

Home aids and adaptations - a guide for constituents

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Home aids and adaptations - a guide for constituents

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This guide gives an overview of the support available to people in Wales who need home adaptations or equipment to help them live independently.

It provides information on the aids and adaptations available, where and how to get them, funding, and other useful information.

We've also signposted to organisations that provide information and support relating to home adaptations.



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1. What are home aids and adaptations?

Home adaptations are changes to your home that make it easier for you to get around or do everyday tasks. These changes could be big or small.

Examples of home adaptations might include:

- installing ramps or grab rails;
- adding a stairlift or wheelchair lift;
- fitting a level access shower or shower seat; and
- widening doorways for wheelchair access.

You can also get aids or equipment that makes your life easier at home. This could include things like door intercoms, raised toilet seats or hoists to help you get in or out of bed.

Home aids are usually removable or portable and therefore do not involve making physical or structural changes to your home.

2. Getting help with home aids and adaptations

You can contact your local authority to get support with home adaptations and equipment. Local authorities will generally have a team that deals with assessments and adaptations.

Local authority assessments

The local authority will usually carry out an assessment to understand your care and support needs, and will determine whether these meet the eligibility criteria for providing services.

If a local authority identifies that you have needs which meet the eligibility criteria, it has a legal duty under the **Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014** to arrange or provide services to meet those needs. This might include arranging for home adaptations or providing equipment to help you at home.

You can read more about social care assessments and the responsibilities that local authorities have in **our Senedd Research guide on accessing care and support**.

Getting permission from your landlord

If you rent your home, you should contact your landlord first before trying to make any home adaptations.

If you live in social housing

You should contact your social landlord in the first instance if you live in a council house or housing association property. Some social landlords have their own processes for assessing needs, accessing funding and arranging for adaptations to be made. For example, housing associations may be able to **access a Physical Adaptations Grant** to fund the work.

If you live in a private rented home

If you rent from a private landlord, you will **need to obtain agreement** from the landlord before any adaptations are carried out.

Landlords are **not legally required** to allow the removal or alteration of a physical feature within the property, or changes to shared areas (such as hallways or entrances in a block of flats). However, **people who qualify as disabled under the Equality Act** may have a legal entitlement to portable or temporary aids, if the aid would stop them being at a **“substantial disadvantage”** in their home.

Scope, a disability equality charity, has more information about **your rights as a private tenant** when it comes to home adaptations or aids. Website: www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support

If you are a leaseholder

If you own a leasehold property, it is likely that you will need to get consent from the freeholder before getting any adaptations made. You should **check the provisions in your lease**.

The **Leasehold Advisory Service** (LEASE) provides free advice to residential leaseholders. Website: www.lease-advice.org/wales-page/

Getting home aids or equipment through the health service

In some cases, you might be provided with equipment or aids through the NHS rather than your local authority. This is usually where equipment **is required to meet health-related needs** rather than social care needs. For example, you

might be provided with equipment to help with mobility, hearing or vision aids, or **telecare devices**.

You should speak to a GP or other health professional if you think you would benefit from aids or equipment to meet health-related needs.

3. Funding for home adaptations

There are different funding streams or schemes in Wales that may be used to deliver home adaptations. Different service providers might be involved depending on where you live and whether you own or rent your home.

In practice, you will usually need to apply for help through your local authority, a social landlord or a health professional rather than accessing these schemes directly.

ENABLE scheme

Small adaptations that cost less than £1,000 are usually provided free of charge and without means testing to older people or those who need to make changes to their home because of a disability.

The Welsh Government provides **ENABLE grant funding** to local authorities as a flexible resource which can be used to pay for small and medium adaptations. Some local authorities delegate their ENABLE funding to local **Care & Repair Cymru** agencies.

Local authorities and housing associations may also choose to pay for small adaptations for tenants out of their own funds.

Disabled Facilities Grant

The **Disabled Facilities Grant** (DFG) is a mandatory grant administered by local authorities which is used to contribute towards the cost of home adaptations.

In Wales, a DFG is generally used to fund larger and more costly adaptations. The maximum amount that can be awarded for a DFG is £36,000. The grant is available to people of all ages and in all housing tenures, though people who rent their home will need permission from their landlord before applying.

The DFG is subject to a means test. Applicants may have to make a contribution

towards the cost of the adaptations. However, in 2021 the Welsh Government **directed local authorities to remove the means test for small and medium DFGs** as a condition for receiving ENABLE funding. Means tests are also not applied where an application for a grant is made by the parent or guardian of a disabled child (under 16) or young person (under 19).

The statutory framework for DFGs is set out in the **Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996**. For a grant to be approved, local authorities must be satisfied that the works are “necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant” and that it is “reasonable and practicable to carry out the relevant works having regard to the age and condition” of the dwelling.

Section 23 of the 1996 Act sets out the purposes for which a DFG grant must or may be given. Section 3 of the **Disabled Facilities Grants (Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes) (Wales) Order 2008** adds two additional purposes for DFGs in Wales.

A local authority **must notify you of its decision to approve or refuse a grant application** within 6 months of receiving it. If your application is refused, the local authority must let you know the reasons for the refusal.

The Welsh Government’s guidance on DFGs can be found in **the National Assembly for Wales Circular 20/2002 (Annex D)**. It was last revised in 2010.

