



**Care & Repair
Newcastle**

Supporting Independent Living

This protocol is about providing information for residents who have a disability to allow them to make informed choices about their home to help them to live independently, safely and with dignity for as long as possible.

For residents with mobility needs the home environment can become a hostile place with steps, staircases and baths being impossible to negotiate. Suitable housing supply forms an essential strand of preventative public health policies with mobility hazards contributing to accidents, hospital admissions and isolation within the home.

Our first Disabled Adaptations Protocol, Supporting Independent Living, delivered many benefits and we want to achieve even more in the next four years by focusing on what makes the most difference to city residents, and further simplifying our processes to speed up delivery. This document also acts as a handbook, helping partners to understand what we need to do during the delivery of disabled adaptations, when and why.

The four principles of fairness identified by the Newcastle Fairness Commission – Fair Share, Fair Play, Fair Go and Fair Say – underpin our whole plan. Fairness is also supported in this area by law. You will find more information about what this means in practice for our Disabled Adaptations Service throughout this document.

Cabinet have agreed a Social Value Commitment which sets out the principles of Social Value; Social Value is, simply, value that accrues in our local communities. It is what city residents say is valuable to them, for example; sustainable employment, a decent place to live, and equal access to a range of quality services in the local area.

By balancing our approach to Social Value with a keen commercial awareness and adopting a client centred approach, we have ensured that our Disabled Adaptations Service activity will continue to contribute significantly the Council's 2016 Efficiency Plan and also that we respond comprehensively to the ten big ideas that cut across planning and transformation in the Council, and in our [Council Plan](#).

Our main focus in this protocol is outward, on the benefits that we can secure for local people. However, our internal rules (rules that Council officers have to follow) and Government legislation are significant drivers of how we procure and deliver disabled adaptations. We have reviewed our rules for this plan to make sure they are designed to contribute as positively as possible to our strategic objectives of fairness and delivering Social Value, so that the service we deliver makes the best possible contribution to city lives.

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Part One: Objectives

Who should read this document?

This protocol has been written for three distinct groups of people:

- Residents (or families of residents) who have a disability;
- Landlords who have tenants with a disability
- Professionals who have a client with a disability

Although these interests are very broad, we have chosen to incorporate the information about each perspective into one protocol and, whichever group you belong to, you can also understand the rules and procedures other people are following.

As well as describing the improvement actions we intend to take this year and our direction of travel up to 2019/20, this protocol is intended as an accessible guide to how the delivery of disabled adaptations in the Council works. Underpinning it are more detailed documents, including the Private Sector Housing Plan, the Newcastle Charter and the Council's Financial Assistance Policy. Please note the terms of these legal documents and the Council's legal obligations at any given time must take precedence over the contents of this protocol.

Our objectives

Our service is fundamentally about supporting independent living. The Council is committed to enhancing residents lives by administering Disabled Facility Grants with the aim of supporting residents to live independently, safely and with dignity in their homes and, if this is not possible, to support residents to make informed decisions about their long term housing needs.

Our resources

We have reorganised our dedicated disabled adaptations resources so that our structure and processes support our objectives in the most effective way:

- We have procured a framework of specialist contractors to deliver adaptations to increase efficiency and improve delivery
- We have streamlined our processes to ensure that customers are at the heart of our service
- We continue to work closely with colleagues in People Directorate to ensure the client journey is a positive experience

Our Planned Improvements

We will work on four major improvements over the life of this plan as detailed in the table below

Our Improvement Priorities	We will:
We want to ensure the service is nationally recognised	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Establish a Home Improvement Agency 'Care and Repair Newcastle' □ Achieve the Foundations Quality Mark Standard which recognises the processes we use are customer focussed □ Attend national and regional HIA meetings to ensure our place in the sector is established
We want to ensure that adaptations are fully utilised for their life expectancy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Introduce a mechanism to loan stair lifts and hoists to clients □ Develop an asset base of equipment which can be installed at short notice □ Reduce waiting times for clients
We want to improve the way we use digital technology to make our processes more transparent	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Ensure our internal processes are streamlined and paperless □ Develop a dedicated website for Care and Repair Newcastle which will contain information for clients and professionals
We want to ensure our client experience is used to improve the service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> □ Carry out satisfaction surveys to determine: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How our contractors perform - The client experience - What we can do better

All of these improvement activities are aimed at maximising the value we get for investments we make as an organisation whilst improving the experience for clients and professionals.

How we save money

We save money through our procurement activity. We have procured a framework of contractors who carry out works on our behalf.

All Council officers have a general duty to ensure the Council obtains good value for money, and that competition is true and fair without discrimination, is transparent and free of corruption under the terms of the Procurement Procedure Rules appended to [Financial Regulation 8 within the Newcastle Charter](#).

Part Two: Background

Policy Statement

We acknowledge that a significant number of our residents are over the age of 60 or have a disability. We have a legal duty to assess and identify the needs of our disabled and older residents and to make arrangements for the provision of adaptations, or other solutions, to meet these needs.

We are committed to helping our residents to live independently in their homes for as long as possible and, in order to do this, a client Pathway Process will be developed to ensure that the most appropriate long term solution is provided.

This Pathway will consider the assessed needs of the client together with all housing options in order to provide long term independence.

