

DONEGAL COUNTY COUNCIL

**HOUSING ADAPTATION GRANT
and
MOBILITY AIDS GRANT
SCHEMES.**

INFORMATION BOOKLET

Guidelines, Terms & Conditions.

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Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme

Purpose of Grant

The Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability is available to assist in the carrying out of works that are reasonably necessary for the purposes of rendering a house more suitable for the accommodation of a person with a disability who is a member of the household.

Who is Eligible for the Grant

The grant is available to households whose gross annual household income does not exceed €60,000.

The grant is targeted at meeting the needs of persons with the greatest level / most complex clinical / functional care needs, the Council have adopted a policy to target the following three (3) categories i.e. progressive neurological conditions, acquired brain injury, other high level care needs groups.

Progressive Neurological Conditions:

- Multiple Sclerosis
- Motor Neuron Disease
- Parkinson's Disease
- Progressive Terminal Illness / Cancer
- Alzheimer's / Dementia
- Amyloidosis
- Muscular Dystrophy
- Fredericks Ataxia
- Huntington's Chorea

Acquired Brain Injury:

- Brain Injury
- Alcohol Related Brain Injury
- Stroke

Other High Level Care Need Groups:

- Persons in wheelchair
- Persons depending on specialised equipment to manage in the home such as hoists
- Persons with high level of care support being provided in the home (generally more than one carer assigned)
- Persons with spinal cord injuries such as quadriplegia or paraplegia

While the diagnosis alone, as outlined in the first two categories above, would entitle consideration for a grant, there would of course have to be the associated functional needs. In that context regard must be had to the existing accommodation and the level of support available.

NOTE 1: Where an applicant has high level / complex care needs, which do not strictly come within the illnesses as specified within the eligibility criteria, such cases can still be considered on their own specific merits, within the terms of the scheme.

NOTE 2: The above eligibility criteria does not apply in respect of Minor works. 'Minor works' in this regard are deemed to refer to: the provision of access ramps, grab rails, and / or minor bathroom adaptations to provide level deck shower facilities.

The following general principles also apply:

- There must be a substantial restriction in the capacity of the person with a disability to carry on a profession, business or occupation or to participate in social or cultural life.
- The person for whom the adaptation is being considered must be someone who has “permanent and substantial” disability.
- The person must occupy the house as his / her normal place of residence
- The purpose of providing adaptations is to increase or maintain functional independence of people with permanent and substantial disability. The level of provision will be dependent on the needs of the individual and or carer’s in relation to the individuals disability and technical feasibility.
- The adaptation should in so far as it is practicable, take into account the clients short and long term needs. In the case of children, it is not always possible to do this until the age of five and therefore applications for assistance for works for children under the age of five will only be considered where their long term needs are clearly established. In such cases, confirmation will be required if the child has undergone an assessment of need consistent with Part 2 of the Disability Act, 2005. Where an assessment has taken place, regard will be had to the recommendations contained in the assessment report.

However,

- A disability in its own right does not automatically infer that a grant will be payable as the level of the disability and the functional difficulties which arise as a result must be taken into account. The level of severity, or existence of specific diagnosis does not imply that an applicant has significant needs in relation to housing.
- A short term disability would not necessarily qualify where for example an “aid” would overcome any functional difficulties which arise. Similarly, where a person undergoes treatment with an expected “curing” within a reasonable period, a grant would not be payable. An example of such a situation would be where a person has undergone a hip operation.
- Infirmary associated with old age does not automatically qualify an applicant for grant assistance as the works proposed must be necessary and directly related to alleviating the applicants functional difficulties.
- Behavioural problems in their own rights would not warrant grant assistance.

What type of Work is Covered?

The types of works allowable under the scheme are varied and include the provision of access ramps, downstairs toilet facilities / accessible showers, stair-lifts, adaptations to facilitate wheelchair access, extensions, and any other works that are reasonably necessary for the purposes of rendering a house more suitable for the accommodation of a person with a disability.

