



HILLINGDON
LONDON

LONDON BOROUGH OF HILLINGDON

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT AND HOUSING ASSISTANCE POLICY

DATE ISSUED	06 September 2021
VERSION	1
REVIEW DATE	06 September 2023
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

BCF	Better Care Fund
DFG	Disabled Facilities Grant
ERG	Essential Repairs Grant
HDG	Hospital Discharge Grant
HGCRA	Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
OT	Occupational Therapist
RRO	Regulatory Reform Order

1 INTRODUCTION

1. The London Borough of Hillingdon's (the Council) obligations, powers and duties in relation to the provision of financial assistance for adaptations and repair are contained within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (as amended) (HGCRA) and the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO). The Government extended the scope of the Order in 2008-2009 to include use of Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funds.
2. Since 2015/16, DFGs became part of the Department of Health's 'Better Care Fund (BCF), managed by the local authority. However legal responsibility for provision of DFG remains with the housing authorities to meet their statutory duty to provide adaptations to the homes of disabled people, including for people aged 17 and under. Access to the BCF is dependent upon local council and clinical commissioning groups having jointly agreed spending plans.
3. The primary aim of Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) is to provide aids and adaptations to enable people with disabilities to live independently and safely in their own homes. This policy sets out the mandatory legal framework for DFGs, and how the Council intends to use its powers under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 to provide discretionary interventions to promote independent living and well-being.
4. The responsibility for controlling DFGs lies with the local housing authority. There is a duty to consult with social services authorities on whether the proposed works are required and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled person who is seeking a DFG (under Part 1, Section 24(3) of the HGCRA 1996).
5. It is the local housing authority that must decide on the action that should be taken following receipt of that advice. In addition, the local housing authority must also decide whether the application is approved, having regard to whether the proposed works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled person and whether it is reasonable and practicable to carry them out. The local housing authority must have regard to whether the works would enable the disabled person to remain living in their existing home as independently as possible and whether the works would meet the assessed medical and physical needs of the person.

2 MANDATORY DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT

6. Applicants from both council owned and privately owned properties are considered and screened to assess whether they meet the criteria for the grant. Privately owned properties can include homeowner, housing associations and privately rented accommodation. A landlord may also

apply on behalf of the resident. The maximum mandatory grant award is £30,000.

7. The grant is means tested which establishes if the resident is required to contribute to the works or if they are ineligible due to their income or capital. Council owned properties are exempt from the means test and do not require any contribution.
8. Landlords written permission must be obtained prior to approval of a DFG. The Tenancy Management Team within the London Borough of Hillingdon must provide written permission for council owned properties.
9. The applicant must have lived or intended to live in the property for at least 5 years and any alterations must be necessary, appropriate, reasonable, and practical. The purpose of the grant is set out in section 23(1) of the HGCRA 1996 Act and additional criteria has been added to by The Disabled Facilities Grants (Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes)(England) Order 2008 as allowed for by section 23(1)(l) of the HGCRA Act. The criterion for the grant includes:
 - Facilitating access to and from the property
 - Making a home safe
 - Facilitating access to a room usable for sleeping
 - Facilitating access to a bathroom
 - Facilitating preparation and cooking of food
 - Heating, lighting, and power
 - Facilitating access to and from the garden
10. Residents must not start work prior to achieving formal grant approval. If any works are undertaken prior to obtaining formal grant approval the application will no longer be valid and will be cancelled.
11. Adaptation works to a property must be simple and cost effective.
12. Adaptation works will predominantly take place within the existing footprint of the property by changing the use of rooms, such as converting a dining room into a bedroom. Extension work would only be considered once all other options have been explored.

2.1 Occupational Therapist (OT) Major Adaptations Assessment

13. A major adaptations assessment will be carried out by a Social Services OT from London Borough of Hillingdon. The OT will determine whether works are 'necessary' and 'appropriate' to meet the resident's needs. The OT will assign a priority to the assessment and provide recommendations.
 - **Category 1:** URGENT Client or carer in imminent danger or client unable to remain in, or return to home

- **Category 2:** STANDARD Client meets eligibility criteria
14. Urgent cases will be visited by the Grant Surveyor and contractor within four weeks of receipt of the assessment, and non-urgent cases will be progressed in chronological order.
 15. All works must be completed in line with the OT recommendations. Individual elements cannot be omitted as the works must fully meet the resident's needs. The Grant Surveyor assigned to the case will determine whether the recommendations are 'reasonable' and 'practicable' by considering the age, condition, and suitability of the property.

