



15 April 2025

Our Ref: FOI 712

Request

We received your request on 18 March 2025 for the following information:

Q1. Does the Housing Executive offer Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) above the statutory maximum and, if yes, how is this delivered:

- *Top ups (paid for by the local authority)?*
- *Loans?*

Q2. What is the total number of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) applications A) received and B) accepted by the Housing Executive that have been above the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) statutory maximum amount over the following periods:

- *April 2021 to March 2022*
- *April 2022 to March 2023*
- *April 2023 to March 2024?*

Q3. Are there any other means in which adaptations are funded by the Housing Executive (if so please specify)?

Q4. What was the Housing Executive's Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) budget for the periods:

- *April 2021 to March 2022*
- *April 2022 to March 2023*
- *April 2023 to March 2024?*

Q5. What proportion of the Housing Executive's Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) budget was spent during the periods:

- *April 2021 to March 2022*
- *April 2022 to March 2023*
- *April 2023 to March 2024*

Q6. What is the process for means-testing applicants for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) in the Housing Executive?

Q7. Are there any exemptions to the DFG means test for people with rapidly progressive terminal conditions such as MND?

Q8. Are there any circumstances in which the DFG mandatory means test is waived and, if so, what are those circumstances? (e.g. for adaptations under a certain cost or of a certain type)

Q9. Has the Housing Executive conducted any assessments (including an Impact Equality Assessment) or reviews on the appropriateness of means testing for individuals with rapidly progressive terminal conditions, such as MND or disability more widely?

Q10. Do you currently have a fast-track application process in place to provide Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding more rapidly to applicants with urgent needs? If yes, what are the eligibility criteria to access this process?

Q11. How many DFG applications were A) received under the fast-track process (if applicable) and B) how many of these were approved under the fast-track process during the period:

- *April 2021 to March 2022*
- *April 2022 to March 2023*
- *April 2023 to March 2024*

Q12. Does the Housing Executive maintain a record or register of accessible homes available for individuals with disabilities, including those living with progressive terminal conditions, such as MND.

Your request has been handled under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 (FOIA).

Our response

Q1. Does the Housing Executive offer Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) above the statutory maximum and, if yes, how is this delivered:

- ***Top ups (paid for by the local authority)?***
- ***Loans?***
- ***Other (please specify)***

The Housing Renovation etc. Grants (Grant Limit) Order (Northern Ireland) 2003 in conjunction with The Housing Renovation etc. Grants (Grant Limit) (Amendment) Order (Northern Ireland) 2023 sets out the maximum grant limit for Disabled Facilities Grant – for privately owned properties.

The limit is £35,000, however, 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 more than £35,000 through a "top up" facility.

Where the cost of the mandatory DFG works exceeds the grant limit of £35,000 the use of the 'top up' facility can be initiated in the following circumstances:

- Where the mandatory works are determined, at initial approval stage to be more than £35,000, these excess works can be considered for grant aid and included within the approved costs when issuing the formal grant approval.
- 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 started. It is not applied retrospectively in instances where the grant aided works have been completed and paid out.

Q2. What is the total number of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) applications A) received and B) accepted by the Housing Executive that have been above the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) statutory maximum amount over the following periods:

- ***April 2021 to March 2022***
- ***April 2022 to March 2023***
- ***April 2023 to March 2024?***

It was subsequently clarified that figures should relate to those applications for grant-aid which have been approved and delivered. Delivered will be taken to mean completed.

The number of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) applications A) approved by the Housing Executive; and B) completed that have been above the statutory maximum i.e. £35,000 are:

Financial year	Approved	Completed
April 2021 to March 2022	157	79
April 2022 to March 2023	161	119
April 2023 to March 2024	196	129

Q3. Are there any other means in which adaptations are funded by the Housing Executive (if so please specify)?

No

Q4. What was the Housing Executive's Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) budget for the periods:

- ***April 2021 to March 2022***
- ***April 2022 to March 2023***
- ***April 2023 to March 2024?***

Financial year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
	£000's	£000's	£000's
Approved Budget	10,000	11,750	12,465

Q5. What proportion of the Housing Executive's Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) budget was spent during the periods:

- **April 2021 to March 2022**
- **April 2022 to March 2023**
- **April 2023 to March 2024**

Financial Year	2021-22	2022-23	2023-24
% of approved budget spent	87.3%	86.6%	97.2%

Please note, expenditure incurred on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) is wholly dependent on works completion progress of contractors independently appointed by grantees.

Q6. What is the process for means-testing applicants for the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) in the Housing Executive?

Means testing (Test of Resources) is a requirement of Article 61 of The Housing (NI) Order 2003. The regulations referred to in this Article are the Housing Renewal Grants (Reduction of Grant) Regulations 2004.

Following receipt of an Occupational Therapist's recommendation the Housing Executive contacts the applicant and sends a Test of Resources application form together with a request for the supporting documentation. It is expected this information is provided within four weeks.

Upon receipt of the completed form and supporting documentation the Housing Executive verifies the information and completes the means test as set out in the regulations.

