in excess of 18 months after the critical date the grant applicant will be required to undertake a new test of resources to enable an up to date and accurate assessment of their financial means to be undertaken. Where a further assessment is required the formal application complete date for such an application is recorded as the date on which all of the necessary documentation required to validate and assess the applicant's contribution has been submitted - **the critical date**.

5.30 Future Occupation Certificates Articles 52 and 53

5.30.1 Future Occupation Certificates are applicable i.e.

(a) Owners Certificate

An application from an owner-occupier must be accompanied by an Owner's Certificate. This is contained in the Owner Occupier Formal Application Form (DFG OWN).

(b) Tenant

A Tenants Certificate must accompany an application from a tenant. This is contained within the Tenants Formal Application Form (DFG TEN). In addition, the landlords consent will be required for the execution of the adaptation works with an Owners Certificate (Intended Letting DFG5) completed by the Landlord. However, the landlords, Owners Certificate can be dispensed with (Paragraph 5.7.4 refers).

(c) Owners Certificate (Landlord version)

An application from a landlord must be accompanied by an appropriate Owner's Certificate. This is contained within the Landlord's Formal Application Form (DFG LAN).

5.30.2 There may be circumstances where a particular application does not fit into one of the above. In such circumstances, the Manager should refer details to the Senior Principal Officer, Private Sector Improvement Services for adjudication on an individual basis.

5.31 Costing

5.31.1 Where all of the technical documents have been received and validated, the costing process can be undertaken independently of and in advance of the application reaching formal application complete stage.

5.31.2 The cost of adaptation works must be assessed using the standard Schedule of Rates ensuring that the technical officer records any appropriate provisions within the costing are made for the following important elements.

5.31.3 GRS will apply a system generated adjustment factor as part of the determination of the cost of the adaptations to which appropriate fees will be added to determine the overall Approved Cost of the proposals.

5.31.4 Any subsequent amendments to the grant due to additions, deletions or modifications to the List of Grant Aided Works will be recalculated within GRS using an adjustment factor reflecting the value of the List of Grant Aided Works at that point in time to adjust the value of the new items. The existing items will retain their original adjustment factor.

5.31.5 In relation to any potential variation in professional fees such as architect, warranty bond, etc. that have been brought about because of the above amendments such adjustments can be reflected as part of the amended approval process.

5.32 Professional Fees

5.32.1 See Policy outlined in paragraph 2.9 of the this manual

5.33 Works Zero Rated For VAT Purposes

5.33.1 The following works will be zero rated for VAT purposes where carried out to a person's private residence.

- (a) the construction of ramps or widening of doorways or passages for the purpose of facilitating the disabled person's access to or movement within the building, including any preparatory work or finishing.

- (b) the providing, extending or adapting of a bathroom, washroom or lavatory where such provision, extension or adaptation is necessary by reason of the disabled person's condition. In addition, other work essential to the provision of these facilities can be zero rated.

5.33.2 For further details on VAT, see the costing policy.

5.34 Enhancement Works

5.34.1 While enhancement works can be undertaken under the Disabled Facilities Grant. It is essential that, when determining the level of grant payable, the costs associated with such enhancements are recorded separately as “Enhancement” and the DFG costing is based on the most practical grant aided solution which has been agreed in consultation with the grants office, the grant applicant and the occupational therapy service.

5.35 Authorisation by Senior Technical Officer

5.35.1 The Senior Technical Officer must check and authorise 10% of all technical costings prior to being referred for approval. They must also check and authorise 100% of amended costings, and authorise the amended approvals except for that following the Final Recost

5.36 Maximum Grant Limit / Top Up

5.36.1 Whilst the maximum grant limit for Disabled Facilities Grant's is £25,000 there is provision under Article 64(3) (b) of the Housing (NI) Order 2003 for the Housing Executive, if it thinks fit, to provide additional grant aid for mandatory adaptation works in excess of £25,000 through a "top up" facility.

5.36.2 Where the cost of the mandatory DFG works exceeds the grant limit of £25,000 the use of the “top up” facility can be initiated in the following circumstances:

- (a) Where the mandatory works are determined, at initial approval stage to be in excess of £25,000, these excess works can be considered for grant aid, and included within the approved costs when issuing the formal grant approval.
- (b) Where a formal approval has already been issued the top up policy initiative can also be invoked irrespective of whether the grant aided works have commenced. It should not however be applied retrospectively in instances where the grant aided works have been completed and paid out.