2.2 Delivery Options

2.2.1 London Borough of Hillingdon Requests

16. The case will be managed by the Council and a Grants Surveyor will arrange and supervise the adaptation works. The Grant Surveyor will draw up a schedule of work and where necessary, detailed plans.
17. The works will be completed by a London Borough of Hillingdon framework contractor, who are working to agreed contracted rates, or the works will be issued out for quotation in line with the Council's standing orders.
18. On approval of funding the works are monitored during the delivery phase by a Grants Surveyor. When work is complete and invoices are received, the surveyor will visit the property to check the work is satisfactory and complete, before recommending payment to the contractors.
19. All relevant permissions and certificates will be sought for any grant works, such as building regulations, planning permission, GAS SAFE/CORGI/NICEIC certification.

2.2.2 Non-Agency Option

20. A non-agency option is available to residents who have had adaptations recommended but wish to use the grant eligible funds to construct alternative adaptations or enhanced schemes.
21. If the resident chooses the non-agency option, the works will not be arranged or supervised by a Grants Surveyor or a Social Services OT from London Borough of Hillingdon. They will not visit the site to check the on-going works. Any issues that arise whilst construction is under way should be dealt with by the resident's surveyor.
22. The Housing Grants & Adaptations Team fees will be considered when determining the amount of grant funding the resident will be eligible to receive.

23. The OT assigned to the resident by London Borough of Hillingdon will advise them on the layout of the proposed scheme, the equipment required, the position of important parts of the adaptations such as grab rails, ramps, controls (including taps) to make sure it is safe to use and meets the disabled person's needs.
24. The Grants Surveyor is assigned to the resident by London Borough of Hillingdon and the resident is required to provide them with a copy of their proposal and/or architects plans before they make any application to Planning, Building Control or other relevant bodies.
25. The Grants Surveyor will discuss the resident's proposal with the residents allocated OT. Once the layout has been agreed the resident will be provided with a Non-Agency Grant schedule of work. This will list the works specific to the resident's proposal which must be carried out for them to qualify for grant aid. If the resident intends to deviate from this schedule, they must obtain permission from the Grants Surveyor before doing so.
26. Once the Grants Surveyor has agreed to the resident's proposal in writing, the resident may proceed with an application to Planning and/or Building Control.
27. The resident is required to submit between 3-5 competitive quotes for the works they intend to carry out. The quotes are to be provided by bona fide and legitimate contractors on their letter headed paper. The residents chosen contractor should be professionally qualified and affiliated with a relevant recognised body. The quotes will be reviewed by the Grants Surveyor who will deem whether the works comply with the OT recommendations and are 'reasonable' and 'practical'.
28. Once the quotation is approved by the Grant Surveyor, the case will be put forward for grant funding. The works must not start on site until the resident has submitted a full grant application, and this has been approved in writing by London Borough of Hillingdon. No grant monies will be paid for works which have commenced before the grant application has been approved.
29. Once the works are completed, the Grants Surveyor will visit site and check that the adaptation works have been completed.
30. The resident is required to contact their builder directly to obtain copies of all relevant permissions and certificates, such as building regulations, planning permission, GAS SAFE/CORGI/NICEIC certification, and these will need to be forwarded onto the Grant Surveyor for approval.
31. 10% of the grant funding will be held in retention until all of the works are satisfactorily completed and the relevant Building Regulations completion certificate is submitted to the Housing Grants & Adaptations team.

32. Stage payments up to 90% of the approved grant amount may be paid upon submission of genuine invoices from the residents contractor on their letter headed paper and provided that an adequate amount of work has taken place, i.e. foundations to DPC level, build to roof level, build to first fix. Grant payments are usually received between 2-3 weeks after inspection.

3 DISCRETIONARY DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT

33. Discretionary grants come into effect when the cost of the DFG works exceed the original £30,000 limit. A Discretionary Grant application will need to be completed which will consider the income and capital of all adults living at the address.

34. The limit to the level of grant that can be provided through a discretionary grant is a further £15,000. The works completed must cover all OT recommendations.

35. In exceptional circumstances a higher grant level can be made available. This would need to be authorised by the Corporate Director for Planning, Environment, Education and Community Services or the relevant post holder.

36. All discretionary grants are subject to the availability of funding. There is a limited grant budget; therefore, applications will be assessed on a first come first served basis.

4 SERVICE STANDARDS/TIMESCALES

37. Section 34 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 requires a decision from the Council to approve or refuse the grant application within 6 months of receiving the application. The Council will endeavour to achieve this within 4 weeks of receiving the application. In addition, the Council will use reasonable endeavours to meet the following standards:

- If we receive an OT assessment prior to receiving the resident's application, we will write to the applicant within 5 working days to acknowledge the request has been received and an application form will be sent out.
- Urgent cases will be visited by the Grant Surveyor and contractor within four weeks, and non-urgent cases will be progressed in chronological order.
- The Council will aim to complete the installation of all disabled adaptations within 12 months from the date of grant approval.
- The Council will aim to process applications fairly, efficiently, courteously, and promptly.
- The Council will aim to pay grant money due within 30 days of a valid claim on certified work.

