

Your Disabled Facilities Grant application

A Handbook for clients

Cambs HIA

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About The Cambs Home Improvement Agency and Your Council

The Cambs Home Improvement Agency is a single Agency used by, and covering the areas of, Huntingdon District Council, South Cambs District Council and Cambridge City Council.

Your Council will adhere to the Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, but will also have their own Policy document on how to administer Grants and Loans within the Act.

As there is only one Agency covering the different Councils, there may be differences in the administration of your application, depending on which area you live in.

About this Booklet

You have been given this booklet because someone in your household has a disability and your home needs to be adapted in some way so that the disabled person can use all the main facilities with as much ease, comfort and independence as possible.

Adapting a home can be very expensive. A Disabled Facilities Grant can help to meet some or all of this cost.

This booklet tells you about that application process. It tells you:

- Who will be involved in your grant application and what responsibilities these different people and organisations have toward you;
- The purposes for which a grant can be made and how we decide which facilities will be supported with a grant and which will not be;
- What you will need to do in order to make an application;
- How we will decide how much grant, if any, you will be paid.

Most importantly, this booklet tells you the part that you play in influencing the kind of facility you get and it tells you what you can do if you think that we have not got this, or any other part of the process, right.

Making sure that we cover all of this, means you have a lot of reading to do! We have tried to make this a little easier for you by setting things out in the order that they should happen. And if yours is a straightforward case – and most are – a lot of the things we talk about later in the booklet are not likely to apply to you. You may therefore want only to read the first few sections and then go on to read the other sections as and when you need to.

We would urge you to keep this booklet in a safe place so that you can refer back to it whenever you need to.

We have used a “question and answer” format to explain the application process. If, having read this booklet, you have questions that are not raised here or if there is something you would like explained to you in more detail, please phone the Cambs Home Improvement Agency on 01954 713347 or 01954 713330. If your question is about the Law or the Council’s wider policy on how we deal with complex or very expensive Disabled Facilities needs, please phone the Officer responsible for Disabled Facilities Grants in Your Council. Their number can be found at the back of this booklet together with other numbers that may be of help to you.

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Please note if you wish to apply for, or have already applied for a disabled facilities grant, works should not be started until they have been agreed by your council. Your council is unable to pay for work in retrospect. Therefore if work is started before the grant is approved, you may be responsible for paying for the work yourself.

Please contact the agency or the officer responsible for disabled facilities grants in your council for further guidance.

It should also be the intention of the person for whom the grant/loan is being applied for that the dwelling to be adapted will be their only or main residence, and occupied by them, throughout the grant condition period which is currently 5 years or shorter if health or other circumstances should change.

1. Disabled Facilities Assistance

Q. What is Disabled Facilities Assistance?

A. Disabled Facilities Assistance is a range of Grants and Loans that can be awarded by your Council to help you adapt your home to suit your disability. Below is a list of the different elements that may be available to you:

1. Disabled Facility Grant

This is a mandatory Grant of up to £30,000 to assist with adapting your home. This is available to Home Owners or Tenants (Private or Housing Association).

2. Top Up Assistance

Top up Assistance may be used to 'top up' a Disabled Facilities Grant if the costs exceed £30,000. Top up assistance is made as an interest-free Loan or Grant and can be secured on the property by a Legal Charge. The maximum amount for Top Up can be up to £15,000 (depending on your circumstances and Council Policy).

Q. Who is eligible to apply for Top up Assistance and who will get it?

All applications for Top up Assistance are considered on a case-by-case basis, and would also be dependant on your Council Policy and budgets. The following would also be taken into account:

- The Occupational Therapist's option appraisal. (If the needs of the disabled person can be met using a most cost effective option this will count against the application);
- The potential alternative options open to the client (for example moving to a more adaptable property or to social housing).
- Whether the applicant themselves can raise the money (through a bank loan or help from family, friends or a statutory agency like Social Services or a charity). Your Council may want proof that these options have been tried and have failed.

- The amount of Top up Assistance needed. (The Council will tend to favour a case where the award is small).
- Whether, by giving this assistance to an applicant, the Council will be making another person with a disability wait longer for their own Grant. This will count against your application.

An application for Top up Assistance will need to be approved by the Officer responsible for Disabled Facilities Grants in your Council. (Their phone number can be found at the end of this booklet).