As the implementation of this policy will require an amended approval to be issued to the grant applicant, a standard explanatory covering letter should accompany the latter document.

5.36.3 Where the grant aided scheme consist of mandatory and discretionary works, which are jointly in excess of £25,000, those excess works can be considered for grant aid and included within the approved costs provided:

- The costs associated with the discretionary works does not exceed £25,000, and
- A summary of the works and associated costs relating to the mandatory and discretionary works is provided.

5.36.4 In all cases when exercising this exceptions policy the Senior Principal Officer Private Sector Improvement Services or Grants Manager must authorise the issue of the formal approval document within GRS where the combined level of grant exceeds £25,000 and is below £50,000. The Senior Officer will then authorise the formal approval document for issue as part of the formal approval process.

5.36.5 A report will be run by the Grants Central Unit, on a quarterly basis, to identify the number of Top Ups applied.

5.37 Parameters of "Topping Up"

5.37.1 Only works of a mandatory nature as set out in Article 54 of 2003 Housing Order can be considered for appropriate additional monies.

5.37.2 Discretion is limited to situations where the grant has been assessed, but the imposition of the current capping limit (£25,000) makes the grant insufficient to meet the relevant approved cost. In these circumstances, the Executive can now augment the maximum grant figure of £25,000 with additional monies to meet the cost of the total mandatory works.

5.37.3 The top up maximum limit is £25,000, therefore the maximum DFG is £50,000 (£25,000 plus £25,000 top up).

5.37.4 There is no statutory authority to "go outside" the above stated remit. In the latter context:

- Additional monies are not to be substituted for the assessed applicants contribution in order to meet the Housing Executive's approved cost, or
- To cover any monetary gap between the approved cost and the builders estimate.

5.37.5 In exceptional instances, grant aid beyond the statutory limit can be considered on an extra statutory basis. This will however require Board approval in advance

Where such approvals are granted by the Board any subsequent increase within the approved extra statutory amount due, for example, to additional unforeseen works, can only be considered where the Grants Manager has obtained CXBC Approval for the additional expenditure. Refer to Financial Control Procedures for further details.

5.38 Commencement of Work Prior to Approval

5.38.1 The Housing Order (NI) 2003, Article 60 (1) states that the Housing Executive shall not approve an application for a grant if the relevant works have begun before the application was approved.

However, there are exceptions to the above, where the Grants Manager may, for good reason, exercise his/her discretion on whether to allow works which have commenced to be considered for grant aid as follows:

1. Where the relevant works, which have commenced, are readily identifiable to the Executive by an appropriate Occupational Therapist (OT) recommendation.
2. Where the DFG List of Grant Aided Works has been issued reflecting the OT recommendations.
3. Where the Grants Manager feels that there were reasonable grounds for the adaptation works to continue to provide continuity and efficiency savings where other non-adaptation works are in progress.

5.38.3 In all cases, the Grants Manager should ensure that the issue of the appropriate urgent works approval letter reflecting the retrospective works, which have been agreed, reflects any decision made. Furthermore, in all cases the OT must 'sign off' the relevant works as having been completed to their satisfaction in the normal way.

5.39 Completion of Works Prior to Approval

5.39.1 Where the adaptation works have been completed prior to approval the disabled facilities grant application should not be approved.

5.40 Formal Approval

5.40.1 Approval should be issued using the appropriate form with a copy forwarded to the OT. The formal approval should be issued within the required service standard. Paragraph 2.13 refers.

5.41 Commencement of Works

5.41.1 The applicant should be requested to advise the Housing Executive of the commencement of work (where possible twenty-four hours prior to its commencement) using the appropriate letter. Where the Housing Executive has not received notification of commencement within six months a reminder should be issued and a copy provided to the OT. Where work does not commence within twelve months the file may be closed and both applicant and the OT notified.

5.41.2 Where the Grants Office has been informed that works have commenced, or are about to commence, the grant applicant should be asked to confirm commencement and provide details of the contractor who they have appointed to undertake the works using the appropriate form.

5.41.3 Where the contractor identified differs from that who submitted the original estimate the Case Officer should refer the case to the Technical Officer appointed to oversee the completion of the works to determine whether the Grants Office require an estimate from the new contractor to determine whether a revision to the approved cost of the works is necessary. See paragraph 5.41 below for details.