It is a matter for each Local Authority to decide, inter alia, the circumstance in which a grant may be paid and if so, the works which are necessary to make the accommodation more suitable for the person with the disability and the level of grant to be paid.

This must all be considered against the background of the ongoing need to obtain best possible value for money.

In general,

- The key point is that the grant is a targeted grant towards meeting the accommodation needs of the person with a disability who has special needs and any works proposed must therefore help overcome the restrictions which arise as a result of the disability.
- The works must be necessary to improve the quality of life of the person with the disability.
- The adaptation work must be “essential and practical” and “necessary and appropriate”.
- Where there are options for meeting an applicants identified need, the most cost effective option will be proposed.
- The type of work will be more directed at adaptations than extensions and the provision of an extension will be the last resort. If there is any room available in a dwelling which can meet the needs of the person with a disability, the grant will only be available for adaptations to that room as opposed to the provision of an extra room. Where however a client wishes to proceed with the extra room, it will have to be built to the appropriate standards although the grant assistance available will be the “adaptation” cost.
- In many cases, bath aids or other aids may be an appropriate remedy as opposed to the carrying out of structural repairs to a dwelling.
- A guideline for qualifying works is “would the person still need the works / facilities if they did not have a disability. If so, then the Housing Adaptation Grant is not appropriate and in such a case it must be clearly understood that the Housing Adaptation Grant does not cover the provision of facilities needed because of overcrowding, or the carrying out of general improvements / maintenance works to dwellings.
- Works, which are of general benefit to the household rather than of specific benefit to the person with the disability or where the works do not directly alleviate the disability, are not covered under the Scheme.
- Under no circumstances will an application be considered where it is deemed to be a case of more “ordinary” maintenance or improvement works as opposed to being a case where a special need arises as a result of disability.

Ramps/Railings

A Grant may be payable in respect of the provision of a ramp or railing to one or either of the front or back doors to a dwelling. The resurfacing of complete driveways or streets will not be covered under the Scheme.

In exceptional circumstances where the person with disability is confined to a wheelchair or is seriously immobile, a contribution towards the cost of the provision of a short pathway to the door can be considered.

Bathrooms / Level Access Showers

The adaptation of a bathroom to provide special shower and toilet facilities may be considered where these are deemed necessary. In many cases, the recommended works will be the provision of a level deck shower or other alteration to a bathroom. The Scheme is not designed to cover the whole bathroom suite i.e. w.c., wash hand basin to be upgraded as standard as part of a bathroom renovation. In many cases the standard suites may be of poor condition and need upgrading but this is not considered appropriate under the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme. In such cases, only the provision of the necessary facilities will be grant aided.

Stair Lifts

The provision of a stair lift will be considered as opposed to provision of an extension where this is practical and where it clearly meets the needs of the person with the disability.

Doorways/Hallways

Where an applicant is confined to a wheelchair, the widening of doorways/hallways may be considered where they are deemed necessary. Standard doors will be covered and does not include intercom doors.

Bedrooms

In the case of a two storey house, the building at ground floor level of a bedroom may be considered where the person with the disability is unable to access the existing bedroom due to the disability. The conversion of an existing room or the provision of a stair lift will take precedence over the provision of an extension where this clearly meets the needs of the person with the disability.

Kitchen

Where the person with a disability is confined to a wheelchair and has the physical ability and motivation to prepare food in a suitably adapted kitchen, alterations may be necessary to the kitchen area. Any alterations however must be specifically provided to enable the use of the kitchen by the person with the disability and not just to improve an inadequate kitchen. Works, which could be carried out would be the provision of some form of limited work top area and electrical sockets. In exceptional cases, the kitchen may be enlarged to enable circulation.