5 OTHER DISCRETIONARY GRANTS

38. From 2008/09 the scope of DFG funding widened to support any local authority expenditure under the Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002 (RRO). This extended the use of DFG funding allowing local authorities to use the funding for additional purposes that are not covered in the Mandatory DFG Grant.

39. All discretionary grants are subject to the availability of funding. There is a limited grant budget; therefore, applications will be assessed on a first come first served basis.

40. The following discretionary grants are available:

5.1 Essential Repair Grant

41. The purpose of the grant is to remove category 1 hazards that are likely to cause imminent harm to health such as no heating, structural collapse, or extreme damp.

42. The maximum grant is £5,000 and subject to the owner, co-owner and or any partner or statutory tenant being eligible following a financial means test and resources being available. Repayment conditions apply regarding any future sale and use of the property as an occupied home.

43. For an applicant to be eligible for consideration for the grant the resident must:

- Be over 60 years old
- Be an owner occupier of the house. ERGs are not usually available for tenants because their landlord is responsible for repairs. However, ERGs are available for Statutory tenants with a repairing obligation.
- Have lived at the property for more than 5 years (the aim of the grant is to help elderly people continue to live in their own home).
The grant requires the same means test as the test for Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants.

44. The house must:

- Be in such a poor condition that a Category 1 hazard exists at the property as assessed using the Housing Health and Safety rating system under the Housing Act 2004. The allocated Grants Surveyor must visit the property to establish that a Category 1 hazard exists and ascertain the works required.

45. The grant requires the same means test as the test for Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants. The result of the test is a figure that the client is expected to contribute to the costs of the works. If the cost of the repairs is less than or equal to the applicant's contribution, then he or she will be expected to pay the full costs of the works. If the costs are more then he

or she will pay their full contribution and the grant will pay the difference up to the maximum grant.

5.2 Safe and Warm Grant

46. The discretionary Safe and Warm Grant is to improve or provide heating, insulation, and security measures for properties in owner occupied properties or occupied by a statutory tenant with a repairing obligation.

47. The maximum grant is £5,000 and subject to the owner, co-owner and or any partner or statutory tenant being eligible following a financial means test and resources being available. Repayment conditions apply regarding any future sale and use of the property as an occupied home.

48. The resident will be eligible for a grant if they have an F or G rated boiler or if their boiler cannot be repaired.

49. Measures that can be funded:

- Replacement of broken boilers
- Replacement of gas boilers that are F or G rated (approximately 15 years old)
- Draught proofing to doors, windows and loft insulation
- Solid wall and flat roof insulation
- Heating controls and smoke alarms
- Security measures e.g. mortice locks, door viewer/chains and window locks

50. For an applicant to be eligible for consideration for the grant the resident must:

- Be under the age of 60
- Be an owner occupier of the house or be a statutory tenant with a repairing obligation
- Have lived at the property for more than 5 years

51. The grant requires the same means test as the test for Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants. The result of the test is a figure that the client is expected to contribute to the costs of the works. If the cost of the repairs is less than or equal to the applicant's contribution, then he or she will be expected to pay the full costs of the works. If the costs are more then he or she will pay their full contribution and the grant will pay the difference up to the maximum grant.

5.3 Burglar Alarm Assistance

52. The Council will install a free burglar alarm for Hillingdon residents who are owner occupiers and are aged 65 or over. A free service is offered 12 months following initial installation.

5.4 Hospital Discharge Grant

53. A non-means-tested grant of up to £2,000 can be provided if eligible works are required so that a patient can be discharged. The following are eligible works covered by the grant:

- Home and/or garden clearance or de-cluttering
- Home deep cleaning
- Home fumigation
- Furniture re-distribution or removal to make the home environment safer
- Heating repairs, e.g., repairing boilers
- Repairs to essential electrical appliances, e.g., cooker, refrigerator/freezer

54. There may be circumstances under which a grant in excess of £2,000 may be considered but each case will be considered on its individual merits between Social Care and Adaptations team, i.e., the extent to which this will expedite the patient's return home and prevent readmission.

55. For a resident to be eligible for consideration for the grant they must:

- Live at an address in the London Borough of Hillingdon.
- Be either a homeowner, a Council tenant or a tenant of a housing association or private landlord; and
- Intend to continue to live at the same address for at least three years. However, an exception applies to people on the end-of-life pathway.