5.41.4 Where work does commence the OT should be advised using the appropriate letter.

5.42 Change of Contractor – Impact on Formal Approval

5.42.1 Where the grant applicant indicates that an alternative contractor to that who originally estimated the works is being used to carry out the adaptation works there may be a need for an amendment to the level of grant approved.

5.42.2 On the case being referred to the Technical Officer nominated to oversee the completion of the works, he/she must review the original costing to determine:

- If the level of grant aid originally approved was based on accepting the original contractor's estimate or the Standard Schedule of Rates
- If there is any VAT, issues that may require an adjustment to the level of grant approved.
- If the new appointed contractor is, where appropriate, a registered warranted builder.

Where appropriate the Technical Officer should advise the Case Officer to request from the applicant a copy of their new contractor's estimate.

5.42.3 Where the new contractor's price is more than the agreed approved cost exclusive of fees and there are no VAT issues no action is required to be taken.

5.42.4 Where the original contractor's estimate is higher than the approved cost exclusive of fees and the new contractor's estimate is lower than the approved cost exclusive of fees the Technical Officer must review the estimate content for accuracy and establish the percentage variation between the new estimate and the original approved cost.

Where the variation is in excess of 10% lower the grant applicant should be asked to have their nominated contractor confirm that they are prepared to carry out the approved works in accordance with the approved plans and specifications for their estimated cost. Where the contractor indicates further amendments are required, a copy of his revised estimate should be obtained.

Where the variation is not in excess of 10% lower the Case Officer should advise the grant applicant that their new contractor's estimate has been accepted and that the level of grant approved will be amended as soon as possible to reflect the reduced contractor's estimate and any subsequent revisions to the works.

- 5.42.5** Where the original contractor's estimate has been accepted for the purposes of determining the approved cost exclusive of fees and a new contractor's estimate is received which, while higher than the original contractor's estimate, is lower than the Grants Office Standard Schedule of Rates then the new contractors estimate should be accepted.

The grant applicant should be advised that their grant approval will be amended at final payment stage to reflect the new contractor's estimate and any subsequent revisions to the works.

- 5.42.6** In the circumstances outlined at 5.41.5 above. No amended approval should be issued before final payment stage as the adjustment factor for such amended approvals will be based on the relationship between the original contractor's estimate and the Standard Schedule of Rates costs and not on the relationship between the new contractor's estimate and the Standard Schedule of Rates costs which can only be determined at final payment stage when the final invoice has been obtained. There may therefore be substantial differences between the values reflected within interim amended approval documents and that produced at final payment stage.

5.43 Assignment of Grant to Third Parties

- 5.43.1** The grant applicant may require that the Housing Executive make payment of their grant directly to their bank/building society account or assign the grant to their builder or architect.
- 5.43.2** For more detailed information on the grant payment options available and as to what constitutes a valid assignment refer to paragraph 2.8 of the General Principles section of the policy.

5.44 Interim Payments

- 5.44.1** The Housing Executive has discretion to make interim payments of grant upon satisfactory partial completion of the relevant approved works
- 5.44.2** Interim payments can be requested by the grant applicant through completing and returning the appropriate claim form, which is contained within the formal approval package confirming that they wish to make a claim for an interim payment under Article 66 of the Housing (NI) Order 2003.
- 5.44.3** Interim payments can be processed for both the basic grant aided scheme and enhanced schemes. With regards to the large enhanced schemes involving non-grant aided extensions in excess of £6,000 care should be taken to ensure that any interim payments reflect an adequate proportion of the grant aided works, on a pro rata basis in relation to the degree of completion of the total scheme. For example, the approved grant for an enhanced scheme is £8,000 while the total cost of the enhanced works is £20,000. It is established that the total works are 25% complete. The interim payment payable should therefore be £2,000 based on 25% of the £8,000 grant aided scheme.

5.44.4 In regard to parallel renovation/DFG applications, interim payments can be made for both sets of works.

5.44.5 As within GRS, the system automatically calculates the level of grant payable based on the details provided by the technical officer interim payments can be processed without a contractor's invoice etc.