This may include:

- Provision of adaptations to an existing home
- Provision of temporary equipment where it is not:
 - reasonable,
 - practical,
 - necessary or
 - appropriate to provide permanent adaptations
- Consideration of long-term housing options
- Support to move to a new home
- Assistance to purchase a home on a shared basis

We are committed to providing a service that supports Independent Living ensuring that:

- Our team are fully trained and are aware of this protocol and the processes we have established
- Our clients are kept informed throughout the process and are satisfied with the service they receive
- We continue to strive to achieve value for money in order to assist as many people as possible within a limited budget.

For the purpose of this protocol the term Occupational Therapist also includes those health professionals who are suitably experienced and qualified to carry out assessments, these include but are not limited to Disability Assessment Officers and Sensory Support Workers.

Context and Legislative Framework

This protocol has been developed taking into account the following information sources:

Information	Implications
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Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996	This is the legislation which specifies the criteria for Disabled Facilities Grants.
The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) [England and Wales] Order 2002	Gives Local Authorities the discretion to top up amounts about the statutory DFG £30,000 limit per applicant.
Newcastle City Council's Everyone's Tomorrow: the strategy for older people and an ageing population in Newcastle upon Tyne (2007)	This sets out the Council's vision for the city, emphasising the role of older people in achieving this and promoting partnership working to met the needs of older people and supporting them to live independently.
Home Adaptations for Disabled People: A Detailed Guide to Related Legislation, Guidance and Good Practice (2013) (updated in 2015)	This is the current national guidance for good practice produced by the Home Adaptations Consortium and published by Care and Repair England.
Lifetime Homes Lifetime Neighbourhoods: A national Strategy for Housing in an Ageing Society	This national strategy highlights an increase in Britain's ageing population and places emphasis on the need for first class services which enable older people to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.
The Care Act 2014	This Act aims to improve people's independence and wellbeing. It makes clear that local authorities must provide or arrange information and services that help prevent people developing needs for care and support or delay people deteriorating such that they would need ongoing care and support.
Newcastle City Council Financial Assistance Policy	This is the policy which specifies when and how financial assistance can be provided to residents.
Newcastle Council Private Sector Housing Plan	This plan brings together all the issues faced by occupants of private sector housing today and in the near future, and contains a set of key actions to help to resolve these.
Newcastle Council Housing Statement	This is one of the Council's key strategic documents which pulls together existing plans and documents to reference our priorities around the future supply, condition and management of housing and associated services in Newcastle. It highlights how we will make best use of the available resources to meet housing and associated care needs and to support the city's economic growth potential

Purpose of this protocol

The purpose of this protocol is to:

- Set out the eligibility criteria by which requests for adaptations will be assessed
- Set out the criteria by which grants will be provided
- Balance the resources available with the expectations of clients
- Outline service standards and the framework used to measure performance
- Set out the criteria for funding works for clients who are moving into the area at the request of another Council due to a social or legal requirement

Scope

We will assist with adaptations in homes which are privately owned, owned by Registered Housing Providers or private landlords.

Eligibility for Assistance

An individual will be considered eligible for assistance with aids and adaptations if they;

- Are a resident in Newcastle with a disability; or
- Care for adult or child resident in Newcastle with a disability; or
- Care for a child not resident in Newcastle where the Council has parental responsibility; and
- Are eligible to reside in the UK and intend to remain in your home for the next 5 years

Applicants may be an owner occupier, private tenant, tenant of a Housing Association or a landlord of a disabled tenant. Proof of ownership or tenancy will be requested upon application. A grant cannot be awarded if there is no intention to remain, or if the property is currently on the market to be sold.

About Disabled Facility Grants and Services

The disabled facilities grant process can be divided four parts:

- **Assessment**, by which we mean deciding what the client needs to support them to live independently. This is usually undertaken by a member of the Occupational Therapy Team.
- **Referral**, by which we mean telling Care and Repair Newcastle what the client needs. A referral is made by the Occupational Therapy Team to Care and Repair Newcastle- the referral contained the clients name and address, contact details and states the adaptations which is recommended to meet the client's assessed need.

- **Application**, by which we mean the process of applying for funds to carry out the adaptations to meet the clients assessed needs
- **Delivery**, by which we mean carrying out works to meet the client's needs

These terms are commonly used in the delivery of disabled facility grants across public, private and voluntary sectors and in law. You will find these terms used throughout this protocol.

Part Three: Assessment and Referral Process

It is the aim of Care and Repair Newcastle to make the process of applying for assistance as straightforward as possible and to support clients during the process.

Residents who consider that they require assistance to live independently are encouraged to visit the My Equipment Newcastle website in the first instance. This website offers residents the opportunity to assess their need and explore the options available to them to resolve the challenges they are facing. The 'My Equipment Newcastle' website can be found [here](#).

If residents have exhausted the options offered by My Equipment Newcastle, they should contact Community Health and Social Care Direct and request a personal assessment. Community Health and Social Care Direct can be contacted by:

Phone: 0191 2788377

Mobile: 0796 8474891

Email: scd@newcastle.gov.uk

You can also write to Community Health and Social Care Direct, 2nd Floor, Allendale Road, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2SZ

Carrying out assessments is the statutory duty of People Directorate and Occupational Therapists will usually visit the client at home, discuss their concerns and assess their needs. If the Occupational Therapist considers that a major adaptation is the most effective solution for the client, a referral will be made to Care and Repair Newcastle to carry out the works.

During the assessment the Occupational Therapist will determine whether the client's needs are urgent and the referral will be graded accordingly.