Provision of Heating Systems

Grants **are not** generally available for the provision of central heating alone under the disability grants as assistance for this work is available from other Authorities/Agencies. Where however there are other works being carried under the disability grant scheme, such as the provision of an additional room, the extension of an existing heating system to the additional room can be considered.

Provision of Water Supply/Sewage

Where there are no existing water/sewerage facilities in a dwelling, these can be considered for inclusion in the works. An example would be where the only existing water supply is an outside tap or where there is an outside toilet.

As separate grants are available for the provision of a well water supply, this is not covered under the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme.

Windows

Only in exceptional circumstances will monies be provided for replacement of windows other than provision of new windows in an extension.

Replacement Works

Where an existing kitchen/shed is to be replaced to facilitate a new extension to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability, the Grant can cover the cost of the replacement of such facilities.

External Works

The Scheme will be focused on the provision of works to the accommodation unit and with the exception of the provision of ramps/railing/pathways in exceptional circumstances, external works will not be covered. An example of such works would be the provision of car port, external garage/shed or utility etc.

Stand Alone Living Quarters/Self Contained Flat

The Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme does not provide for stand alone living quarters/self contained flat etc.

Smoke Alarms

It is strongly recommended that an applicant should include smoke alarms in any suite of works undertaken, if not already present and operating in a dwelling. The preferred option is to include the provision of mains operated smoke alarm in conjunction with any rewiring works that are taking place.

Alternatively as a minimum, at least, two self contained, ten year battery operated alarms should be installed. In such cases it is important to ensure that batteries are frequently checked and replaced as required.

Other Works

Other minor works that are reasonably necessary for the purposes of rendering a house more suitable for the accommodation of a person with a disability may be considered.

Mobility Aids Grant Scheme

In general, individuals who require grant aid for certain works (i.e. ramps, level access showers, grab rails and stair lifts), and who satisfy the means test provisions, should apply for assistance under the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme. There is of course nothing preventing an applicant applying for such works under the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme.

Level of Grant

The amount of grant available shall not exceed 95 % of the approved cost of the works **subject to an overall maximum level of grant of €30,000.** The grant is only available to households whose gross annual household income does not exceed €60,000. The grant available for new houses (less than 12 months old) is the cost of the alterations/additions being carried out to the house to facilitate the person with a disability, or €14,500 whichever is the lesser (subject to means test).

The following limits apply in respect of the more common elements of work, and the level of grant applicable to each element is subject to means testing (i.e. between 30% and 95% of approved works in each case).

Provision of pathway, access ramp and hand rail,	€ 2,632.00
Stair lift - based on written quotation	€ 2,632.00
Adapt existing bathroom to incorporate level deck shower	€ 3,947.00
Construction Costs of a Disabled Persons Bathroom	€ 1,600/m ²
Recommended Standard Size is 5.76.m ² ,	€ 9,216.00
Construction of a bedroom to HD Standards	€ 1,350/m ²
Recommended standard size is 13.38 m ²	€ 18,063.00
Conversion of Store/Garage to bedroom or conversion of an existing bedroom to a disabled person's standard bathroom to the current Standards?	€ 3,000.00
Any other works that are reasonably necessary for the purposes of rendering a house more suitable for the accommodation of a person with a disability,	€ 2,632.00
NOTE: Under this Scheme the level of grant applicable to each element is subject to means testing (i.e. up to 95% of approved works).	

Note: The above limits are based on a complete suite of works being necessary under a particular element of works. For example, under the provision of pathway, access ramp and handrail, the full €2,632 is only allowable where all three components of the works are necessary, whereas if it is only the provision of a handrail which is necessary, a lesser amount would apply.

Where a builder's estimate is submitted which is lower than the values set out above, or where due to particular circumstances, the Council believe that the full cost is not justified; the amount of the grant will be reduced accordingly.

The table below sets out the level of grant available based on an assessment of household income.

