

ADAPTATIONS AND EQUIPMENT

This fact sheet has been written by parent carers for parent carers



If your home is a difficult place for your child to live in, your local council has a responsibility to look at how to make it safer and more accessible. These kinds of changes are called 'adaptations' and they can be made to a home you own or a home you are renting from the council or a private landlord. This fact sheet explains what kinds of adaptations are available and how to go about getting them. We also offer tips for dealing with the lengthy and complex process of getting an adaptation.

What is an adaptation?

An adaptation is a change or changes to a property that mean a disabled person can move more freely and independently around their own home. Adaptations can range from simple things like installing a handrail or bath seat to widening doors, installing stair lifts or even creating entire wheelchair friendly bathrooms or kitchens. If your child needs specialist equipment like a hoist, this may also be considered at the same time as the other changes.

How to get an adaptation

Contact the social care team at your local council or, if you already have a social worker, you can ask them to refer you to the social care occupational therapists (OTs). See 'Ask about' at the end of this fact sheet for contact details. An OT from your local social care office will arrange to assess your needs. They will look at your disabled child's current and likely future needs and also the needs of the whole family. They will talk to you about what adaptations might help you overcome your difficulties. If the OT agrees that an adaptation is needed, they will make recommendations to your local council. Be aware that if there is a long waiting list to see an OT, the council can ask someone else, like your GP, to carry out the assessment.

Adaptations can be funded in various ways: the council funds adaptations to council homes; adaptations to an owner-occupied, privately rented or housing association home that cost less than £1,000 will usually be provided free of charge by the council; if they cost more than £1,000 you will need to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). The OT will advise you of all the steps in the adaptation process. All adaptations costing over £10,000 are presented by the OT to the council Adaptations Panel for agreement in principle to proceed with the DFG.

The maximum amount for this grant is £30,000. **Disabled Facilities Grants are NOT means tested for families of disabled children under 19.** Your income will be taken into account for any amount over this though.

If you are asked to pay towards any work over £30,000, social care may still be able to assist with the costs but how much they can pay will depend on your income. And the work must be considered essential and not just desirable.

They have six months to make a decision but this only begins once a formal application for a DFG has been made. You don't need to wait for an OT assessment. They can't refuse to allow you to make an application or to give you an application form. Be assertive.



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Tips for the assessment process

Don't wait until your situation is desperate before you ask for help. The process can be time-consuming and frustrating, so the sooner you ask the better.

A lot hangs on the assessment so be prepared; our fact sheet 'Meetings and paperwork' may help. Be clear about what you, your child and the rest of the family need and why. Use other reports and advices to back up what you are saying. You need to demonstrate that any adaptations are 'necessary and appropriate'. For example, though it may be OK for a three year old to crawl on the floor, it's not for a 10 year old who hasn't space to use his wheelchair. As part of the assessment the OT may, with your permission, seek information from other professionals involved with your child to gain a clearer picture of their abilities now and in the future.

Any assessment must include the needs of siblings. It's not OK for a child to have to share a bedroom with a sibling who smears, destroys the other's belongings or won't let them sleep. But you will need to make the case.

Don't be afraid to explain how what you are doing right now is taking its toll. You may want to save any conversation about how exhausted and miserable you feel until your child is elsewhere.

If you are a council tenant, 'get your house in order'. High rent arrears, or uncertainty about your tenancy, like the imminent sale or transfer of your home, are reasons for not approving work an OT has recommended.

If you are renting privately, don't be put off asking for your landlord's permission for adaptations - they could end up with a more desirable property afterwards. There are laws that govern 'reasonable adjustments' that private landlords must make for disabled tenants. Ask your social care team or local housing charities about this.

Ask other people what they did. Disabled young people and families who have been there before you often have a wealth of useful advice about where to compromise, what to insist on and changes they would make if they were starting to plan again. Organisations run by disabled people are good places to ask. The Housing Adaptations Service at the council will also be able to offer advice as you work through the process.

Be prepared to negotiate hard over the specification of the work; after all, the whole family has to live with the adaptations and you want to be sure that major works will continue to meet your child's needs in the future. These discussions may feel intrusive, especially if you are contributing a significant sum towards the cost.

If large expensive items are recommended, make sure you try them out before making a decision: you need to see how they would work in your own home. Don't be rushed or rush your child into making a decision and make sure you listen to what your child is telling or showing you: a hoist isn't the answer if your child is terrified or experiences pain being lifted this way.

Tips for the build phase

Make sure funding is allocated within your DFG to organise and manage the project, otherwise you will end up doing it in your spare time and it's a major undertaking.