Priority Status

Occupational Therapists will be responsible for awarding priority status, subject to approval from the Team Manager, to applications following discussion with the applicant; assessment of them and their living conditions. They will give careful consideration to the following circumstances:

- When the applicant has urgent personal hygiene and toileting requirements for example they are experiencing double incontinence and do not have any carers
- Where there are serious moving and handling issues which could present a risk to the client or their carer
- Where the client is suffering from a life threatening illness or rapidly degenerating condition such as Huntington's Disease or Motor Neurone Disease

- Where there is a serious risk to the applicant or their carer;
- Where non provision of an adaptation would affect other social issues e.g. provision of a ramp to facilitate essential day care;
- Where the need for an adaptation is compounded by other social factors e.g.:
 - When a client cannot be discharged from hospital because their current home is not suitable for their needs and could present a potential risk
 - The client is a single parent with dependent children
 - The client is also a carer

This list is not exhaustive. The Occupational Therapist will consider each case individually and priority will be agreed by the Occupational Therapy Manager based on the assessed level of need. It should be noted that priority will not be routinely awarded based only on the clients age.

Priority applications will be processed in date order subject to funding being available.

Routine Status

The majority of cases are routine and this is:

- Where an adaptation is necessary and appropriate, and
- It is not considered to be a priority need

These applications will be processed in date order when all Priority applications being dealt with or have been completed.

Any client who feels that their condition has deteriorated whilst waiting for their case to be processed should contact their Occupational Therapist to discuss their concerns. Any client who is unhappy with the status of their assessment should contact the Occupational Therapy Manager to discuss their concerns.

Quality Assurance

The Senior Home Improvement Officer and Occupational Therapy Team Manager discuss each new referral on a weekly basis. The purpose of these meetings is to review each referral to ensure:

- Each referral contains all of the necessary information to deliver a 'right first time' solution for clients; this may include details about the client's physical condition, preferred method of contact, advocate and assessed needs
- Each referral has been awarded the correct status i.e. routine or priority □ The correct recommendation has been made to meet the client's needs

- The recommended works are reasonable, necessary, practical and appropriate

Housing Options Discussions

It is not always reasonable, practical or appropriate to carry out adaptations to a client's home and on these occasions the Occupational Therapist will invite the clients to discuss their housing options. In the first instance these discussions will take place between the Occupational Therapist and the client; should more specialist advice be required an appropriate referral will be made.

Housing options conversations WILL be prompted when:

- The house cannot physically be adapted to meet the clients essential long term needs and temporary solutions are not suitable
- The cost of the adaptations is likely to exceed the maximum grant amount
- Further adaptations will be required in the longer term
- The client has a condition which cannot be met with adaptations: i.e. obesity
- The client prognosis is terminal and palliative care is more appropriate
- The client does not have a significant support network in the local area
- The property owner has not agreed to the adaptations

It is not appropriate or necessary to carry out a housing options conversation with every client and in general these conversations will NOT be prompted when:

The client is an owner occupier and:

- Requires one or two adaptations costing below £5000
- The client expresses from the outset a desire to remain in the area
- The client's prognosis is good and should be met with minimal adaptations; further adaptations should not be required
- The client has a significant support network in the local area
- The property owner has agreed to the adaptations

This list is not exhaustive and each client will be considered on an individual basis.

Moving House

If a client prefers or intends to move house and indicates this to their Occupational Therapist, a disabled facilities grant cannot be provided because it is a requirement that the client intends to remain in their current home (where the adaptations will be delivered) for the next 5 years.

If it is not reasonable or appropriate to adapt a client's property it will be recommended to the client that they consider moving house to a property which can be more readily adapted or is already adapted to suit their needs.

If the client is a private rented tenant or the tenant of a Registered Housing Provider (RHP), the client will be referred to the Housing Options Team of YHN and supported to make an application to Tyne and Wear Homes for more suitable accommodation.

If the client is an owner occupier grant funding may be awarded to assist with removal costs.

Clients Receiving Palliative Care

Where a client is in receipt of palliative care and requires adaptation/s, the client assessment will be carried out at the earliest opportunity. The Occupational Therapist will endeavour to provide those adaptations or equipment which are essential and where the installation process will not have a negative impact on the client's quality of life.

In cases of urgent need it may be appropriate to forgo a means test and install an adaptation on a loan basis to meet the clients need quickly. The client will be asked to confirm that Care and Repair Newcastle will be notified when the appliance is no longer required in order that arrangements can be made to remove it.

Obesity

Where a client is assessed as obese, it may not be possible to meet their assessed need due to availability of suitable appliances with the relevant load bearing capacity. This is particularly relevant to stair lifts which have a maximum weight capacity and where structural alterations may not be appropriate to strengthen the stair case.

In this case the client will be offered appropriate equipment to help support their independence, housing options advice and, if appropriate, a referral to the relevant professional body to discuss the management of their condition.

Clients moving into Newcastle at the request of another Council

Clients who are 'looked after' by a Council and who are moving into Newcastle at the request of another Council would not usually qualify for grant assistance. The placing Council would retain responsibility for the client and would therefore be required to fund any adaptations required to make a property suitable to meet the client's assessed need.

Part Four: Application and Delivery Process

Application Process

A step by step guide has been produced to guide clients through the grant process and this is available [here](#). Care and Repair Newcastle seek to ensure this is as smooth as possible and to support clients fully but by the nature of grant funding it is a formal process.

It is important to remember that grants are intended to allow people with disabilities and mobility problems to live independently in their home and this may mean adapting an existing room to serve a different purpose or moving to another home which is already adapted or can be adapted more easily. If a client's current home is significantly overcrowded, adaptations will only be provided in exceptional circumstances following approval by the Adaptations Panel.