Q. Top up Assistance and Tenants

A. The Council treats homeowners and tenants equally because it awards Disabled Facilities Grants of up to £30,000 to either group. Top up Assistance may not always be available to Tenants. You should discuss your individual circumstances with your Agency Caseworker.

3. Special Purposes Assistance

Special Purposes Assistance may be awarded in exceptional circumstances to provide a facility that falls outside of the Disabled Facility Grant purposes. Special Purposes Assistance might be made, for example, to provide storage for disability equipment or to fit out a room so that a disabled person can work from home. The maximum amount for Special Purposes Assistance can be up to £15,000 (depending on your circumstances and Council Policy).

A request for Special Purposes Assistance must be endorsed by an Occupational Therapist.

Q. How will the Council decide whether to make an award of Special Purposes Assistance?

A. As with the Top up Assistance, all applications for Special Purpose Assistance are considered on a case-by-

case basis, and would also be dependant on your circumstances and Council Policy. The following would also be taken into account:

- The strength of the case made by the Occupational Therapist;
- Whether the applicant themselves can raise the money (through bank loan or help from family, friends or a statutory agency like Social Services or a charity). The Council may want proof that these options have been tried and have failed.
- How much the facility will cost. (The Council will tend to favour a less expensive facility).
- Whether, by giving an award of Special Purposes Assistance to an applicant, the Council will be making another person with a disability wait longer for their own Grant. This will count against your application.

An application for Special Purposes Assistance will need to be approved by the Officer responsible for Disabled Facilities Grants in your Council.

Q. Special Purposes Assistance and Tenants

- A. Depending on your Council and their Policy, Special Purpose Assistance may not be available if you are a tenant in the property. You should discuss your individual circumstances with your Agency Caseworker.

Q. How do I apply for Special Purposes Assistance?

- A. If the application is made as part of a Disabled Facilities Grant application then there is no additional application procedure. If there is no current Disabled Facilities Grant application the application for Special Purposes Assistance may be made on the same form as is used to apply for a DFG. (Any application will be subject to the same Means Testing rules that apply to DFG's – see page 13).

4. Disabled Persons' Relocation Grant

Disabled Persons' Relocation Grant can be awarded to help a disabled person to move home when:

- The Council is satisfied that a person has a need that makes him or her eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant;
- In the Council's opinion the disabled person's existing accommodation is not suitable to be adapted;
- The disabled person is willing to move to alternative accommodation that would be more suitable for their needs, as discussed with the Occupational Therapist;
- The total cost to the Council of all assistance (including the Disabled Facilities Grant) will be no more than the cost of adapting the disabled person's existing accommodation.
- Each case is considered on its own merits, and should be discussed further with your Agency Caseworker.

Q. What expenses can be covered by a Disabled Person's Relocation Grant?

- A. Disabled Persons' Relocation Grant can be made to cover the cost of:
- removal expenses;
 - carpets, window coverings and white goods;
 - estate agent's fees;
 - redecoration;
 - security measures; and
 - other necessary costs.

Q. What is the maximum Disabled Persons' Relocation Grant that can be awarded?

- A. There is no formal upper limit but funding will be limited to an amount that is, in the opinion of the Council, reasonable. At least 2 quotes must be provided for each item that is being claimed and no grant will be paid unless there is a clear demonstration of a saving to the Council or a clinical or social advantage to the disabled person.

Q. How do I apply for a Relocation Grant?

An application can be made as part of your application for Disabled Facilities Grant.

2. Getting your Application Started

Q. How do I get my application for a Disabled Facilities Grant started?

- A. If you received this booklet from an Occupational Therapist (OT) the process has started.

If not, you can start the process by contacting the Occupational Therapy Service at Cambs Direct on 0345 045 5205. They will arrange for an Occupational Therapist to make an assessment of your needs. This will be confirmed by letter from Cambs Direct or the Occupational Therapy Service.

Because of the way that the grants law is set up, the application process is quite complex and there are several stages your application will need to go through before it can be said to be a "valid" or "completed application".

Q. What will happen next?

- A. The next stage will be for the Occupational Therapist to assess your needs and if applicable make a recommendation to The Agency or your Council.

Q. So an Occupational Therapist will always have to come out and visit me?

- A. Not necessarily. The Occupational Therapist (OT) is a person who is skilled in assessing the functional needs of disabled people. Under the Law, your Council has to ask Cambridgeshire County Council Social Services for advice about the things a disabled person needs. Cambridgeshire County Council Social Services then asks the Occupational Therapy Service (which is a part of the local health service trust) to provide this advice on its behalf. The Occupational Therapist will then advise you and your Council of their recommendations.