Gross Maximum Household Income p.a.	% of Costs available	Maximum Grant Available For houses erected for more than 12 months	Maximum Grant available for houses erected for less than 12 months
€	%	€	€
Up to €30,000	95%	30,000	14,500
€30,001 - €35,000	85%	25,500	12,325
€35,001 - €40,000	75%	22,500	10,875
€40,001 - €50,000	50%	15,000	7,250
€50,001 - €60,000	30%	9,000	4,350
In excess of €60,000	No grant is payable		

For example, if a grant is being paid in respect of provision of a bathroom to a person who has a gross household income of €32,000, the grant payable would be €6,609.60 (85% of €7,776)

Housing Adaptation Grant for New Houses

A Housing Adaptation Grant is provided for new houses and is a targeted grant for persons with a disability who purchase or build new houses (houses less than twelve months old) to better accommodate their special needs.

A lesser amount of grant is payable in respect of houses less than twelve months old to those over twelve months old as it is less costly to provide for the needs of the person with a disability when building or purchasing a house rather than adapting an existing house.

It will be necessary for the applicant to clearly demonstrate that the new dwelling is being built or purchased specifically to accommodate the needs of a person with a disability. It will not simply be a case of a grant being payable in circumstances where a family is purchasing or building a new dwelling and where one or other of the family members are disabled but rather the existing accommodation must have been deemed unsuitable and the new accommodation specifically designed to take into account the accommodation needs of the person with a disability. In this regard, the application for the Grant must be accompanied by:

- A Certificate from the Architect who prepared the plans certifying that the dwelling has been designed with specific reference to a named person with a disability.
 - The Certificate will also be required to clearly demonstrate how specific alterations have been incorporated into the plans to specifically provide for the person with a disability.

- The Certificate must also clearly demonstrate how these alterations are over and above the requirements of the standard Building Regulations with particular reference to Part M relating to the visit ability requirements by people with disabilities.
- The Certificate must outline the additional costs associated with these alterations/additions.
- The application will also necessitate the submission of a Certificate from the applicants doctor in the same way as the standard Housing Adaptation Grant Application.

An Occupational Therapist will visit the previous accommodation and, taking into account the Architects Certificate, will report on the suitability or otherwise of the previous accommodation and whether the new accommodation meets the specific needs of the person with a disability. It is therefore advisable that the Occupational Therapist be involved at an early stage in the context of consideration of plans for the provision of a new dwelling as under no circumstances will a Housing Adaptation Grant for new dwellings be paid where it is deemed that the needs of the person with a disability are not adequately met.

Mobility Aids Grant Scheme

Purpose of Grant

The Mobility Aids Housing Grant is available to cover a basic suite of works to address mobility problems.

Who is Eligible for the Grant?

The grant is available to households whose gross annual household income does not exceed €30,000 and where works are reasonably necessary for the purpose of rendering the house more suitable for the accommodation of a person who has mobility problems and who is a member of the household.

The following general principles apply:

- The person for whom the adaptation is being considered must be someone who has **“permanent and substantial”** mobility problems.
- The person must occupy the house as his / her normal place of residence
- The purpose of providing adaptations is to increase or maintain functional independence of people with permanent and substantial mobility problems. The level of provision will be dependent on the needs of the individual and or carer’s in relation to the individuals mobility problems and technical feasibility.
- The adaptation should in so far as it is practicable, take into account the clients short and long term needs. In the case of children, it is not always possible to do this until the age of five and therefore applications for assistance for works for children under the age of five will only be considered where their long term needs are clearly established. In such cases, confirmation will be required if the child has undergone an assessment of need consistent with Part 2 of the Disability Act, 2005. Where an assessment has taken place, regard will be had to the recommendations contained in the assessment report.