Care and Repair Newcastle are committed to processing referrals in date order when funds are available.

As a result of the increasing ageing population, demand frequently exceeds funding availability and the ability to deliver; to manage increased demand a waiting list is operated with priority referrals processed as quickly as possible and routine referrals processed in date order.

Application for assistance is dependent on:

- the works being necessary and appropriate
- the works being reasonable and practicable

Necessary and appropriate works are determined following an assessment of the client and their home environment by an Occupational Therapist. This concentrates on the client's ability to remain living independently in their own home and must distinguish between works which are desirable and those which are necessary and appropriate.

Reasonable and practicable: there are times when it is not reasonable or practicable to provide a grant. This could occur when there are excessive changes, where there are space constraints or where moving existing services is prohibitively expensive. Clients will be asked to consider if moving to a more appropriate home would be a better option for their long term needs.

Financial Testing

Once it has been confirmed that the works are necessary and appropriate and reasonable and practicable a means test is completed. Central Government determines the mechanism for the test.

Certain income related benefits will passport the client through the normal Test of Resources. The means test form can be quite complex and proof of income and savings is required, for this reason it is normally conducted at the client's home by a Home Improvement Officer. However if a client is concerned about the likely level of contribution prior to commencing the process this form can be posted to the client for completion and return. This will allow a provisional contribution to be determined, the Home Improvement Officer will however still need to see proof of income if the application continues.

Adaptations Provided

There are a number of different adaptations which may be suitable to meet the needs of the customer including the following:

Adaption Type	Examples
<p>Temporary Adaptations</p> <p>These can be removed easily when they are no longer required</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Metal mesh ramps • Stair Lifts • Ceiling Track Hoists
<p>Permanent Adaptations</p> <p>These meet the longer terms needs of customers and cannot be removed easily when they are no longer required</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Paved ramps • Level access showers • Multi-function toilets (wash and dry) • Shower cubicles • Widening doors • Wheelchair accessible kitchen units • Through Floor Lift • Step Lift • Reconfiguration of space to provide wheelchair circulation • Access Alterations • Room conversions

Quality Assurance

All works will be inspected as complete and suitable to meet the client's assessed needs **before** any grants are paid. At this time any warranties which are relevant will be handed to the client for safe keeping.

Most works will be accompanied with a 12 months guarantee and the warranty will provide full details of this.

Works which are required after the warranty period has expired are the responsibility of the client or, in some cases, their landlord.

Delivery Routes

Direct Delivery

Where only grant funded works are to be carried out, the Home Improvement Officer will appoint a Contractor from the Council's approved framework; this removes the need for the client to obtain an estimate for the cost of the identified work. This framework is established according to the Council's procurement protocol and will ensure best value and competency.

Clients Preferred Scheme

In some cases clients may wish to carry out works above and beyond those that can be grant funded. This is acceptable provided the guidelines are adhered to.

- If an alternative scheme is preferred and pursued it must meet all of the client's identified assessed need which the grant would have met; the plans must be agreed by the overseeing Occupational Therapist in consultation with the Home Improvement Officer;
- The grant will only be based on works identified by Care and Repair Newcastle as 'necessary and appropriate';
- In order to calculate the amount of grant the client is entitled to, 3 competitive estimates, obtained by the client, must be provided for the works agreed by the Council as necessary and appropriate. Care and Repair Newcastle cannot assist with obtaining these estimates at the time this policy was developed;
 - A valid estimate contains:
 - a unique identification number,
 - a company name, address and contact information (including landline telephone),
 - the customer's name and address,
 - the address where the work would take place,
 - a clear description of what the estimate is for,
 - the date of the estimate,
 - how long the estimate is valid for, ▪ the overall amount, and
 - the VAT amount if applicable.
- The client must provide evidence that they have sufficient funds to meet their cost of the works;
- Any unforeseen works which are unrelated to the proposed grant works and relate solely to the clients preferred scheme are the client's responsibility;
- Interim payments will be made by Care and Repair Newcastle on alternative schemes only **after** the client's full contribution has been made;

- Full and final monies will only be released when the alternative scheme works are completed and an assessment has confirmed that the completed works **fully** meet the identified needs;
- Care and Repair Newcastle will work in partnership with clients to deliver their alternative scheme and will provide advice and support to clients. Should the client wish Care and Repair Newcastle to deliver their scheme a fee of up to 15% of the total costs of the works will be charged; details of this charges can be found in the appendices
- The client must sign an agreement confirming the scope of the agreed works; and

Recycling

In order to ensure that Care and Repair Newcastle makes best use of its resources, we will recycle adaptations wherever possible. This means we will be able to assist as many people as possible within our limited budget.

We will always recycle stair lifts, hoists and may recycle some ramps to clients who are receiving palliative care which means they will be installed as a loan item rather than a means tested, grant funded item. This means that we can meet a client's assessed need quicker.

These items will be fully serviced and maintained by Care and Repair Newcastle and removed when they are no longer needed.

Recycled items will be fully serviced before being installed to make sure that they are safe and fit for purpose.

In the event that major structural alterations are required to install any of these items, this aspect of the work will be delivered as a means tested grant.

Part Five: Framework Contractors and Contract Management

Contract management is the process by which the Council checks that it is gaining value for money from its third party spending, and assures itself that contract requirements are being met. It provides the Council with an opportunity for dialogue with the provider to spot any issues or opportunities in a timely way, helps to assure the Council that contracts are being delivered safely and to the expected quality standards, and also provides a mechanism to check that the contract is delivering outcomes for people in the city.