In most cases the OT will visit you at home. In some cases the OT may be able

to make the referral by speaking with you about your needs over the phone.

It is possible that the Occupational Therapist may recommend that you do not need to have an aid or adaptation at the present time or that you need only a small item which Social Services may supply for you without you having to apply for a grant.

Q. Do I have to use an Occupational Therapist (OT)?

- A. The DFG rules do not specify that you must use an OT, however we must consult with Social Services and using an OT is the best way to do this and to have your needs assessed.

Q. Can I choose to use a private Occupational Therapist?

- A. Please see the question further on in this handbook 'What if I don't want to wait for an Occupational Therapist to visit?'

Q. So what is the role of my Council?

- A. Your Council has the main responsibility in the Disabled Facilities Grant application process, and administers and processes your grant application (through its agent, the Cambs Home Improvement Agency). The Council makes the final decision about what will and will not be supported by a grant and how much grant will be paid.

Q. Do I have to use the Home Improvement Agency?

- A. No, you can apply to the Council direct but the Home Improvement Agency has been specially developed to work with customers requesting Disabled Facilities Grants and has built up expertise over time. Whilst we would wish to encourage you to engage the services of the Agency we cannot force you to do this. We have written an advice notice to guide you through the process and alert you to the potential risks of going it alone. For more

information or a copy of the advice notice, please contact the Officer in your Council who is responsible for DFG's. Their number is given on the back of this Guide.

In order for an application to be valid it must be in writing and specify the premises to which it relates. Applications must also contain:

- Particulars of the works in respect of which the grant is sought known as the relevant works.
- Unless the local authority state otherwise, at least two estimates from different contractors of the cost of carrying out the relevant works.
- Particulars of any preliminary or ancillary services and charges in respect of the cost of carrying out the relevant works, such as charges for planning permission, building regulations approval, architects and surveyors' fees, Home Improvement Agency fees, Occupational Therapist Services. However, local authorities cannot charge for performing their statutory duty in determining grant applications.
- Such other particulars as may be prescribed. I.e. the financial information required for the test of resources.

The Secretary of State has prescribed a form in which a valid application must be made. The application must be in the prescribed form but not necessarily on a prescribed form. To assist you we will provide you with one of our application forms on request.

Q. What Happens After I have been assessed By the Occupational Therapist?

- A. Once you have been assessed by your Occupational Therapist, a copy of their recommendation is sent to the Agency. The Agency will then arrange to complete one of their own application forms with you.

Q I am worried because you said that the application process can be quite complex. What help can I get?

- A. The Agency will do all it can to help you throughout the processing of your application.

If you want, the Agency can help you to fill out forms and help you to get the documents you will need in order for your application to be valid.

The Agency will also help you to find a contractor to carry out the work and make sure that the work is done properly.

If English is not your first language, the Agency can make arrangements to provide you with an interpreter.

Q. How long should it take before I get the facility that is needed?

- A. This will depend;

If you have yet to be assessed by an Occupational Therapist you may have some time to wait before they contact you. Once you are registered with Cambus Direct (0345 045 5205) you will be advised of the likely waiting time.

If you have already been assessed by the Occupational Therapist and the aid or adaptation you need is straightforward (for example a stair lift), then the whole process should not take more than a few months. But if your needs are complex and perhaps very expensive to meet (requiring, for example, major building work) then, as you would expect, the process might take far longer. All the agencies involved in your grant application will try to make sure that you do not have to wait any longer than necessary. You can help us to deal with your application swiftly by making sure that you give us all the information we ask for as quickly as you can and by contacting us straight away if you are having difficulties with anything.

Q. What if I don't want to wait for an Occupational Therapist to visit?

- A. You could appoint a Private Occupational Therapist (OT) however, they are required to work to the same guidance followed by OT's employed by Social Services. Private OT's recommendations are checked by a panel of OT's to ensure the relevant criteria are being adhered to. If

you decide to engage a private OT it must be for the duration of the grant process, i.e. from assessment to completion and the OT must be available for any queries and to check the adaptation when it is completed. You should also be aware

that the charges made by a private OT will not be included as part of the grant and therefore will need to be met by you. Further details can be obtained from the Agency on (NEW NUMBER).

