

An applicant's guide to Disabled Facilities Grants in West Lindsey.

West Lindsey District Council can provide a range of services to assist you to live independently in your home. Depending on your individual needs there will be different services that can support you. Staff at the council will work with you to help decide which service offers you the best long term assistance.

Referrals to the grant service are made by Occupational Therapists, who will assess your needs and then inform the council what adaptation you may need. Often the Occupational Therapist can arrange for equipment to help with some tasks, at least in the short-term. In other cases a more permanent adaptation may be the only option and this is when they will refer you to our Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG's) service.

DFG's can be used to pay for adaptations in your home. This guide explains how the grant service works and will help you decide whether this is the right option for you. The guide will tell you what the council must consider when assessing grant applications and the type of work that can be covered by grant funding.

Please be aware that not all changes to your home can be covered by Disabled Facilities Grants. All properties are assessed to make sure it is possible to provide the adaptations and a means test will be carried out to confirm you are eligible.

This guide forms part of the Housing Assistance Policy which is available to view on the council's website.

The Government has published additional information on the ways that Disabled Facilities Grants can be used. This can be found online at www.gov.uk.

For **new enquiries** please call Lincolnshire County Council's Contact Centre

If your enquiry is for an **Adult: 01522 782 155** ♦ if it is for a **Child 01522 782 111**

If you have already made an application please contact West Lindsey District Council ✉
e-mail: dfg@west-lindsey.gov.uk ☎ **Phone: 01427 676 676**



Section 1. Overview

If you are disabled and need to make changes to your home, you could get a grant from the council to help with the costs. The grant provides funding for adaptations that are considered to be essential in order for you to remain living independently in your home.

There are lots of changes that may help you, and some of the most common types of work funded by disabled facilities grants include:

- widening doors and installing ramps to help you get in or out of your home
- improving access to rooms and facilities - e.g. by installing a stair-lift
- improving access to bathing facilities – this can be simple changes such as removing your bath and installing a level access shower, or lowering and changing the type of wash basin to make accessing a sink easier for wheel chair users
- adapting heating or lighting controls, or even kitchen units, to make them easier to reach

Section 2. Who can apply for a grant?

You can apply for the grant if you or someone living in your property is disabled. To apply for the grant **you must:**

- **be the owner of the property or a tenant** (with an owners or tenancy certificate), and
- **intend that the property will continue to be occupied** by the disabled person for at least **5 years**, as their main or only home

You can also apply for a grant if you are a landlord and have a disabled tenant. Landlords will need to provide proof of ownership when supplying their consent for any adaptations.

If you are applying for a child under 16 no benefits check will be required and you will automatically be considered for a grant. If the application is for a young person aged 16 to 19 a check will be carried out to see what benefits are being claimed (either by the young person or on their behalf) to determine eligibility.

For all adult applications a benefits check will be carried out to confirm the eligibility of the person needing the adaptations.

If you receive certain benefits you will automatically be considered for a grant:

- Housing Benefit (at any rate)
- Guaranteed Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit or, Child Tax Credit

- Income Based Employment and Support Allowance
- Income Based Job Seekers Allowance
- Universal Credit

If you are not in receipt of one of the above benefits a full financial test of resources will be carried out. The test is carried out by the council using regulations that are set by the Government and used by all councils nationally. Officers will advise you what supporting information or documents you need to provide. This will normally include evidence of your income, savings and assets, and any benefits you currently receive.

Note: From time to time the Government introduces changes to what is included in the means test. For this reason officers will always check exactly what you receive during the application process.

Section 3. What is included in the grant?

The grant amount you will be offered depends on your own circumstances. The means test will show whether you need to pay towards the cost of the works. For example, if you are going to have a bathroom adaptation that will cost £4,000, and the means test shows you need to contribute £1,000, the grant offer will be £3,000 and you will be required to cover the rest. If your contribution would exceed the estimated cost of the adaptation you will not be offered a grant.

The amount of grant that can be offered is limited to the cost of essential adaptations only, up to a maximum of £30,000 inclusive of any surveyor/technical fees. The maximum amount you can be offered is reduced if you are required to make a contribution. For example, if you are required to cover the first £5,000 then the maximum grant offered will be £25,000 (your contribution is deducted from the maximum entitlement).

The council must always consider the suitability of your property and whether it can reasonably provide the adaptation requested. This could mean that if you have a specific scheme or adaptation in mind before you apply, you may find that once it has been reviewed by the council it is not possible to provide an adaptation in your preferred way. For all grants over £5,000 a land charge is registered against the property, full details of this are shown in Section 10 of this guide.