For all of these reasons, contract management is a critical part of the disabled adaptations cycle. To be able to manage contracts effectively, it is important that certain decisions about our requirements are made during the commissioning phase, that these requirements are made clear during procurement phase, and that both the Council's contract manager and the provider work to meet these standards.

The key requirements for effective contract management are to:

- **Ensure there is an identified contract manager:** this is the Senior Home Improvement Officer who is responsible for managing the framework of contractors
- **Determine level of risk:** contract managers should undertake a [risk assessment](#) which will determine the intensity with which a contract must be managed in order to provide adequate assurance to the Council. This assessment takes account of important factors such as financial value, whether a contract is business critical, and the nature of the contract delivery. This may however differ if it is a collaborative contract as the risk will be determined by the collaboration.
- **Determine a proportionate contract management approach:** the contract manager will then determine the appropriate level of performance and quality management for the contract.
- **Clarify expectations with the provider:** it is important to be clear with the provider about what the contract management arrangements will be, including the outcome of the risk assessment, the reporting requirements, reporting format, and frequency (including the criteria and frequency of any quality monitoring which may apply).
- **Active contract management throughout the life of the contract:** once the expectations are set during the commissioning and procurement phases, and both the Council and provider are clear on their roles and responsibilities, the Council Contract Manager should ensure that the contract is actively managed in line with the guidelines as agreed. This includes acting in a timely way on any intelligence which arises throughout the life of the contract which may trigger a change to contract management arrangements, e.g. a new risk assessment, additional monitoring, or escalation procedures.

1. The role of framework contractors

As recipients of public funds, providers who enter into a contract with the Council have an important role within the process to help ensure that our contracts deliver value for money outcomes, and that opportunities and threats to contract delivery are identified. Providers should be familiar with the stages below and work actively in partnership with the Council on these stages throughout the life of the contract:

- **Risk assessment:** the contract being delivered has been subject to a risk assessment which determined the appropriate level and frequency of contract management required.
- **Performance Reporting:** Regardless of the level of risk within the contract, there will be some performance reporting requirements within the contract to assure the Council that important quality and value for money criteria are being met, and to help both parties to identify any important trends which may emerge during the contract.
- **Quality Monitoring:** as our contractors are providing a 'high risk' service on behalf of the Council working directly with vulnerable groups quality monitoring is undertaken via a quality monitoring visit and a client survey.

Part Six: Governance

Council governance of the Disabled Facilities Process

This section is about the formal Decisions that the Council may make relating to disabled adaptations, when they are required and who can make them.

	Responsibility
Occupational Therapy Team	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carrying out client assessment of need • making referrals • agreeing works are meeting need • discussing client housing options
Occupational Therapy Team Manager	□ Agreeing Priority
Home Improvement Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Assessing eligibility • Financial assessment • Appointing contractor • Arranging works • Approving works • Paying grant • Inspection of works • Single point of contact for clients • Manage any variations to schemes • Satisfaction Surveys
Senior Home Improvement Officer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Procuring and appointing framework contractors • Managing Framework Contractors • Financial assurance • Supervision of service delivery • Investigating Stage 1 complaints • Monitoring performance, spend and satisfaction

Private Housing Team Manager	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Management of Service • Development of Protocol • Overseeing delivery • Quality assurance • Investigating Stage 2 complaints • Reporting performance, spend and satisfaction
Adaptations Panel	<p>□ Considering applications which sit outside of policy and making recommendations as appropriate which may include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Award of additional funds, via a Helping Hand Equity Loan, when client cannot pay contribution
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - that client is advised to seek rehousing - Approving none, some or all of the works

Appendices

Appendix 1: Disabled Facilities Grant – Mandatory Description Eligibility

All owner-occupiers and tenants, licensees or occupiers who satisfy the eligibility criteria in sections 19 to 22 of the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (hereafter referred to as the Act) can apply for a DFG. Landlords may also apply for a DFG on behalf of a disabled tenant but must also satisfy the requirements relating to the security of the tenant. Registered Housing Providers (RHP's) tenants are eligible to apply for a DFG and are needs assessed and means tested on the same basis as private owners and tenants.

An individual/household cannot become a client unless there is an up to date confirmation from an Occupational Therapist which identifies an assessed need which can only be met by the provision of an adaptation.

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Description

The purposes for which mandatory disabled facilities grants may be given are set out in section 23(1) of the Act, as amended from time to time by the Secretary of State, and fall into a number of categories:

Facilitating Access and Provision – These purposes include works to remove or help overcome obstacles which prevent a disabled person moving freely into and around the dwelling and enjoying the use of the dwelling and the facilities or amenities within it. In particular facilitating access:

- a) to and from the dwelling, garden or the building in which the dwelling or, as the case may be, flat is situated;
- b) to a room used or usable as the principal family room;
- c) to a room used or usable for sleeping or alternatively providing such a room for the disabled occupant;
- d) to a room in which there is
- e) a lavatory, a bath or a shower (or both) and a washbasin or providing a room in which there is such a facility or facilities;
- f) for the preparation and cooking of food.

In considering applications for grant towards such works, the presumption will normally be that the occupant should have reasonable access into their home, to the main habitable rooms within the home – namely the living room and bedroom, and to a bathroom or shower room in which there are suitable facilities for washing and/or showering.