3. The Occupational Therapist's recommendation and the Disabled Facility Grant process

Q. The Occupational Therapist has made the assessment and discussed what is needed with me. Does this mean that I will definitely get a grant to pay for the things the Occupational Therapist has recommended?

- A. In very many, if not most, cases the answer to this is "yes". The Council respects the skill and judgement of the Occupational Therapy Service and is keen to make grants to support the disability needs an Occupational Therapist has identified. But not all applications will end in a grant being made.

Q. If the Occupational Therapist says I need something why wouldn't the Council give me a grant to pay for it?

- A. There are several reasons why the Council might not make a grant following an Occupational Therapist's recommendation. These are:

1. Where the recommendation does not meet one of the disabled facility grant purposes. The Law says that a disabled facilities grant can only be made for one of a limited number of purposes. These purposes are:

- to allow a disabled person to get into and out of the property, and to be able to use the main family room, a bedroom, a bath or shower and a toilet;
- to allow the disabled person to prepare and cook food;
- to allow a disabled person to move around the home;
- to allow a disabled person to care for a dependent;

- to make the home safe for the disabled person;
- to provide heating or to improve an existing heating system so that it is suitable for the needs of the disabled person;
- to allow a disabled person to use a source of power, heat or light;
- access to the garden where this is reasonable and practicable.

Normally the Occupational Therapist will not recommend an aid or adaptation unless it is for one of these purposes, but sometimes it is a matter of judgement whether a need does or does not fit one of the purposes. It is the policy and practice of your Council to interpret the grant purposes as broadly as possible but applicants should be aware that the Council could refuse a grant for this reason.

In some cases – usually cases that are complex and/or are likely to be very expensive – an Occupational Therapist may deliberately include in their recommendation a facility that does not meet one of the grant purposes. When an Occupational Therapist does this it is to let the Council know about the total needs of the disabled person and of the possibility that the Council and the Agency will need to co-ordinate their efforts with other funding organisations (such as Social Services) or other individuals and agencies (such as the Council's special needs housing officer or a local housing association). All this is discussed in more detail in Section 4: Maximising client choice and satisfaction.

If the Council does decide to refuse a grant because the recommended work does not meet one of the grant purposes, it will always explain its reasons to you in writing and also tell you how you can appeal against the decision. (See Section 6: Review).

2. Where the facility recommended by the Occupational Therapist doesn't seem to the Council to be "necessary and appropriate".

The Law says that the Council has got to be satisfied that the facility recommended by the Occupational Therapist is "necessary and appropriate" for the needs of the disabled person. In practice it is rare for the Council to question the Occupational Therapist's judgement on this matter but grant applicants should be aware that the Council could refuse a grant for this reason. This is discussed in more detail in Section 4: Maximising client choice and satisfaction.

The Council will not refuse a grant without discussing it with you first. We may be able to suggest other options. Any decision will be notified in writing with information about how you can appeal against the decision. (See Section 6: Review)

3. Where the age and condition of the property makes it unsuitable to be adapted.

Some older properties can be difficult and sometimes impossible to adapt successfully. Other properties may simply be unsuitable for the needs of the client whatever adaptation work might be done to it, perhaps because rooms and corridors are just too small. In other cases it may not be possible to get planning permission for the work.

The Council will not refuse a grant without discussing it with you first. We may be able to suggest other options. Any decision will be notified in writing with information about how you can appeal against the decision. (See Section 6: Review)

Q Who will get quotes for the proposed work?

- A. This may differ depending on your Council, and the Agency will guide you further with this.

A minimum of 2 quotes are required for most works. However, if the work is of a specialist nature (stairlift or hoist for example), it may be that only 1 quote will be needed.

You will be kept informed of the Contractors that will be approached for a quote, and you will of course be consulted on the choice of contractor before any works begin.

If you have any queries you can contact your Agency Caseworker for further information about this arrangement.

Your Council will normally choose the lower quote. If you would prefer the contractor supplying the higher quote to do the work then you have this option, as long as you are willing to pay the difference. You should speak to your Caseworker if this is the case.

More complex adaptations such as extensions will require a tender process to be followed; your Caseworker will advise you what this means.

In the interests of sustainability and value for money, your Council may look at the option of using re-conditioned or refurbished items if they are suitable.