5.44.6 The total of the aggregate interim payments should not normally exceed 75% of the Disabled Facilities Grant. While Grants Managers have, authority under Article 66(3) of the Housing (NI) Order 2003 to exceed this limit up to a maximum of 90% care should be taken when exercising this discretion to ensure that all of the relevant works are satisfactory completed.

5.45 Completion of Works

5.45.1 It is a condition of the grant that the eligible works are carried out within twelve months from the date of approval.

5.45.2 Under Article 68(4) of the Housing (NI) Order 2003. Final payment of grant is conditional upon the eligible works being executed to the satisfaction of the Housing Executive and them being provided with an acceptable invoice, demand or receipt for the works and any preliminary or ancillary services or charges in respect of which the grant is to be paid

5.45.3 Where an applicant fails to complete the scheme within the specified period and interim payments made then it may be appropriate to recoup any monies paid (NB. See recoupment procedure within the Section 3 of this policy - Renovation Grants).

5.45.4 On completion of the DFG works, grants office staff will advise the applicant that they may be entitled a Disabled Person's Allowance, which is a reduction in rates from the local Council for domestic properties that have been adapted to facilitate the needs of a person (including child) with a disability.

5.46 Changes of Circumstances affecting Disabled Occupant(s)

5.46.1 Article 72 of the Housing (NI) Order 2003 details provisions within an approved disabled facilities grant where before the certified date:

- The works cease to be necessary or appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant(s), or
- The disabled occupant(s) ceases to occupy the dwelling or flat concerned or it ceases to be the intention that he should occupy it, or
- The disabled person dies

5.46.2 Under these provisions the Housing Executive may take such action as appears to it to be appropriate having regard to all of the circumstances of the case and may decide:

- That no grant shall be paid or, as the case may be, no further instalments shall be paid, or
- That the relevant works or some of them should be completed and the grant or an appropriate proportion of it paid, or
- That the application should be re-determined in light of the new circumstances.

5.46.3 Where it is decided that no grant shall be paid or that no further instalments shall be paid the Housing Executive may demand that any instalment of grant paid be repaid together with interest from the date on which it was paid.

5.47 Extensions of Time

5.47.1 Grants Managers may grant an extension of time to the period allowed using appropriate letter. The Grants Manager should satisfy himself that the reasons for granting such an extension are valid e.g. where there is unforeseen works that could not have been identified at the original survey, illness of applicant etc.

5.48 Final Inspections

5.48.1 The applicant should notify the Grants Office that the works have been completed to their satisfaction. The Grants Office should arrange a final inspection as soon as possible. The O.T. should be advised that the work have been completed to the Housing Executive's satisfaction, and requested to forward confirmation that the completed works satisfy the relevant recommendation.

5.49 Final Payment

5.49.1 Where the original invoice for professional fees was not a complete account the Grants Manager should request final accounts for architectural and Building Control fees and make appropriate adjustments to the formal approval as required while ensuring that professional fee ceilings are not exceeded

5.49.2 Where it is apparent from the invoice or receipt submitted that the eligible works have been carried out for less than the approved cost, the Housing Executive's contribution should be reduced by the relevant amount. See Article 73 of Housing (NI) Order 2003 for details.

5.49.3 During the processing of any grant payment cognisance must be taken of any request by the grant applicant to pay the grant monies to a third party by way of an assignment. See paragraph 2.8 for details

5.49.4 No disabled facilities grant final payment should be made until the OT has confirmed in writing their satisfaction with the adaptation works undertaken.

5.49.5 In relation to parallel renovation/DFG applications for an unfit dwelling a final DFG payment can be made at the discretion of the Grants Manager before the renovation works are completed, and the dwelling made fit for human habitation.

5.50 Disposal of Property (Relevant Disposal)

5.50.1 There is no provision in the Order to recoup grant in the event of a relevant disposal regarding an application for a Disabled Facilities Grant. Note however that the Future Occupation Certificate must still be obtained.

5.51 Statutory Charge

5.51.1 There will be no necessity to register a legislative charge for Disabled Facilities Grants.

5.52 Procedural Flow

5.52.1 This manual sets out the formal procedure, which should be followed in all cases.

5.52.2 For each file, the Occupational Therapist should be forwarded the following documentation or information:-

- name of Case Officer and Technical Officer
- List of Grant Aided Works
- Notification of Approval (without personal financial details)
- Final Plan date stamped
- Notification at commencement of work
- Notification at completion of work