Making a dwelling or building safe - Section 23(1)(b) of the Act allows grant to be given for certain adaptations to the dwelling or building to make it safe for the disabled person and other persons residing with him. This may be the provision of lighting where safety is an issue or for adaptations designed to minimise the risk of danger where a disabled person has behavioural problems which causes him to act in a boisterous or violent manner damaging the house, himself and perhaps other people. Where such need has been identified, DFG is available to carry out appropriate adaptations to eliminate or minimise that risk.

For those with hearing difficulties, an enhanced alarm system, which may be required in the dwelling to provide improved safety for the disabled occupant in connection with the use of cooking facilities or works to provide means of escape from fire, could also qualify for mandatory grant under subsection (1)(b).

These measures might include the provision of specialised lighting (or measures such as special blinds to reduce lighting where the disabled person has sensitivity to light), toughened or shatterproof glass in certain parts of the dwelling to which the disabled person has normal access or the installation of guards around certain facilities such as fires or radiators to prevent the disabled person harming himself. Sometimes reinforcement of floors, walls or ceilings may be needed, as may be cladding of exposed surfaces and corners to prevent self-injury.

Room usable for sleeping - While in some cases a living room may be large enough to enable a second room for sleeping to be created, in smaller homes this will not be possible. The provision of a room usable for sleeping under section 23(1)(d) will normally only be undertaken if Care and Repair Newcastle is satisfied that the adaptation of an existing room in the dwelling (upstairs or downstairs) or the access to that room is unsuitable in the particular circumstances. Where the disabled occupant shares a bedroom with another person, mandatory grant may be given to provide a room of sufficient size so that the normal sleeping arrangements can be maintained.

Bathroom - The provisions in section 23(1) relating to the provision of a lavatory and washing, bathing and showering facilities enable a disabled person to apply for DFG to have access to a wash hand basin, a WC and a shower or bath (or if more appropriate, both a shower and a bath). In some cases this may be provided by the installation of a shower cubicle in the client's bedroom.

Facilitating preparation and cooking of food - The provision in section 23(1)(h) covers a wide range of works to enable a disabled person to cater independently. Eligible works include the rearrangement or enlargement of a kitchen to ease manoeuvrability of a wheelchair and specially modified or designed storage units, gas, electricity and plumbing installations to enable the disabled person to use these facilities independently.

Where most of the cooking and preparation of meals is done by another household member, it would not normally be appropriate to carry out full adaptations to the kitchen. However, it might be appropriate that certain adaptations be carried out to enable the

disabled person to perform certain functions in the kitchen, such as preparing light meals or hot drinks.

Heating, lighting and power - Section 23(1)(i) provides for the improvement of an existing heating system in the dwelling to meet the disabled occupant's needs. Where there is no heating system or where the existing heating arrangements are unsuitable to meet his/her needs, a heating system may be provided. A DFG would not be given to adapt or install heating in rooms which are not normally used by the disabled person. The installation of central heating to the dwelling would only be considered where the well-being and mobility of the disabled person would otherwise be adversely affected. Any installation must meet the current recommended efficiency standards.

Section 23(1)(j) provides for works to enable a disabled person to have full use of heating, lighting and power controls in the dwelling. Such work includes the relocation of power points to make them more accessible, the provision of suitably adapted controls where a disabled person has difficulty in using normal types of controls and the installation of additional controls.

Appendix 2: Financial Assistance, Means Testing and Conditions Amount of Assistance

The Disabled Facilities Grants (Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes) (England) Order 2008 (SI 2008 No.1189) places a limit of £30,000 on the amount of mandatory DFG which may be given. This limit may be altered from time to time by the Secretary of State.

Additional Financial Assistance

Where eligible works include property extensions and cost more than the statutory DFG limit of £30,000, additional financial assistance will be offered to increase this limit to £40,000,000.

Additional grant funding may be offered in exceptional circumstances on a case-by-case basis, taking into consideration the impact on the applicant if additional funding wasn't approved. Where the costs of works exceed the grant limit, applicants will be required to self-fund any additional costs and should not commit to the works unless the funding arrangements for the additional costs are organised as grant funds cannot be realised under the project is finished.

The Occupational Therapist or Home Improvement Agency may assist the client to make application to any relevant charitable body, Trade Union or SSAFA.

If the client is an owner occupier it may be possible to offer a Helping Hand Loan which will be secured by placing a charge against the property requiring that the loan is repaid when the property is sold.

If the client is a tenant of an RHP, the RHP will be asked to consider funding the additional works.

If the client is a private rented tenant, the tenant will be asked to consider moving to a more appropriate property and will be given support to do so.

Should the contractor require an interim payment the client will be asked to pay their contribution in full before any payment will be made by Care and Repair Newcastle.

Conditions Applying to the Provision of Assistance

Certificates and conditions of occupation - All applications for DFG must be accompanied by a certificate relating to the future occupation of the property, and Care and Repair Newcastle will not consider an application unless such a certificate is provided. There are three different types of certificate:

Owner-occupiers - An 'owners certificate' certifies that the client has, or proposes to acquire, an owner's interest (as defined in section 21(2)) in the dwelling, and that he/she intends that the disabled occupant will live in the dwelling as his/her only or main residence

from the certified date throughout the grant condition period (5 years from the date of completion) or for such shorter period as his/her health and other relevant circumstances permit. The certificate serves to confirm the intention on application, and does not automatically require repayment of grant where there is a breach of condition. However, the Council retains discretion to demand repayment of the grant or cease to make further instalments if there is a change of circumstances, or on the basis that more grant than was appropriate was awarded, or that the client was not entitled to a grant. (Sections 40 and 43 of the Act as amended by the Order).