Where the cost of the work is too high. This is discussed in more detail in Section 5: Maximising client choice and satisfaction.

Where the applicant's assessed contribution is higher than the cost of the work. This is discussed in more detail in the next section: The Means Test.

4. The Means Test

Q. What is the Disabled Facilities Grant Means Test?

- A. Under the Law all Disabled Facilities Grant applications for adaptations for adults have to be checked to see whether certain members of the household can afford to pay anything toward the cost of the work. If the test shows that a contribution can be made then this contribution is taken off the amount of grant that otherwise would have been paid. Sometimes the calculated contribution will be more than the cost of doing the work and in these cases no grant will be paid. We will let you know at the earliest possible stage whether you will have to make a contribution and how much it will be.

Q. Who is Means Tested?

- A. Adult application: Usually it is the person who needs the disabled facility (the 'relevant person') and that person's partner, if there is one. The word "partner" means a person who lives with you as husband, wife, or civil partner, whether or not you are married to or a civil partner of that person.

If the relevant person is not the owner of the property i.e. Adult child or elderly parent and the cost of work exceeds the maximum grant and extra funding is required; the owner of the property will also be financially assessed.

Application on behalf of a child: If the relevant person is a child or a young person the applicant is the person receiving child benefit for them. A grant may be awarded up to a maximum of £30,000 and is not means tested. If the work costs more than the maximum grant and extra funding is required the parents/guardians will be means tested.

Q. How does the Means Test work?

- A. The Means Test works by looking at how much the relevant person who is means tested has to live on each week.

This will include any wages, benefits, pensions, savings and investments and may even include money that you could have but you choose not to collect (such as rent from a second home you let to a relative). Against this is set the amount the government says the household needs each week to live on. (This is based on things like the age of the relevant individuals being means tested, whether there are any dependent children in the household and what benefits are being paid). This notional amount you need to live on is called the "applicable amount". If your income is more than your applicable amount then you will have to make a contribution based on how much you would be able to raise as a loan using your "excess" income.

If you are in receipt of income support, income based job seeker's allowance, pension credit guarantee, council tax benefit, housing benefit or you receive tax credit and have a taxable income of no more than £15,050.00, then you can be certain you will not have to pay a contribution.

Q. How soon will I know whether I have to make a contribution?

- A. We will run a test as soon as you return your completed application form and all documentary evidence that we requested from you. We will then let you know if you have a contribution to make.

Q. Who is the contribution owed to?

- A. If you are required to make a contribution to the works, this will need to be paid to your Council BEFORE works can start. On satisfactory completion of the works, your Council will then pay the contractor the full cost, which will include your contribution. You should discuss the arrangements for paying your contribution with the Agency Caseworker.

Q. What if I can't afford to pay my contribution?

A. If you feel you can't afford to pay the contribution you should let your Agency Caseworker know immediately. With your consent the Caseworker can approach charitable organisations and/or Social Services to seek financial help. If you can't get help to pay, the Council regrets that it will have to suspend your application until either you can find the money or your circumstances change so that no contribution is needed from you.

Q. What if my contribution is more than the aid or adaptation will cost?

A. In this case you will not be entitled to a grant at all. In certain (though very rare)

cases of this kind, if you intend to go ahead and pay for the work yourself, it may be beneficial to carry on and make a formal grant application even though the outcome will be a nil grant. The Grant Officer will be pleased to advise whether it is worth you pursuing a nil grant. If you do decide to do the work at your own expense you may still use the Agency's services to help get the work done, but you will be charged their usual fee.

Q. Are there any other expenses?

A. Yes. Included in the grant award will be an administration fee payable to the Home Improvement Agency.

5. Maximising Client Choice and Satisfaction

Q. What part can I play in influencing the kind of facility I get?

A. Your Council, in common with its partners in the Grant process, is committed to achieving the very highest standards of client satisfaction. This means they will support client choice to the fullest extent compatible with the Law and with our wider responsibilities to all other Disabled Facilities Grant applicants and to the public purse.

Q. That sounds all very well, but what does it mean in practice?

In practice, individual client choice is limited by considerations of cost and by how the Law says we should administer disabled facilities grants. We have already mentioned that a disabled facilities grant can only be made for a limited number of purposes. So if a client wants (and possibly needs) a facility that does not fall within these purposes there is nothing we can do under the grant system to help. (But your Council may, in exceptional circumstances be able to make a loan. Please see Section 5: Disabled Facilities assistance).