What is not included?

The grant will only cover mandatory works that are necessary for you to remain living independently in your home. No additional works or changes that are not deemed to be essential will be approved.

Grants cannot be provided to cover the cost of home repairs or normal wear that could reasonably be expected to be the responsibility of the property owner or covered under householder insurance.

Extended Warranties and future repairs: Applicants must consider that the grant is provided to cover the cost of an adaptation. Responsibility for any future maintenance or repair falls to the applicant and property owner, and not the council. Applicants can consider purchasing extended warranties and can discuss this with the contractor independently. Grants do not cover extended warranties.

In all cases WLDC is not liable for any costs associated with 'making good', or repairing a property if adaptations are removed. Landlords especially should consider this and if necessary agree with tenants how reparation would be made before providing consent.

The council requires all DFG requests to be supported by an Occupational Therapist referral and assessment. **Grant applications will not be considered without this referral.**

Section 4. Where to start

Step 1 – First contact: The first step in **all** cases is to contact Lincolnshire County Council's Customer Service Centre. The customer service team will request some basic information from you to help determine which Independent Living Service can offer you the best support.

Lincolnshire County Council's Customer Service Centre
**Adult enquiries please call: 01522 782 155 ♦ Child enquiries 01522
01522 782 111**

Step 2 – Home assessment: The Customer Service Centre will arrange for an Occupational Therapist to visit and carry out an assessment. Often the Occupational Therapist will recommend equipment that can be provided to help - at least in the short-term. In other cases a more permanent adaptation may be the only option. If so, they will refer you to our DFG service.

Your Occupational Therapist will tell the council what adaptations are needed, for example:

“improved access to bathing facilities” or “installation of a stair-lift to provide access to an upstairs bedroom”. Although your Occupational Therapists may discuss a certain scheme with you, the council will consider all of the options available and can only agree how the adaptations will be provided after your eligibility has been confirmed and your property has been fully surveyed.

When a referral is received by the council you will be contacted and provided with the grant application forms.

Some people may be under the care of an Occupational Therapist already. If so, they can talk to the council on your behalf about a possible grant application.

Section 5. The grant application process

There are several parts to the application, these are described below.

1. Forms - The first step is to complete the application forms. This is done by the applicant (the person described in Section 2 of this guide) and the information required includes:

- Details of the applicant
- Details of the person needing the adaptation (if this is someone different)
- Details of any other people living in the property
- Details of the property and its ownership
- Any financial information that the council asks for

Once the form has been returned, the council will confirm if you are eligible for grant assistance and determine whether your application can continue. The council will notify you of the outcome.

2. Checking your property - The next part of the application is to check that the property is suitable for adaptation. To assess your application the council needs to be satisfied that the work is:

- necessary and appropriate and will meet the disabled person's essential needs
- reasonable and can be done - depending on the age, condition and lay-out of the property
- that the home will be suitable for at least the whole grant period (5 years)
- permitted by the owner of the property (note: for tenants in rented properties approval must be obtained from the landlord or housing association in order for a grant to be approved).

The final decision about whether a property is suitable for adaptation will be made by the council once it has all of the information needed to issue a decision. Additional or alternative adaptations, or any works deemed non-essential, cannot be funded by the grant.

Note: The council must ensure that the living conditions of the person needing the adaptations are (and will continue to be) safe and appropriate in the future. The council will not approve an application if either the home, the existing living arrangements or existing care needs are not considered to be suitable, and will not improve as a result of the work.

3. Obtaining quotes for the work – Finally, the council needs to know how much the adaptations will cost. The Council will act on your behalf to arrange this.

A contractor will be selected by the council from a list of approved suppliers. All of the contractors used are suitably qualified to carry out the work and will do so in a highly professional manner. For some larger adaptations the council may seek additional quotes and will also appoint a technical officer to work with the approved contractor to help design and manage the work through to its completion. Once all of the above steps have been completed the application is deemed valid, or 'made'. From that point the council must issue the grant offer as quickly as possible, and always within 6 months.

All applicants must follow this process. Applicants will not receive grant funding for any work that has already started, or for work that has been completed, before applying for the grant. Grants will only cover the costs of works that have been agreed by the council in writing.