Tenants – There are similar rules regarding intention at the time of application for tenants and occupiers. A “tenant’s certificate” certifies that the client is the tenant, and that s/he intends that the disabled occupant will live in the dwelling as his/her only or main residence from the certified date throughout the grant condition period or for such shorter period as his/her health and other relevant circumstances permit. The same conditions outlined above, apply to repayment of grant.

A tenant’s application should, however, normally be accompanied by an owner’s certificate from the landlord, unless the Council consider it unreasonable in the circumstances to require it.

Occupier’s certificates (in relation to houseboat and park home applications)

An ‘occupiers certificate’ certifies that the client intends that the disabled occupant will live in the qualifying houseboat or park home as his/her only or main residence from the certified date throughout the grant condition period or for such shorter period as his/her health and other relevant circumstances permit.

An ‘occupier’s application’ must, however, normally be accompanied by a consent certificate from each person who owns the mooring or land on which the houseboat or park home is stationed, or who owns the houseboat or park home (i.e. the landlord).

3.6 Properties held in trust

There are no specific provisions governing grant applications in respect of dwellings owned by trusts and such applications are therefore, subject to the same conditions as those applying to applications by owner-occupiers, tenants and occupiers. Eligibility for grant is likely to depend on the terms of the individual trust and the Council will consider any such application on its merits, as after taking legal advice if necessary.

A trustee or beneficiary applying for a grant must be able to fulfil all the normal grant conditions. So, for example, the client must be able to demonstrate a relevant interest in the property, either as an owner or a tenant, and must meet the conditions associated with either interest, including providing the appropriate certificate of future occupation.

3.7 Means Testing

The Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996 (as amended) provides a definition of 'relevant person' for the purposes of applications for DFG. Means testing will be carried out in accordance with the prevailing statutory instrument in force at any particular time.

The Means test will determine the amount of any contribution which a client has to make towards the works. In the event that the client has a contribution towards the works and is unable to make the contribution, the Occupational Therapist or Home Improvement Agency may assist the client to make application to any relevant charitable body, Trade Union or SAFA.

If the client is a Social Tenant, the RHP will be approached for assistance.

If there is still a shortfall and the client is an owner-occupier, a Helping Hands Loan may be pursued to cover this cost, however as fees are attributed to the administration of any loan, in the case where a client's contribution is below £600 the Private Housing Team Manager may elect to award the full cost of the shortfall in the client's contribution.

In the event that additional funding cannot be secured to cover the client's contribution or the client has refused to make the contribution, the Occupational Therapist will be asked to provide temporary equipment, where possible and appropriate.

The Adaptations Panel has discretion to award the full cost of the work or to make a partial award to cover the most essential works. In cases of extreme urgency, when the Adaptations Panel cannot be convened, the Private Housing Team Manager has discretion to make the appropriate award. This will only occur when every other funding avenue has been explored. Neither the Adaptions Panel nor the Private Housing Manager are obliged or compelled to exercise their discretion to make any award to cover even any essential works

Appendix 3: Performance Management

There are no longer any national performance indicators for DFGs or adaptations. The 'Home Adaptations for Disabled People: A Detailed Guide to Related Legislation' (2013) suggests a number of possible indicators and this has been used as basis to develop a number of performance measures for adaptations carried out by Care and Repair Newcastle.

Performance management can be categorised as measures used to benchmark our performance against others, and measures used to monitor the effectiveness of the service being provided.

Benchmarking

Benchmarking performance is important as it allows us to judge our performance against that of other similar organisations using a set of predetermined indicators. Care and Repair Newcastle has benchmarked its performance for a number of years against the other North East authorities and continues to do so on a quarterly basis.

The benchmarking measures used are:

Indicator Reference	Title	Description
PM1	Enquiry Stage	Duration between initial contact to referral being made
PM2	Referral/Application Stage	Duration between referral to grant approval
PM3	Approval Stage	Duration between grant approval to certified completion
PM4	End to End Times	Duration between initial contact to certified completion
PM5	Average End to End Time	Average duration between initial contact to certified completion

Performance Measures

The use of performance measures is important for a number of reasons. The indicators used are relevant to the service, are clearly defined, and are simple to record and monitor. This allows us to monitor the effectiveness of the service being offered, highlight any areas which require future improvement, and demonstrate the effectiveness of the service being offered. It can also provide future clients with confidence in the ability of Care and Repair Newcastle to provide the service that they need.

The following performance measures are used:

Indicator Reference	Title	Description
PM6	Client Satisfaction - Service	This is a measure of the service provided by the Contractor to Care and Repair Newcastle
PM7	Client Satisfaction - Product	This is a measure of the product provided by the Contractor to Care and Repair Newcastle
PM8	Customer Satisfaction - Tidiness	This is a measure of how tidy the Contractor was when carrying out the work
PM9	Customer Satisfaction - Courtesy	This is a measure of how courteous the Contractor was when carrying out the work
PM10	Customer Satisfaction - Service	This is a measure of the service provided by the Contractor to the Customer
PM11	Customer Satisfaction - Product	This is a measure of the product provided by the Contractor to the Customer
PM12	Defects / Snagging	This is measure of the finished product and assesses whether there are any defects or outstanding/snagging works
PM13	Site Safety	This is a measure of how safely the work was delivered by the Contractor
PM14	Increased Contact and Involvement	This a measure of whether the customer is able to have more contact with friends and family and take part in activities or groups within the community as a result of the adaptation
PM15	Increased Health	This a measure of whether the customer is able to take more care of their physical or mental health as a result of the adaptation
PM16	Quality of Life Improvement	This a measure of whether the customer feels their quality of life has improved generally as a result of the adaptation
PM17	Provision of Information	Proportion of customers satisfied with the information provided about the options available to them to meet their need
PM18	Understanding of work and benefits	Proportion of customers satisfied with the information given to them about the work to be carried out and the impact it would have for them

