

FROM HOUSE HOME ^{TO}

THE DISABILITY ADAPTATION GUIDE

WE KNOW FROM CALLS TO OUR NATIONAL NURSE HELPLINE THAT FAMILIES CARING FOR A DISABLED OR TERMINALLY ILL CHILD SOMETIMES STRUGGLE TO KNOW WHICH WAY TO TURN WHEN LOOKING FOR HOUSING ADAPTATIONS AND RELATED SUPPORT.

We've put together this helpful guide to alleviate some of the distress and difficulties families face when it comes to understanding what's available and how to apply.

If you would like to speak to Newlife's Care Services Team about anything in this brochure call **0800 902 0095** (free from UK mobiles and landlines) or dial **01543 468 400** (normal call charges apply) Monday – Friday, 9.30am – 5pm and until 7pm on Wednesdays.

Alternatively you can email **nurse@newlifecharity.co.uk** or go to the website, **newlifecharity.co.uk/contact** to use our 'Live Chat' service.

Please note that verbal translation services are available through the Nurse Helpline.

Need support or information?



Want to speak with a Newlife Nurse?

Newlife's Care Services Team readily use confidential translation services. We want you to feel comfortable when raising sensitive questions or discussing important matters.

 **0800 902 0095**

Simply call (free from UK mobiles and landlines) and inform a Nurse of your preferred language.

Newlife Nurses will provide caring emotional support and useful information regarding:

- rare & complex conditions;
- local & national services;
- rights & benefits;
- access to health & social care professionals;
- delivery of care in the community.

ADAPTATIONS FOR YOUR HOME

Making adaptations to your home can make caring for a disabled child a little easier. Things many people take for granted, like being able to get upstairs or go into the garden, can be virtually impossible for some because their house limits their ability to get about. This can have far reaching effects, not only on the physical and emotional wellbeing of the child, but on carers too.

FINANCIAL HELP IS AVAILABLE

If you need to make your home more accessible, or you need specialist equipment that will help you carry out everyday task to care for a disabled child or young person more safely and easily, then you may be entitled to help.

Local housing authorities have a responsibility to provide major adaptations to make the homes of families with a disabled child more accessible.

In England this is usually done through a Disabled Facilities Grant although there are smaller grant schemes available. There are also regional differences in terminology used. Charitable finance support may also be available, but only if an application to statutory services has been declined.

HINTS AND TIPS

- ▶ *Families with a disabled child who are tenants of local authorities, housing associations and private tenants, landlords and licensees can all apply to their local housing authority for a Disabled Facilities Grant to help make homes more accessible.*
- ▶ *If you live in a property that is privately rented or social housing, you can ask your landlord to make reasonable adjustments as part of your tenancy agreement.*
- ▶ *Homeowners, whether making mortgage payments or not, can still apply to their local authority for support to adapt their home.*



WHAT SORT OF ADAPTATIONS CAN BE MADE?

You may be able to access local authority support for minor adaptations for changes that make daily activities easier and promote independence. This includes, fitting lever taps in the kitchen or hand-rails around the home.

Assistance can also be sought for major adaptations through a Disabled Facilities Grant.

The Housing Renewal Grants (Services and Charges) Order 1996 states that a Disabled Facilities Grant can be used for many different types of adaptations.

This Includes:

- ▶ *Installing ramps.*
- ▶ *Widening external and internal doors.*
- ▶ *Adapting washing, bathing, showering or toilet facilities.*
- ▶ *Extending rooms to accommodate medical and other equipment.*

Any financial grant awarded must be used to fund the cost of adapting a property to meet the specific needs of the child with disabilities and their carers.

HINTS AND TIPS

- ▶ *If you would consider moving home, it could be beneficial to register on your local housing register. Some councils and housing associations have existing adapted properties i.e. wider doorways, ramps, level access etc. In some cases the longer you are registered the higher your priority. You may also be considered as a priority due to your child's disability and prognosis.*

MINOR ADAPTATIONS AND EQUIPMENT

Across the UK there are geographical differences regarding the type of support you may be able to claim. An overview of regional differences can be found below.