However,

- **Mobility problems in their own right do not automatically infer that a grant will be payable** as the level of the mobility problems and the functional difficulties which arise as a result must be taken into account. The level of severity, or existence of specific diagnosis does not imply that an applicant has significant needs in relation to housing.
- A short term mobility problem would not necessarily qualify where for example an “aid” would overcome any functional difficulties which arise.
- Similarly, where a person undergoes treatment with an expected “curing” or “recovery” within a reasonable period, a grant would not be payable. An example of such a situation would be where a person has undergone a hip operation.
- Infirmary associated with old age does not automatically qualify an applicant for grant assistance as the works proposed must be necessary and directly related to alleviating the applicants functional difficulties.

What type of Work is Covered?

Examples of the type of works grant aided under the scheme include:

- Grab-rails;
- Access ramps;
- Level access showers;
- Stair-lifts;
- Smoke / Carbon Monoxide Alarms; and
- Other minor works deemed necessary to facilitate the mobility needs of a member of a household.

It is a matter for each Local Authority to decide, inter alia, the circumstance in which a grant may be paid and if so, the works which are necessary to make the accommodation more suitable for the person with the mobility problems and the level of grant to be paid.

This must all be considered against the background of the ongoing need to obtain best possible value for money.

In general,

- The works must be necessary to improve the quality of life of the person with the mobility problems.
- The adaptation work must be “essential and practical” and “necessary and appropriate”.
- Where there are options for meeting an applicants identified need, the most cost effective option will be proposed.
- In many cases, bath aids or other aids may be an appropriate remedy as opposed to the carrying out of structural repairs to a dwelling.
- A guideline for qualifying works is “would the person still need the works / facilities if they did not have mobility problems. If so, then the Mobility Aids Grant is not appropriate and in such a case it must be clearly understood that the Mobility Aids Grant does not cover the provision of facilities needed because of overcrowding, or the carrying out of general improvements / maintenance works to dwellings.
- Works which are of general benefit to the household rather than of specific benefit to the person with the mobility problems or where the works do not directly alleviate the mobility problems are not covered under the Scheme.
- Under no circumstances will an application be considered where it is deemed to be a case of more “ordinary” maintenance or improvement works as opposed to being a case where a special need arises as a result of mobility problems.

Ramps/Railings

A Grant may be payable in respect of the provision of a ramp or railing to one or either of the front or back doors to a dwelling. The resurfacing of complete driveways or streets will not be covered under the Scheme.

In exceptional circumstances where the person with mobility problems is confined to a wheelchair or is seriously immobile, a contribution towards the cost of the provision of a short pathway to the door can be considered.

Bathrooms / Level Access Showers

The adaptation of a bathroom to provide special shower and toilet facilities may be considered where these are deemed necessary. In many cases, the recommended works will be the provision of a level deck shower or other alteration to a bathroom. The Scheme is not designed to cover the whole bathroom suite i.e. w.c., wash hand basin to be upgraded as standard as part of a bathroom renovation. In many cases the standard suites may be of poor condition and need upgrading but this is not considered appropriate under the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme. In such cases, only the provision of the necessary facilities will be grant aided.

Stair Lifts

The provision of a stair lift will be considered as opposed to provision of an extension where this is practical and where it clearly meets the needs of the person with the mobility problem.

Smoke / Carbon Monoxide Alarms

It is strongly recommended that an applicant should include smoke alarms in any suite of works undertaken, if not already present and operating in a dwelling. The preferred option is to include the provision of a mains operated smoke alarm in conjunction with any rewiring works which are taking place.

Alternatively as a minimum, at least, two self contained, ten year battery operated alarms should be installed. In such cases it is important to ensure that batteries are frequently checked and replaced as required.

Other Minor Works

Other minor works deemed necessary to facilitate the mobility needs of a member of a household may be considered.

External Works

The Scheme will be focused on the provision of works to the accommodation unit and with the exception of the provision of ramps/railing/pathways in exceptional circumstances, external works will not be covered.

Level of Grant

The amount of grant available shall not exceed the approved cost of the works subject to an overall maximum level of grant of €6,000. The grant is only available to households whose gross annual household income does not exceed €30,000.