But it is money that puts the biggest restriction on client choice. Your Council will make sure that any facility that it helps to pay for will be of good quality and right for the client's needs and, as far as possible, the needs of the client's household. But it is very important that we get value for money by making sure that the facility is no more elaborate than it needs to be to do the job. For example, if, when everything is taken into consideration, a client's need for a ground floor bedroom can be met by dividing a large existing downstairs room then it will be presumed that this is what the grant will pay for rather than providing a new bedroom extension. In other words, it is one of the Council's key responsibilities to ensure that while the preferences of individual clients are recognised and met whenever possible, these preferences must not be met at the cost of making another client wait for the thing that they need because the money has run out. We believe most people will see this as being fair.

To help us with these difficult decisions the Council and the Occupational Therapy Service has introduced an "options

appraisal process" for complex cases. Under the options appraisal process the Occupational Therapist will advise the Council and the Home Improvement Agency of the various ways that the client's needs can be met, explaining the advantages and disadvantages of each. All of the factors can then be considered before coming to a decision about which option to support.

Q. So in what ways can I influence the process?

A. In our experience most disabled facilities grant cases are not complex. There is usually one clear solution – for example a stair lift or a level access shower - which all the parties, including the client, agree upon. So, in most cases, client choice is easily met.

(If yours is a straightforward case of this kind you may want to skip the rest of this section and also section 5 and go straight to section 6).

But things can get more complicated in clinically complex and/or expensive cases or in cases where the client's needs can be met in a range of ways at different cost levels and varying levels of client satisfaction. If yours is a case like this your Occupational Therapist will first discuss with you your needs and your preferences and they will then ensure that these are formally reported to the Council and the Home Improvement Agency for consideration under the options appraisal process.

Q. What will happen then?

A. The Council will make a decision on which of the range options it is prepared to fund with a grant. This decision will be made on the basis of:

- What the Law and the statutory guidance says;
- The strength of the case put by the Occupational Therapist in their options appraisal;
- The potential alternative options open to, and acceptable to, the client (for example moving to a more adaptable property or social

housing);

- The scale of demand for grants from other people in need.

If the officer making the decision does not agree that your preferred option is fully justified then they will write to you giving reasons why your preference cannot be supported. This officer will also let you know how you can go about having their decision reviewed. (See Section 6: Review). If the decision-making officer does agree that what you want is justified then the next stage is for the Council to get an estimate of how much the work will cost. If the cost to the Council is likely to be under the £30,000 grant maximum then there is a good chance that the grant will be approved and the work can go ahead.

DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS AND CHARGES ON PROPERTIES

In some cases, your Council will secure part of the Disabled Facilities Grant against your property. This will be dependant on the amount of Grant awarded and the type of works agreed. Full details of the charges should be discussed with your Agency Caseworker, or the Officer responsible for Disabled Facilities Grants in your Council.

Q. But what if the cost to the Council will be more than £30,000?

A. Things become more difficult if the cost to the Council is likely to be above £30,000, and very much more difficult if the cost is likely to be several thousands of pounds above this Grant maximum.

Initially, your Caseworker may try and obtain additional funding from Charities or Social Services to cover works above £30,000. However, this is not guaranteed to be successful. Failing this, your Council may be able to offer additional funding in the form of a further Grant or a Loan. This is known as Top Up Assistance (see page 4) and is dependent on any discretionary budget amounts that may be available. Please note, however, that any amounts over the mandatory £30,000 DFG are

NOT guaranteed and may not be available at the time of your application. Full details of this can be discussed with your Agency Caseworker, or relevant Officer responsible for Disabled Facilities Grants in your Council. If you are a tenant we can also ask your landlord to contribute towards the cost of works.

Alternatively, if you are willing to move home we may be able to help you to find a property that is more suitable for your needs and adaptations, or we may be able to help you to find socially rented accommodation that has already been adapted. The Council may even be able to award you a Grant to help with your removal expenses – (please see Section 1: Disabled Facilities Assistance).

Q. But what if I can't get the additional funding from another source and I'm not eligible for a Council loan and I don't want to move house?

A. Again, this will depend. If your Occupational Therapist has told us in the options appraisal that there is a less expensive way to meet your needs then, with your approval, the Council will consider making you a grant for this facility even if it does not meet your needs as well as your preferred option would have done. But if, on the other hand, there is no possibility of your needs being met for under £30,000 in your present accommodation or you will accept nothing except your preferred option, regrettably the Council will not be able to help you and we will have to close your application.