If you live in England:

Your local authority should provide disability equipment or minor adaptations to enable you to meet the needs of caring for a disabled child. For up to date information on disability adaptations, contact your local authority in the first instance:

<https://www.gov.uk/find-local-council>

If you're not currently accessing services provided by your local authority, you can request a 'Section 17 assessment' which may result in a referral to an occupational therapy team who can advise on provision of equipment and provide small adaptations costing less than £1,000 free of charge.

Each authority is legally required to host an on-line 'local offer' that will explain how to access a Section 17 assessment that explores the holistic needs of your child and immediate family.

If you live in Wales:

Information is available on the Welsh Government website.

<https://gov.wales/topics/housing-and-regeneration/grants-and-funding/disabled-facilities-grant/>

If you live in Scotland:

Information is available on the Scottish Government website.

<https://www.mygov.scot/find-your-local-council/>

If you live in Northern Ireland:

There are a number of grants available to improve or adapt your home. Check out the Housing Executive website for details of the funding available.

http://www.nihe.gov.uk/index/hig_home/grants_available.htm



IN THE PROCESS OF PLANNING FOR CEILING TRACK HOISTS AS PART OF OUR DFG IT BECAME CLEAR THAT JOHN'S MANUAL HANDLING NEEDS IN THE COMMUNITY WERE NOT BEING MET, NEWLIFE GRANTED US A MOBILE HOIST TO ACCESS THE LOCAL COMMUNITY. "

EQUIPMENT MATTERS

Newlife can fund essential disability equipment such as beds, portable hoists, wheelchairs, seating systems, and much more. Equipment can improve child health, reduce risk of injury and pain, as well as support delivery of care – while enabling positive childhood development and encouraging independence. Equipment needs should be considered alongside housing adaptations, so liaise with local health and social care services to ensure that the equipment is appropriately assessed prior to application. Please visit our Equipment Grants page to make an application.

<http://newlife.support/EGSApply>



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THE WHOLE PROCESS TOOK ALMOST TWO YEARS TO COMPLETE SO THERE WAS A LOT OF UPHEAVAL. BUT BEING ABLE TO LOAN A SAFE BED FOR CHARLIE THROUGH NEWLIFE'S EMERGENCY EQUIPMENT LOAN SERVICE MEANT WE WERE ABLE TO MINIMISE THE DISRUPTION TO HIS NIGHT-TIME ROUTINE AND KEPT US ALL SANE.”

EQUIPMENT EMERGENCY

Newlife understands that some children just don't have time to wait for assessments and urgently need equipment to maintain their health and keep them safe.

Newlife provides the UK's only rapid response equipment loan service for children who are at significant risk of injury or in urgent need because of their shortened life expectancy. We can act immediately, often delivering equipment within 72 hours of terms and conditions being agreed, to meet the short-term crisis.

Where appropriate, we will then offer to work with your family and local health and social care services to make sure your child receives long-term, permanent provision. Families can make multiple applications as is necessary – we don't put limits on your child! Apply online at:

<http://newlife.support/EELApply>



MAJOR ADAPTATIONS - DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT

For families with a disabled child, the Disabled Facilities Grant is a 'non means' tested financial grant to help with meeting the costs of adapting a property, so anyone can apply.

Grants are paid by your local authority (or Local Housing Executive if you live in Northern Ireland).

The grant is able to pay for changes the council consider essential for you to continue to meet the caring needs of your disabled child and must be "necessary, reasonable and practical".

Work funded through a Disabled Facilities Grant can include:

- ▶ *Widening doors and installing ramps, or stair lifts.*
- ▶ *Building or adapting a bathroom or bedroom.*
- ▶ *Adapting heating and lighting.*
- ▶ *Providing easy access to the garden.*

Other adaptations may be considered, such as a drop kerb or a safe play area, but these are not mandatory and may only be possible if discretionary funding is available.

HINTS AND TIPS

- ▶ *There are a number of terms and conditions attached to a Disabled Facilities Grant, for example if you sell your home within a certain number of years of being awarded the grant, you may be required to pay back a proportion of the grant amount. This is something that should be considered before making an application, as there may be other long-term options to consider, such as moving to a house that already offers better accessibility.*

AM I ELIGIBLE?