The following limits apply in respect of the various elements of work.

Provision of pathway, access ramp and hand rail	€2,500
Adapt existing bathroom to incorporate level deck shower	€3,750
Stair lift - based on written quotation	€2,500
Any other minor works as may be necessary to facilitate the Mobility needs of the applicant	€2,500

Note: The above limits are based on a complete suite of works being necessary under a particular element of works. For example, under the provision of pathway, access ramp and handrail, the full €2,500 is only allowable where all three components of the works are necessary, whereas if it is only the provision of a handrail which is necessary, a lesser amount would apply.

Where a builder's estimate is submitted which is lower than the values set out above, or where due to particular circumstances, the Council believes that the full cost is not justified; the amount of the grant will be reduced accordingly.

Other General Conditions and Guidance

Means Test & Household Income

As Grant Applications are means tested, evidence of household income must be included with all applications. Household income is calculated as the property owner's annual gross income in the previous tax year, together with that of his or her spouse/partner, if applicable and any other adults living in the house i.e. those over 18 (or over 23 if in full time education)

Where the property owner is not residing in the house, the subject of the application, household income is calculated as the property owner's annual gross income in the previous tax year, together with that of his or her spouse/partner, if applicable and that of all tenants (of the house, the subject of the application) over 18 (or over 23 if in full time education).

In determining gross household income, local authorities shall apply the following disregards:

- €5,000 for each member of the household aged up to age 18 years;
- €5,000 for each member of the household aged between 18 and 23 years and in full time education or engaged in a FAS apprenticeship*;
- €5,000 where the person for whom the application for grant aid is sought, is being cared for by a relative on a full-time basis;
- Child Benefit;
- Early Childcare Supplement;
- Family Income Supplement;
- Domiciliary Care Allowance;
- Respite Care Grant;
- Carer's Benefit / Allowance;
- Foster Care Allowance;
- Fuel Allowance.

***Evidence must be submitted from Educational / Training body for household members aged between 18 and 23 years and in full time education or engaged in a FAS apprenticeships.**

Evidence of household income

Pensioners

A person retired from insurable employment and in receipt of

- State Pension (Transition)
- State Pension (Contributory)
- Pre-Retirement Allowance
- Overseas Pension

must submit a Statement of Income for the previous tax year, from the Department of Social Protection /Overseas Government Department and a P60 from their former employer where applicable, or a P21 Balancing Statement.

A person in receipt of

- State Pension (Non-Contributory)

must submit a photocopy of their payment slip from An Post or a P21 Balancing Statement for the previous tax year.

PAYE workers

A person in employment must submit a P60 or a P21 Balancing Statement for the previous tax year.

Self Employed / Farmers

Those who come under this category must submit an Income Tax Assessment Form, together with a copy of accounts for the previous tax year.

Social Welfare Recipients (This list is not conclusive)

- Widow's / Widower's Contributory Pension
- Widow's / Widower's Non-Contributory Pension
- Illness Benefit
- Invalidly Pension
- Disability Allowance
- Blind Pension
- Carer's Benefit/Allowance
- Injury Benefit

must submit a Statement of Income for the previous tax year, from the Department of Social Protection or a P21 Balancing Statement for the previous tax year.

Earnings from Savings and Investments

Must submit a certificate of interest or a dividend certificate

EVIDENCE OF HOUSEHOLD INCOME MUST BE SUBMITTED IN RESPECT OF THE PROPERTY OWNER AND, IF APPLICABLE, HIS/HER SPOUSE/PARTNER AND ANY OTHER ADULTS LIVING IN THE HOUSE I.E. THOSE OVER 18 (OR OVER 23 IF IN FULL TIME EDUCATION)

Department of Social Protection Contact Details:

- Pensions: State, Widow/er, Blind, Deserted Wives Payments: (071) 915 7100 - Locall 1890 500 000
- Disability Allowance, Carers Allowance/Benefit & Invalidity Pension: (043) 334 0000 - Locall 1890 927 770
- Illness Benefit & Injury Benefit: (01)704 3300 - Locall: 1890 928 400

Note: The rates charged for using 1890 (Locall) numbers may vary among different service providers.