Rapid Response Adaptations Programme

The **Rapid Response Adaptations Programme** (RRAP) is funded by the Welsh Government and delivered through Care & Repair Cymru and other agencies across Wales.

The purpose of the programme is to fund minor adaptations, such as handrails, to enable people to return from hospital to their own homes. It is available to owner occupiers and private tenants.

Physical Adaptations Grant

The **Physical Adaptations Grant** (PAG) supports housing associations to meet the cost of making adaptations to properties they own. Funds are allocated to eligible social housing providers on an annual basis, and are used to support medium or large adaptations.

In January 2021, the then Minister for Climate Change, Julie James MS, stated that

housing associations had been given control over their PAG budget, “to allow them to take a more strategic approach to adaptations and increase the stock of accessible housing in Wales more generally”.

Local authorities may also use their own funds for home adaptation works. Under the **Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002**, local authorities can introduce discretionary forms of assistance (e.g. grants or loans) and are able to set their own conditions or financial limits. This might be used to top-up a DFG, or instead of a DFG.

Charitable grants

Some charities offer grants towards the cost of adaptations or provide equipment and aids free of charge. There is a list of relevant organisations at the end of this guide.

4. Policies, standards and complaints

Local authorities are required by law to **adopt a policy** for how they provide financial assistance for the purposes of improving living conditions in their area. You can request a summary of the policy from your local authority, or it may be published on the local authority website.

The Welsh Government has published **standards of service for housing adaptations**, which set out the level of service expected from all providers involved in delivering housing adaptations. The standards set out how providers should communicate with service users, the expected quality of services and equipment, and what eligibility checks are usually required.

How long does it take to get adaptations installed?

The Welsh Government’s standards of service sets out **expected timeframes** for the delivery of **small, medium and large adaptations**. You can read a summary in the table below.

Table 1: Timeframes for delivery of home adaptations

Type of adaptation	Timeframe for delivery
<p>Small adaptations - i.e. inexpensive items which can be provided quickly</p>	<p>A solution will usually be installed within 3 weeks (if urgent) or 4 weeks (if non-urgent) from date of first contact with the service provider who deemed the adaptation necessary.</p>
<p>Medium adaptations - i.e. anything not classed as small or large</p>	<p>Service users can expect to receive an assessment within 2 months from the date of first contact with the service provider.</p> <p>If the adaptation is deemed necessary, a report or referral to a service provider should be made within 2 weeks of the decision.</p> <p>A solution will usually be installed within 4 months (or in line with legislative requirements) from the date of this referral or report.</p>
<p>Large adaptations - i.e. works which require specialist assessments, statutory approvals and major adaptations to a property</p>	<p>Service users can expect to receive an assessment within 2 months from the date of first contact with the service provider.</p> <p>If the adaptation is deemed necessary, a report or referral to a service provider should be made within 2 weeks of the decision.</p> <p>A solution will usually be installed within 15 months (or in line with legislative requirements) from the date of this referral or report.</p>

Source: Welsh Government, [Housing Adaptations Service Standards](#)

Complaints and appeals

The **standards of service for housing adaptations** state that you have the right to make a complaint if you are not satisfied with the level of service you have received from an organisation providing home adaptations.

You should complain directly to the service provider, who should handle the complaint in accordance with their organisational complaints procedure. If you decide to use your own contractor to carry out the work, it will be your responsibility to deal with and resolve any issues.

If you disagree with a decision made by your local authority relating to home adaptations or social care assessments, you can make a formal complaint. Your local authority website should have information about their complaints procedure.

If you are still unhappy after the local authority has responded to your complaint, you may be able to make a complaint to the **Public Services Ombudsman for Wales**. The Ombudsman has published guidance on complaints relating to **Disabled Facilities Grants** and **social care services**.

5. Other sources of information and support

- **Age Cymru** - provides information and advice to older people. They publish **detailed factsheets and guides** on their website which explain how to access home adaptations, equipment and social care assessments. Website: www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/our-work/in-your-area/. Advice line: 0300 303 44 98. Email: advice@agecymru.org.uk
- **Care & Repair Cymru** - provides assistance for older and disabled people to remain in their own homes. They can help to identify sources of funding, as well as organise the fitting of aids and adaptations. Website: <https://careandrepair.org.uk/our-agencies/>
- **Citizens Advice** - provides free, confidential and independent advice on a range of issues. Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales. Advice line: 0800 702 2020.
- **Disability Justice Project** - publishes guides and resources which help disabled people to understand and exercise their rights. Website: www.disabilityjustice.org.uk/
- **Equality Advisory Support Service (EASS)** - if you've experienced discrimination under the Equality Act 2010, you can get help from the EASS helpline. Website: www.equalityadvisoryservice.com/app/home. Advice line: 0808 800 0082
- **Living Made Easy** - publishes free impartial advice and information on solutions, gadgets, adaptations and aids to make life easier. Website: www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk/
- **Scope** - a disability equality charity that provides information and support relevant to disabled people. Website: www.scope.org.uk/advice-and-support
- **Shelter Cymru** - provides free, confidential and independent advice on housing issues. Website: <https://sheltercymru.org.uk/get-help/>