Section 6. The grant offer

Once the application and means test is complete, and the type of adaptation has been agreed, the council will issue a formal written grant approval. This approval will:

- state the adaptation(s) that will be funded
- show the total amount of the grant awarded
- name the contractor that will carry out the work and show their contact details
- provide a the time limit for work to be completed by*

* Grant offers are valid for 12 months and work must therefore be completed within this time. Under normal circumstances the work should commence as soon as possible and the applicant will be asked to arrange a convenient start date with their contractor.

Applicants living in Social Rented properties

The council works closely with different housing providers to develop and improve the way that adaptations are provided, and to provide assistance as effectively and quickly as possible. In some cases a housing association may carry out the works fully, or in partnership with the council. You will always be made aware of who is going to undertake the work before it starts.

Applicants currently on the Housing Register

During the application process officers will check whether the person needing the adaptations is on the housing register. Applicants are reminded that in accepting a grant they are stating their intention to remain living in the property being adapted for at least five years. Persons accepting a grant will therefore be removed from the register. Once removed, individuals cannot re-apply for the register or bid for alternative properties for 5 years, unless their medical circumstances change significantly during that period.

Applicants in Acis properties

A large number of applicants in West Lindsey live in Acis properties. For this reason Acis and the council have jointly agreed which homes will be deemed suitable for adaptation and which will not. This helps ensure that only homes which are suitable for the longer term are adapted and focuses grant funding towards homes better suited to the needs of elderly or disabled tenants. All applications will be considered on an individual basis but applicants living in an Acis property should be aware that typically adaptations that may not be permitted by Acis include:

- Adaptations to first floor properties or properties with shared access where other residents may be affected by the adaptations needed.
- Adaptations to homes where the applicant is under occupying (has spare bedrooms). This is to ensure that people are in a property that will continue to be affordable and to ensure the best use of housing stock. It ensures that family sized homes are not adapted in cases where there is only one person currently occupying the home.
- Where there are, or will shortly be, other vacant properties nearby that are already adapted or that would be more suitable for your current and future needs.
- Where the extent of the work, or the type of adaptation necessary, would result in significant changes or future liability for maintenance costs that are not acceptable to Acis.

Section 7. Planning and building regulations approval

Not many adaptations require planning permission but all work must conform with the latest Building Regulations. For certain types of adaptations the work can only be carried out by a suitably qualified and registered contractor (typically any works involving electrics or gas). Where planning permission or building regulation approval is needed, the council can take care of this for you completely. If any plans need to be drawn the cost of appointing a Technical Officer to do this work can also be covered by the grant.

Section 8. Starting the work

Your contractor can advise you how long the work will take to complete. Inevitably there will be some disruption during the work, and the extent will depend entirely on the amount of work that is being carried out. If you need any additional support during the work, or in the very unlikely event that you need to move out of your home for a short period, the council will seek advice and support for you from your Occupational Therapist. You can discuss this with the team at the council in advance, or at any stage during the work if you have concerns.

Section 9. How the work is paid for

In all cases the council will pay the contractor directly for all works covered by the grant. This will be:

- by instalments - as the work progresses, or
- in full - when both you and the Council are happy with the finished work

Any work that is not covered by the grant, including any contribution you need to make towards the work, needs to be paid directly to the contractor. They will issue you with an invoice for this amount.

Payment terms will be discussed between the Council and your contractor when your application is approved, and will be agreed before any work starts. If you ask the contractor to carry out any additional work when they are at your property you will be responsible for paying the contractor directly for this and the council will not become involved in assessing the suitability of any additional works carried out.

Section 10. Land Charges

The council is permitted to recover some of the grant awarded to an applicant if the property is sold within 10 years of the adaptation being completed. This is done by placing a local land charge on the adapted property. The land charge is applied to both owner-occupied and private rented properties.

All grants over £5,000 will incur a land charge, however only the amount over the first £5,000 is included in the charge. For example, if you are awarded an £8,000 grant, a local land charge of £3,000 will be added against the property. The relevant homeowner or landlord must consent to this as a condition of the grant.

The Government have set the maximum land charge amount at £10,000. For example, if you are awarded a grant of £25,000 then the land charge repayable will still be capped at £10,000.

Land charges are removed from the local register automatically after 10 years **or** once repaid in full, whichever occurs first.

Section 11. Additional terms and conditions (Answers to the most Frequently Asked Questions)

11.1 DFG's can only be awarded to adapt your only or main residence. In certain cases DFG funding can be provided to help people to move into suitably adapted alternative accommodation, if this is more appropriate than adapting an existing property.