Individuals who do not satisfy the provisions of the Mobility Aids Housing Grant Scheme means test should apply for grant aid under the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme for People with a Disability (subject to meeting the other Terms & Conditions of that scheme).

Building Regulations

Part M of the Building Regulations have been amended to ensure visitability by people with disabilities. The Part M Regulations apply to new houses granted planning permission on or after 1 January 2001. The main features generally applicable in new houses include:

- Accessible entrance to the dwelling site or plot,
- Level or gently sloping approach to the main door of the dwelling,
- An entrance door that is of adequate width and incorporates a level entry threshold,
- Sufficiently wide corridors and doorways to allow for circulation at the entry level,
- Door handles and light switches at an appropriate height,
- A WC cubicle at entry level that is sufficiently large to allow a wheelchair user access.

As these features are now required to be included in new houses granted planning permission on or after 1 January, 2001, they will not be considered when determining the amount of a Grant payable in respect of such houses. Only additional works deemed necessary to make the accommodation more suitable to the needs of the person with mobility problems, over and above those required by the building regulations, may be considered by the authority in determining the grant amount paid.

Application Submission

Application Form.

An applicant will be required to complete a simple application form and to submit it to the Council together with a medical certificate to be completed by the Person with the mobility problems Doctor. The application must also be accompanied by evidence of household income together with, in certain cases, evidence of ownership of the property (see section on "Evidence of Ownership" for details). This is the only information that is required at the outset. Where an application is submitted which does not meet this basic standard, it will be returned to the applicant setting out the missing information.

Doctors Certificate

A Doctors certificate must be completed and signed / stamped by your Doctor and submitted with your application. You have the option of using Form A or Form B depending on the works you are seeking. Form A is required if you are only seeking minor works. *'Minor works' in this regard are deemed to refer to: the provision of access ramps, grab rails, and / or minor bathroom adaptations to provide level deck shower facilities.* Such applications can be processed more quickly.

Evidence of Ownership

Where someone, other than a person, who would generally be considered to be the head of a household, is indicated to be the property owner, e.g. son / daughter or other person, evidence of ownership should be submitted with the application to avoid delays in having it processed . Another example of instances where evidence of ownership should be submitted is where someone other than the principle earner is indicated to be the property owner. Such evidence should be in the form of copy title documentation or confirmation from a solicitor that the named person is the registered owner of a property or that application is being made to have them so registered. It should be noted that it is open to the Local Authority to seek evidence of ownership in any instance it considers appropriate.

Charges due to Council

Where there are any monies due to the Council in respect of rent/purchase annuities, housing loan, water charges, rates or other charges, these charges must be cleared in full before any application will be approved.

Local Property Tax (LPT)

Proof of compliance with the LPT must be submitted with your application. A printed copy of the property history page from the LPT online system will provide this information. Where applicants do not have access to the online system, they should contact the LPT helpline on 1890 200255.

Where the property owner is not residing in the house, the subject of the application, proof of compliance in respect of “both” houses must be submitted.

Compliance with the LPT is necessary on date of receipt of the application and on the date the grant is paid.

Evaluation

Donegal County Council will arrange for an inspection of your property and a report to be prepared on whether or not the application qualifies in the first instance, having regard to the nature and extent of the mobility problems and secondly what works are considered necessary. The report will be prepared by either a member of the Council’s own staff or an Occupational Therapist, having regard to the nature and extent of the mobility problems being experienced.

Where, on investigation, the Council considers that your application qualifies for assistance, a provisional letter of approval will issue.