Eligibility can vary depending on where you live. <https://www.gov.uk/apply-disabled-facilities-grant> will direct to the appropriate local website which will explain the application process, provide relevant local information and explain next steps.

If your local authority agrees that adaptations of your home are necessary, appropriate and proportionate to help you meet the needs of caring for a disabled child then you can apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant.

HOW TO APPLY?

Applications are usually handled by the housing or environmental health department at your local council. You may apply direct or through a referral by a social worker or occupational therapist.

The first step is for an occupational therapist to undertake an assessment of the disabled child's needs. Their recommendations are important as they are required as evidence that the changes are essential.

Be warned there may be a long wait for an occupational therapist to be referred to your case.

Once you are allocated an occupational therapist it may take several visits to make a full assessment to ensure that you are happy with the choices and that all the needs have been addressed.

The occupational therapist will also be able to explain the application process and advise on local waiting times.

The council may need to become involved before you submit the application form depending on the changes recommended. They may ask for structural surveys or planning permission to be carried out before making a formal application, depending on the nature and extent of the adaptations needed.

If the occupational therapist agrees that adaptations are possible and necessary, you will then be required to submit a more in-depth application detailing the building works and modifications required as well as including quotes from contractors.

Councils have a statutory time limit of six months to make a decision on your grant application.

This is six months from the date of the formal application on the council's application form and does not include the time you have already spent waiting for an occupational therapist assessment, obtaining quotations or planning permission.

Some councils are quicker than others! So, do check up on the progress of your application. And remember don't start the work as the council will not pay for any work undertaken before the grant is approved.

CAN SOMEONE MAKE AN APPLICATION ON MY BEHALF?

Yes, applications can also be made by local landlords or through health/social care professionals such as occupational therapists and social workers.



I HAD NO IDEA HOW HELPFUL IT WAS TO BE ABLE TO SPEAK WITH OUR LOCAL SOCIAL WORKERS AND UNDERSTAND OUR OPTIONS AND GAIN ADDITIONAL SUPPORT."

HINTS AND TIPS

- ▶ *If you find phone calls and filling out forms overwhelming, your nearest Citizens Advice Bureau is on hand to help you.*

<https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk>

NOT SURE WHERE TO START?

If you're not sure where to start when it comes to planning the adaptations and employing tradespeople, home improvement agencies (HIAs) can ease a lot of the worry. There are nearly 200 HIAs in England, sometimes known as care & repair or staying put schemes, covering 82% of local authorities. Their services include:

- ▶ *Housing options – impartial advice and information, supporting older people achieve the outcome best suited to their needs, whether they need help adapting their own home or finding a new one.*
- ▶ *Disabled adaptations – (includes Disabled Facilities Grants – financial help towards the cost of providing adaptations and facilities to enable a disabled person to continue to live in their home). The HIA may help with any work you decide to have carried out on your home, for example, drawing up plans, getting estimates and liaising with others involved in the work, such as council grants officers and occupational therapists.*
- ▶ *Making homes more energy efficient - this often includes installing insulation, energy efficient light bulbs and other measures to keep fuel and electricity costs down.*
- ▶ *Home repairs/handyperson – these services cover 'odd jobs' such as putting up curtains or moving furniture, minor adaptations, falls prevention measures etc. The handyperson may also be able to identify further needs and can refer to other services (such as benefit checking) or occupational therapists.*
- ▶ *Hospital discharge and re-ablement – A number of HIAs are working closely with discharge teams to arrange rapid-response adaptations for those patients waiting to return home after a stay in hospital. The schemes facilitate a swift and safe discharge from hospital for older people by ensuring their home environment is safe and ready for their return (grab rails, ramps, widening a doorway, etc).*
- ▶ *Welfare and benefits advice - checking whether you are entitled to any financial help (for example, disability benefits, or money to help you repair or adapt your home). They also publish a list of trusted tradespeople on their website.*

HINTS AND TIPS

- ▶ *Make an application to your local authority as soon as possible because the process, and agencies used, vary geographically.*
- ▶ *Paying for a private occupational therapist to assess your property and make recommendations could speed up the application process. You need to check with your local authority to confirm they will accept a private assessment before commissioning this.*

<http://www.findmyhia.org.uk>
find your local home
improvement agency.