Q. What if the Occupational Therapist recommends something that I am unhappy with?

A. As already mentioned, the Council does not have to accept the recommendation of the Occupational Therapist but it would be a rare thing to go against their advice and make a grant for something they have not recommended. If you are unhappy with the recommendation you should first raise the matter with the Occupational Therapy Service. If this

results in a changed recommendation the Council will normally follow this. However, you may also talk to the Agency Manager or the Officer responsible for Disabled Facilities Grants within your Council who may ask you to put your concerns in writing. They will raise your concerns with your Occupational Therapist and will let you know the outcome, with reasons, by letter.

Q. What if I'm generally happy with the facility that is being recommended for me but I want to vary or add things?

A. The Council welcomes and encourages the expression of individual preferences but there are two golden rules. First, the Council will not support anything that in the opinion of the Occupational Therapist is not suitable for you. Second, your preference will not be supported with any additional grant money if it will cost more than the alternative.

These principles hold up even if you want to make a major change to the recommended facility. So if, for example, you wanted a level access shower to be installed in a separate room next to your bedroom rather than in your bathroom this can be done so long as the Occupational Therapist says that this location is equally well suited to your needs. If it is, the second consideration is whether it will cost more to put it there. If the cost is the same or less than the cost of putting the shower in the bathroom then your choice will be supported. If the cost is more, your choice will be supported only if you are prepared to pay the additional amount.

In some cases it will cost money to find out which of two or more options will work and how much each will cost. Where this cost is significant it may have to be met by yourself rather than the Council.

Having chosen which contractors you would like to provide quotes, you may have a preference for one of them. If this is the case you should discuss this with your Agency Caseworker. If your preferred contractor is

not the lowest quote you may still be able to have the contractor of your choice if you are prepared to pay the difference in costs between the lowest quote and your preferred contractor's quote.

If you want to take advantage of having a builder in your home by, say, getting your other bathroom fittings replaced at the same time as you have a shower installed then you can do this. But again you must follow the two rules. First, let your Occupational Therapist know what you plan to do so that they can assess whether this might affect the grant-aided work. Next, agree a price with the builder and make sure that the builder knows it will be you and not the Council that will be paying him for the extra work.

6. Review

Q. What if I'm unhappy with a decision the Council makes?

A. Your Council and its partners in the Disabled Facilities Grant application process are committed to a culture of open and accountable decision making. You have a right to question any decision for which this Council is responsible and to have this decision explained to you.

You have a right to demand that any decision made by your Council in the course of your application is reviewed, unless that decision is one that the Council is bound to make under the Law. You will be informed in writing of all key decisions and that letter will explain how you can initiate a review. The review would be carried out by a Senior Officer unconnected with the application process.

If you are dissatisfied with any action of the Council's staff or its agents you can use the Council's complaint procedure. Any member of the Grant or Agency staff will be able to let you know how to make a formal complaint. Alternatively you may telephone or email your relevant Council office.

Your Council supports Cambridgeshire County Council's "protection of vulnerable

adults" policy. If you think that you, or someone you know, are the victim of abuse we can advise you where to go to get help. Further advice and information is available from the Home Improvement Agency.

GLOSSARY

'The Agency' – Cambs Home Improvement Agency (1 Agency covering 3 districts)

'Your Council' – Huntingdonshire District Council, South Cambs District Council or Cambridge City Council.

'DFG' – Disabled Facilities Grant

'Agency Caseworker' – the Agency representative looking after your application

'Officer responsible for Disabled Facilities Grants' – the representative for your Council

7. Contacts

Cambs HIA

01954 713347 or 01954 713330

Huntingdonshire District Council

Private Sector Housing Team
01480 388285

South Cambs District Council

Grant Officer
01954 713293

Cambridge City Council

Grant Officer
01223 457958

Cambridgeshire Direct

0345-045-5205

Help to repair your home

01954 713347 or 01954 713330

If you are responsible for keeping your home in good repair and if there is essential work you need to carry out, your Council may be able to help you with some or all of the cost.

In some cases your Council may be able to offer assistance for Home Repairs. The award may be secured on your property and will become repayable on disposal of the property. If you are an owner occupier and you would like to know more, please call The Cambs HIA.