Once the calculation is completed applicants are informed in writing of their contribution, if any, towards the cost of works eligible for grant-aid.

Q7. Are there any exemptions to the DFG means test for people with rapidly progressive terminal conditions such as MND?

No, there are no exemptions for people with rapidly progressive terminal conditions.

Q8. Are there any circumstances in which the DFG mandatory means test is waived and, if so, what are those circumstances? (e.g. for adaptations under a certain cost or of a certain type)

Yes, there are three instances:

- **Child case** – those children under the age of 16 and for Qualifying Young Persons under 20.
- **Passported benefit recipient** - those applicants in receipt of a 'passported' benefit are not subject to a full means-test
- **Landlord** - there is no means test when an application is made by a landlord

Q9. Has the Housing Executive conducted any assessments (including an Impact Equality Assessment) or reviews on the appropriateness of means testing for individuals with rapidly progressive terminal conditions, such as MND or disability more widely?

No, the Housing Executive administers grant-aid in line with current legislation.

Q10. Do you currently have a fast-track application process in place to provide Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding more rapidly to applicants with urgent needs? If yes, what are the eligibility criteria to access this process?

No, the Housing Executive does not have a fast-track application process in place.

The Housing Executive's policy allows for 'Urgent Works Approval' at the Head of Grant's discretion.

Urgent works are based on individual circumstances where there is a health and safety risk to the occupant. In these circumstances, if urgent works approval is granted the occupant can start work before formal approval is issued.

Urgent Works Approval does not guarantee grant aid will be approved, nor does it guarantee that the Housing Executive will cover all the costs placed on the applicant by the builder / contractor they employ to carrying out the works.

Q11. How many DFG applications were A) received under the fast-track process (if applicable) and B) how many of these were approved under the fast-track process during the period:

- **April 2021 to March 2022**
- **April 2022 to March 2023**
- **April 2023 to March 2024**

The Housing Executive does not have a fast-track policy or application process in place.

Q12. Does the Housing Executive maintain a record or register of accessible homes available for individuals with disabilities, including those living with progressive terminal conditions, such as MND.

It was subsequently clarified that the response should indicate if properties are privately or publicly owned.

The Housing Executive, in partnership with the Northern Ireland Federation of Housing Associations (NIFHA), developed an in-house Accessible Housing Register (AHR) solution.

This register is for social housing only and does not capture privately owned homes.

Q13. If such a register exists, how is it updated and made available to individuals and families in need of accessible housing?

Accessible Housing Register (AHR) data for Housing Executive homes is currently being collected via the Asset Management Stock Condition Survey (AMSCS). Housing associations are surveying their own stock, or design standards for new homes.

Once surveyed, data is entered into an electronic calculation engine which assigns the appropriate AHR classification based upon the property attributes being matched against the relevant design standards. This links in with National Register of Social Housing standards.

The AHR classification are detailed below:

- A Fully wheelchair accessible
- B Partially wheelchair accessible – accessible entrance and access to all essential rooms on the access level i.e. living room, kitchen, bedroom, bathroom & dining room (if available).
- C Lifetime Homes (this standard is exclusive to HA stock)
- D Mobility Standard
- E Step-free
- EE Minimal steps (0-3 steps)
- F General needs (+4 steps)

The classification per home is entered into the Housing Executive's Housing Management database directly by the housing provider.

Work is ongoing to build the pool of accessible stock data. When completed this will be accessible via the application process for a social home.

Q14. If no record is maintained, are there any plans to develop a database or register of accessible homes?

Please see response in question 13. Work is ongoing to develop a register of social homes.

The Housing Executive has no plans for developing a register of accessible homes in the private sector.

Q15. What was the average time taken (in days) complete the assessment of A) small, B) medium and C) large-sized adaptations under the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) during the period:

- **April 2021 to March 2022**
- **April 2022 to March 2023**
- **April 2023 to March 2024?**

It was confirmed that the Housing Executive will provide figures based on a categorisation of minor or major works.

It was subsequently clarified that it is the time taken to complete the technical assessment by an Occupational Therapist.

The Housing Executive does not hold this information. The [Health and Social Care Trusts](#) in Northern Ireland may be contacted for details.

Q16. What was the average time taken (in days) from the approval of A) small, B) medium and C) large-sized Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to the completion of the installation during the period:

- **April 2021 to March 2022**
- **April 2022 to March 2023**
- **April 2023 to March 2024**

It was confirmed that the Housing Executive will provide figures based on a categorisation of minor or major works.

The average time taken - in calendar days - from the approval of A) minor and B) major Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) to the completion of the installation:

Financial Year	Minor	Major
April 2021 to March 2022	376	614
April 2022 to March 2023	354	613
April 2023 to March 2024	320	567

Figures reflect the time taken from issue of Formal Approval to start work by the Housing Executive **to** receipt of Satisfactory Completion of Works notice and all Final Documents from the applicant.

It must be noted that this construction stage is outside of the Housing Executive's control. This stage relies on an applicant and / or their agent arranging for work to be completed and subsequently supplying the required documentary evidence.

This concludes our response.