The council can get quotes for the works from approved contractors or you can approach contractors yourself. If you do this, it may be best not to say how the work will be funded to avoid inflated quotes.

If you appoint your own contractor make sure you choose carefully. Any problems will be left for



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you to sort out and the DFG is likely to be withheld unless the work is completed to a satisfactory standard.

Consider using the local Home Improvement Agency who can assist with the DFG application and provide technical and project management support.

If you need to move out while work is done, tell the council as soon as you can. If you don't, they'll assume you have family or friends to stay with!

When adaptations are not the solution

Sometimes it just isn't reasonable or practical to adapt a property. If this is the case it's worth moving to a place with more potential to get it right, before you ask for help. If you rent from the council or a housing association, speak to your housing officer about transferring to a more suitable home. The social care OT can give advice on the suitability of a new property to meet your child's needs.

If you are thinking of selling and moving on to something better, some local estate agents keep information about adapted properties for sale across the city. You can also find details of wheelchair accessible properties for sale or rent from the Accessible Property Register (www.accessible-property.org.uk).

If you are looking further afield, it's also worth looking in Disability Now magazine as many people advertise there when they are selling a property suitable for households with a disabled person, or you could place a 'wanted' advert.

Ask about

- **Amaze – the Special Educational Needs and Disability Information, Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)** offers impartial, confidential advice on anything to do with special educational needs and disabilities for 0 to 25 year olds. Parents, carers, children and young people under 25 with SEND living in Brighton & Hove or East Sussex can use the service. Email sendiass@amazesussex.org.uk, call **01273 772289** or visit our website at <https://amazesussex.org.uk>
- **An assessment for housing adaptations** – for children under 18 in Brighton & Hove, contact the **Specialist Community Disability Service (01273 295550)** and ask to speak to the Occupational Therapy team for children. For over 18s in Brighton & Hove, contact **Access Point** on **01273 295555** or email accesspoint@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- **Disabled Facilities Grant** – for information about the DFG and how to apply visit www.gov.uk/disabled-facilities-grants or contact the council's Housing Adaptations Service on **01273 292420** or **293365** or email: adaptations@brighton-hove.gov.uk
- **Disability Advice Centre** – Possability People can offer advice on equipment, grants and accessibility issues. Call **01273 894050**, email: advice@possabilitypeople.org.uk or **07769 612015**
- **Housing Adaptations Team** – for information and advice on housing adaptations call 01273 292443 or email adaptations@brighton-hove.gov.uk

Further information and useful links

- **Brighton & Hove guides on adaptations** – the council information on adaptations to both council and privately owned property. Go to:



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<https://new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/adult-social-care/care-and-support-adults/changes-your-home>

- **Accessible Property Register** – a website that promotes accessible and adapted property for sale and rent, including holiday lets. For more go to: www.accessible-property.org.uk.
- **AskDes (Disability Equipment Service)** – national website where you can buy and sell disability equipment. Call: **07845 041678** or go to: www.disabilityequipmentservice.org.uk.
- **Disabled Gear** – a website where you can buy or sell equipment. For more information, go to: www.disabledgear.com.
- **Disabled Living Foundation** – provides information, advice and training on daily living aids. Tel: **0300 999 0004**, email: info@dlf.org.uk or visit: www.dlf.org.uk. For information on equipment to aid independent living and details of demonstration centres go to: www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk.
- **Independent Lives** – information, care and support services designed to enable people with care needs to be independent. For more go to: www.independentlives.org, call: **0845 601 2399 / 01903 219482** or email: feedback@independentlives.org.
- **Kidz to Adultz** – holds exhibitions of equipment for children and young people offering information and advice on: mobility; seating; beds; communication; education; toys; transport; sensory issues; sports and alternative funding streams. Go to: www.kidzexhibitions.co.uk.
- **Local Offer** – the local authority's online listing of all the services and support that are available to families with children with SEND in the area. Visit: new.brighton-hove.gov.uk/special-educational-needs-and-disabilities
- **MERU** – designs and custom-builds specialist equipment for children and young people with disabilities. For more, go to: www.meru.org.uk, call: **01372 725 203**, or email: info@meru.org.uk.
- **Remap** – tailor-made special equipment for disabled people designed and built by expert volunteers. Visit: www.remap.org.uk, call: **01732 760209**, or email: data@remap.org.uk
- **Whizz-Kidz** – a charity providing equipment, support and life skills for disabled children and young people. For more, go to: www.whizz-kidz.org.uk, call: **0800 151 3350** or email: kidzservices@whizz-kidz.org.uk.