HOW MUCH WILL I GET?

The maximum amount for a Disabled Facilities Grant depends on where in the UK you live.

MAXIMUM DISABLED FACILITIES GRANT PAYABLE	
England	£30,000
Wales	£36,000
Scotland	The amount you get varies depending on your local council.
Northern Ireland	£25,000

There are no limits to the number of grants you can apply for, and your local authority will have discretionary powers to provide further financial help if meeting your child's essential needs goes over the maximum limit.

HOW YOU'LL BE PAID

- ▶ *In instalments - as the work progresses.*
- ▶ *In full - when the work is finished.*

The council may pay the contractor directly or give you a cheque to pass on to them. They'll agree this with you when they approve your application.

WHEN YOU'LL BE PAID

- ▶ *When the council is happy with the finished work.*
- ▶ *Give the council the invoice, demand a receipt for payment from the contractor.*

DON'T FORGET TO CLAIM VAT RELIEF!

If you have a disabled child and have successfully applied for a Disabled Facilities Grant (or other) any building work you do to adapt your home might be zero-rated for VAT.

Find out more about VAT exemptions on building work on the **GOV.UK** website.

COUNCIL TAX REDUCTION?

If the adaptations you are having done to your home push your property into a higher Council Tax band, you might be entitled to a discount on your Council Tax. This is called the 'Disabled Band Reduction Scheme'.

THINGS TO CONSIDER

- ▶ *Talk to family and friends when you're planning the adaptations for your home. As well as providing different viewpoints, they can offer emotional support and reassurance.*
- ▶ *Expect the unexpected. Even the best laid plans go awry – and invariably a process involving lots of different parties will experience some hiccups and delays. Be sure to prepare yourself for every eventuality to minimise the emotional upset to you and your family.*
- ▶ *Engage children to consider how the adaptations will help them, encouraging them to draw pictures and talk about the things they expect to be able to do and the way they feel as a result of changes being carried out.*
- ▶ *Plan for the future – as your child gets bigger, so will the equipment they're likely to need, so make sure you think about the long-term impact of any adaptations to ensure they meet the changes for your child. You may find it helpful to seek support from a local or national condition-specific family support group. Contact A Family can provide further details.
<https://contact.org.uk>*
- ▶ *Consider respite options while the work is being carried out. Support may be available from hospices and local authority funded services through a social worker.*
- ▶ *If you receive DLA care or mobility payments you could consider saving part of the money in the months leading up to the work taking place to pay for respite.*
- ▶ *Plan special days out and holidays when the work is being carried out - if you can't afford to pay for a break, there are charities who offer experience days for children with disabilities.*

HELP FROM CHARITIES

If you're unable to secure funding from your local authority, there are a number of other charities who might be able to help:

- ▶ *Check out the Turn2Us website – a free service that helps people gain access to welfare benefits, grants and financial support.*
- ▶ *Foundations, appointed by the Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government, provide a 'One Stop Shop' for everything related to DFG and Home improvements.*
- ▶ *Family Fund provide grants for essential items such as clothing, washing machines, beds, and much-needed family breaks.
www.familyfund.org.uk*

HINTS AND TIPS

- ▶ *Newlife's Play Therapy Pods may provide the ideal distraction - a FREE 12 week loan of specialist toys that can help keep your child relaxed, distracted and entertained during adaptations. Apply at **<http://newlife.support/PTPApply>***

Our dedicated team of nurses can be contacted through our national FREE helpline. Newlife's Nurses routinely receive helpline calls about the challenges parents face when trying to prioritise quality family time while also being expected to become an expert on their child's health.

If you want caring support and individualised information that could help improve quality of life for your whole family on any of the points below:

- ▶ *Condition Information.*
- ▶ *Local and National Service Information.*
- ▶ *Practical and Emotional Support.*
- ▶ *Disability Benefits and Legal Rights.*

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HAPPY HOME