11.2 'Essential works' refers to any adaptations that are absolutely necessary, and that without providing them an individual could not remain living safely and independently in their home. Any adaptations requested by an individual or an Occupational Therapist that do not meet this criteria will be challenged and are unlikely to be eligible for the grant. Examples include requests to make a second level access entry point (where one suitable and level access point already exists) or providing full access to outside space (note: access to a garden area can be provided by a grant but this does not extend to providing access to all garden space where some is already accessible).

- 11.3 DFG's are designed to assist disabled people to remain living independently in their own home. However, grant funding will not be approved for adapting or extending any property that is deemed unsuitable by the Independent Living Service or the council's Home Options team. Where this decision is made the council will refer you to any appropriate alternative support.
- 11.4 In applications for a disabled child or young person, it is their age at the point the application is considered 'valid' that is used (i.e when a final agreed scheme has been approved by the council). The child's age at the time of their assessment by the Occupational Therapist (if different) is not used for assessing grant eligibility.
- 11.5 Annexes are regarded together with the main property to which they are attached. Annexes are not considered as a separate property or means tested as separate units. Only the property owner(s) is eligible to apply for a grant, and not the person residing in the annex.
- 11.6 Extensions – These are an expensive and exceptional way of providing home adaptations. Therefore, to ensure that funding is used to the benefit of as many people as possible, funding for extensions will only be approved as an absolute last resort and where all possible alternatives have been exhausted. Extensions will not be approved if a suitable, reasonable and more cost-effective alternative solution can be achieved by adapting the existing building or facilities. Each case is assessed individually but typical examples of reasonable alternatives include limiting grant funding to the costs of converting a spare room or garage, rather than building a new extension. Likewise, grants will normally only be offered to cover the costs of upgrading of an existing bathroom rather than building a completely new one.
- 11.7 Extensions will not be approved where they are requested as a result of the applicant not wishing to have existing parts of their home disrupted or changed. This is not a reasonable or acceptable use of DFG funds. Likewise, the desire (and not essential *need*) for increased living space is not an acceptable reason for requesting an extension.
- 11.8 The council will seek to recover all sums paid where a grant is obtained by deception and/or as a result of supplying false information. The council may also seek to recover grant funding in full where any terms of the grant have been breached by the applicant.
- 11.9 The scope of work that can be carried out outside of the home is limited under DFG funding. DFG cannot be provided for creating designated parking areas, adapting the public highway or new paths. Improving access directly in to and out of the property or to the garden, such as provision of a ramp, can be carried out using DFGs.

Section 12. Complaints

The council will always explain its decision to you and offers a range of housing advice in addition to providing disabled facilities grants. If you are refused a grant or are unhappy with the way the grant has been awarded, you should set out your complaint either in writing or by e-mail and send this to the Independent Living team via the address shown at the end of this guide. To view the council's complaints procedure please visit the council's website or request a copy from the Customer Services team on 01427 676 676 or by e-mail to customer.services@west-lindsey.gov.uk.

If you have followed the council's complaint procedure in full and remain dissatisfied with the response provided you can complain to the [Local Government Ombudsman](#). Their telephone number is 0300 061 0614.

Data Protection

West Lindsey District Council (WLDC) will only ask you for personal and financial information that is relevant to the grant application and for a grant decision to be made.

The home assessment carried out by the Occupational Therapist, appointed by Lincolnshire County Council, will be provided to WLDC to support a grant application. This information will only be shared between the Occupational Therapist, the person(s) named on the application form and the council, or its representatives.

In some cases limited data may need to be shared with registered housing providers (social rented tenants only) in order to work out the best way to carry out the adaptation. All information is retained securely and confidentially by WLDC in line with the legal obligations to protect that information under the Data Protection Act 1998. More details on data protection and your right to access this information can be found on the council's website at: www.west-lindsey.gov.uk.


For all new enquiries please call Lincolnshire County Council's Contact Centre
Adult enquiries please call: 01522 782 155 ♦ **Child enquiries 01522 782 111**

For all on-going applications or for more information please contact West Lindsey District Council's Independent Living Support Team:

 **Web:** www.west-lindsey.gov.uk/dfg

 **e-mail:** dfg@west-lindsey.gov.uk

 **Phone:** 01427 676 676

 **Write:** WLDC, Marshall's Yard, Gainsborough, Lincs, DN21 2NA

Other Useful Support:

West Lindsey Home Options The team provides a free, impartial and confidential service to all Housing Association and private tenants. They can be contacted on 01427 676 676 (select option 4 for 'home options').

If you would like this information in a different format or larger print, please contact: 01427 676 676 and advise our Customer Services Team.