PM19	Progress Updates	Proportion of customers satisfied with how they were kept in informed during the process
PM20	Occupational Therapy Team Service	Proportion of customers satisfied with the service provided
PM21	Care and Repair Newcastle Service	Proportion of customers satisfied with the service provided
PM22	Overall Time Taken	Proportion of customers satisfied with the length of time taken to provide the service
PM23	Overall Service as a Whole	Proportion of customers satisfied with the overall service provided

A number of these measures (PM6 to PM13) are used to monitor the performance of our framework contractors. We appoint contractors to a 4 year framework to ensure that, when required, we can provided a service where we can:

- be legally compliant,
- ensure true and fair competition.
- prevent fraud and corruption,
- avoid inconsistency and unreasonable discrimination, and
- promote best value and consumer protection.

The majority of our clients use our contractors so we use these performance measures to ensure that the service provided is to a consistently high standard.

Appendix 4: Measuring Satisfaction

Client satisfaction is difficult to measure for several reasons, often if people are satisfied they prefer to keep quiet. However it is essential that we receive feedback from our clients to ensure that we continue to provide an excellent service and make improvements based on what our clients tell us. We also need to ensure what our clients expect from us and understanding this will help us to satisfy expectations and delivery excellence.

Surveying clients is the best way of obtaining feedback and to obtain credible feedback every client will be asked to complete a survey, answering questions on a weighted scale to tell us their views on:

- service provided by the Occupational Therapy Team including:
 - the time taken to be assessed
 - client involvement and understanding the process
- service provided by Care and Repair Newcastle including:
 - information provided
 - did it fully explain the impact of the works
 - was it provided at the right time ○ progress updates
 - were they timely
- service provided by the contractor ○ were they tidy ○ were they courteous ○ did they work safely
- the product provided ○ are there any defects or outstanding works ○ is the product working effectively
- the impact on quality of life ○ has it improved the clients ability to socialise ○ has the clients mental and physical health improved ○ has overall quality of life improved

Appendix 5: Service Standards

Care and Repair Newcastle is committed to ensuring that the delivery of adaptations is a positive experience for clients and will:

- Offer a friendly, professional and polite service
- Deal with your enquiry as quickly as possible
- Listen to you
- Give you our name
- Adapt our communication in response to your needs
- Value feedback from clients and use it to improve our services
- Do what we say we are going to do
- Keep you informed
- Provide easy-to-understand information
- Respect your privacy
- Show you our identification card if we visit you at home

Appendix 6: Fees and charges

Fee Charging Structure

Estimated Value of Work	Fee Level	Minimum Amount	Maximum Amount	£1 to
£5,000	15%	£250	£750	
£5,001 – to £10,000	15%	N/A	£1,500	
£10,001 to £20,000	12.5%	N/A	£2,500	
£20,001 to £30,000	12.5%	N/A	£3,750	
£30,001 and above	12.5%			

Note:

1. The actual final fee level will be determined by the final cost of the work once completed up to any identified maximum sum.
2. Fees are to be paid as follows:
 - 30% on instruction
 - 30% when work is ordered
 - Balance on completion of work
3. Fees paid are non-refundable.
4. The cost of any necessary surveys, applications or consents will be charged separately

Appendix 7 – Complaints and Comments

We aim to provide high-quality services for all clients when dealing with complaints. We accept that things can sometimes go wrong and we need to know when you are not happy with our service. When you tell us what you are not happy with, we can try to put things right. In future, we can try to get it right first time. We will treat all complaints seriously and deal with your complaint positively. We see any complaints as an opportunity to improve our services.

We are committed to putting you first and providing quality customer service. This includes dealing with any complaint you may have. We will:

- Deal with complaints quickly and fairly
Tell you what is happening with your complaint and do everything we can to help you
- Do our best to treat the information you give us in confidence
- Explain our decision
- Use complaints to review and improve the way we provide services

How to make complaints

You can complain using an online form, by phone, in person or by letter. Please:

- Complete our online form
- Phone 0191 2787878 and ask for 'Complaints' from 8 am to 6pm Monday to Thursday and from 8 am to 4.30 p.m. on Fridays. For customers with hearing difficulties please use our minicom: 0191 2114944
- Visit any of our council offices or Customer Services Centres, or libraries in person (please check their opening days and times before you visit) or
- Write to:

Complaints at Newcastle
Newcastle City Council
Civic Centre
Newcastle upon Tyne
NE1 8QH

Comments and suggestions

As well as learning from complaints, we want to know any comments or suggestions you may have to help us improve our services. You can do this by telling a member of the Home Improvement Agency team about your comment or suggestion or by putting your comment or suggestion in writing to:

Care and Repair Newcastle
9th Floor
Civic Centre
Barras Bridge
Newcastle
NE1 8PR

Email: careandrepairnewcastle.co.uk