56. This is subject to the following additional criteria:

- The proposed works are essential to support early discharge.
- Family and/or friends are either unwilling or unable to address the issue that is (or is likely to) delay discharge.
- Alternative options have been considered and it is possible to evidence that these will not meet need and expedite discharge.
- It is possible to identify a reduction in length of stay as a result of a grant approval or it will contribute to reducing risks that could lead to a readmission.

57. The Council's Hospital Discharge Team manage the application process and email the completed grant to the adaptations team to progress.

58. The final decision about a grant application will be made jointly by the Service Manager for the Council's Hospital Discharge Team and the Adaptations Manager. The joint review will consider the application, which will be informed by the earlier liaison between the Hospital Discharge Team and Adaptations Team.

59. Where it is agreed to proceed the Adaptations Team will identify the

appropriate contractor (s) and confirm timescales.

5.5 Sanctuary Scheme

60. Sanctuary schemes are designed to enable victims of domestic abuse to remain in their own home where it is safe for them to do so and where it is their choice. Examples of work carried out include reinforcing door and windows and installing alarms. This scheme is available to all residents of the borough regardless of the tenancy types they live in. Tenants of the Council or housing association properties should contact their landlord in the first instance. The scheme is administered by the Council's Homeless Prevention Service.

5.6 Landlord Property Renovation Grant

61. Landlord Property Renovation Grants (LPRGs) are between £1,000 and £10,000 and require match funding through partially funding improvement work.

62. LPRGs are only available where the property is secured for use in connection with the council's homelessness duties. LPRGs can be used in connection with London Borough of Hillingdon Finders' Fee scheme. The grant is given in exchange for five years nomination rights.

63. LPRGs should be focused on areas of the property to ensure that minimum standards are maintained, e.g. sufficient ventilation and heating provision should be in place to ensure prevention of mould growth / condensation issues.

64. On a case by case basis the Council will consider providing a grant where sitting tenants (housed under homelessness duties) are in place to incentivise landlords to sustain existing tenancies.

65. All LPRG grants are subject to the availability of funding.

5.7 Funding to pay for Housing Occupational Therapists

66. One of the matters that can cause delays in hospital discharge is the availability of OTs to organise and stipulate care packages and equipment required. To address this problem funding will be provided to assist the provision of a Housing OT to help assess applicants for DFGs and speed up the DFG process. Funding will be via the Better Care Fund and subject to availability.

5.8 Funding to pay for a Hoarding Case Worker

67. Funding will be provided for the provision of a case worker to make available a dedicated service to work with people with hoarding tendencies. Funding will be via the Better Care Fund and subject to availability.

5.9 Relocation Grant

68. When a disabled person and their family are eligible for a DFG, the cost of relocating to a more suitable property will be considered where it is more cost effective than adapting the applicant's current home. The grant requires the same means test as the test for Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grants. An OT must assess the new home to meet or potentially meet the needs of the disabled occupant.

69. Funding will be considered on a case by case basis and will be limited to the actual cost of moving. Costs that may be covered include legal, estate agent and survey fees, stamp duty and removal costs. Funding is subject to availability and will be limited to a maximum of £5,000.

6 LAND CHARGES

6.1 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant

70. If the applicant is an owner-occupier and has work funded through a DFG, the Council will register a local land charge against their property, where the grant payment exceeds £5,000. This allows the recovery of funds in the event of a property subsequently being sold or otherwise disposed of.

71. If the property is disposed of within 10 years of the date of completion of the works, then the Council may demand the repayment of such part of the DFG that exceeds £5,000 (but may not demand an amount in excess of £10,000).

6.2 Discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant

72. If the property is disposed of within 10 years of the date of completion of the works then the grant is fully repayable to the council. If the applicant is an owner-occupier and has work funded through a DFG, the Council will register a local land charge against their property. This allows the recovery of funds in the event of a property subsequently being sold or otherwise disposed of.

6.3 Essential Repair Grant

73. If the property is disposed of within 10 years of the date of completion of the works, then the grant is fully repayable to the council. If the applicant is an owner-occupier and has work funded through this grant, the Council

will register a local land charge against their property. This allows the recovery of funds in the event of a property subsequently being sold or otherwise disposed of.

7 RIGHT TO BUY

7.1 Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant

74. Council owned properties that have had work funded through a DFG, will subsequently be removed from the Right to Buy scheme.

8 REMOVAL OF ADAPTATIONS

75. Once the works have been completed the council will not remove adaptations from a property. If the resident decides they do not like the adaptation(s) the council will not remove or amend the works. No additional works will be completed unless an OT reassesses the resident and decides their needs have significantly changed.

9 COMPLAINTS

76. If an applicant is dissatisfied with the standard of service, they are advised to follow the London Borough of Hillingdon's complaints procedure: [Complaints - Hillingdon Council](#)