You will be advised what works are considered necessary and you will then be required to submit the following, for further consideration:

- 1 or 2 (depending on the proposed works) written itemised quotations in respect of the Estimated cost of works
- Income tax details for yourself and the Contractor,
- Detailed Plans / Planning Permission where required

A Final decision will be made on your application after these additional items are furnished by you, and considered by the Council, whereon you will be issued with a notification of Final Approval.

Where the assessment has been carried out by members of the Council's own staff, the applicant retains the right to request an Occupational Therapist assessment and they will be given an opportunity to choose this option. They will also be advised of the implications of accepting the grant on any future applications (see maintenance of works and payment of second grant section elsewhere in this document).

It is also open to an applicant to arrange for the submission of an independent Occupational Therapist report with an application at the outset thereby ensuring applicants with severe mobility problems or disability at an advance stage / receiving professional care / in hospital can have their application processed more speedily. Any such independent report must however be in the format as set out in this document and have regard to the terms of the scheme as contained herein. Where an applicant engages a private sector Occupational Therapist to assess their needs, this cost (up to €200), can be included in the grant, subject to the effective maximum grant level.

MINOR WORKS ASSESSMENT.

Please note that if you only require minor works we can process the application more quickly. 'Minor works' in this regard are deemed to refer to: the provision of access ramps, grab rails, and / or minor bathroom adaptations to provide level deck shower facilities.

If you only require minor works, please complete FORM A and arrange for your Doctor to certify.

However, if you require more 'major works' such as an extension, major internal adaptation works or a stair lift, the you should arrange to complete FORM B and arrange for your Doctor to certify.

Reports

Where the application is investigated by an Occupational Therapist, a detailed report will be completed following investigation of the application and this will be taken into consideration by the Council in the context of making a decision on same. The report will contain details of the house, the family makeup and the persons residing there, the functional status of the applicant, details of works which the Occupational Therapist believes are reasonably necessary to make the accommodation more suitable for the person with the mobility problems having regard to the terms of the scheme. Details of the specific works and specifications will be contained on a schedule attached to the report.

Where during discussion with the applicant, it becomes clear that the applicant/family are unhappy with the works being proposed, the Occupational Therapist's Report will set out details of the works which the applicant/family considers as being necessary and comment thereon. The key element here is the need for the Occupational Therapist's Report to contain sufficient information for the Council to make an informed decision on the Application and to enable it/Occupational Therapy Manager to review the application in the event of an appeal.

Where the investigation is carried out by a member of the Council's own staff, the report will contain the same level of detail to facilitate the making of a decision on the application.

Plans/Sketches

Subject to provisional approval being granted with details of the eligible works/specification being given to the applicant, it will in some cases depending on the nature and extent of the works be necessary to have a plan/drawing of the proposed works prepared which has been drawn to scale in accordance with the specifications/details contained in the provisional approval. It will be based on these plans, as approved by the Council, that a contractor's estimate should be submitted and the appropriate works carried out. It will be the responsibility of the applicant to obtain any necessary Planning Permission, which may be required. All plans must be in accordance with the Building Regulations.

Estimates

Following the granting of provisional approval, the applicant will be invited to submit a detailed contractor's estimate in respect of the approved works. This estimate will be required to be itemised in respect of the individual elements of works which are being grant aided.

Tax Requirements

Forms HM3 and HD3 sets out the information to be submitted by the applicant and the contractor in relation to tax requirements. (The Council will issue the relevant form to you when it is satisfied your application qualifies for assistance). In the case of the applicant, where the grant is less than €10,000, all that is required is a PPS number/tax reference number together with confirmation that the applicant's tax affairs are in order.

Where however, the amount of the grant exceeds €10,000, the applicant must also submit a tax clearance access number. The provision of this number, together with the PPS number/tax reference number enables the Local Authority to verify in real time, using the online verification facility on the Revenue Commissioners Website, that a tax clearance certificate has been issued.

In the case of the contractor, a PPS No / tax reference number and tax clearance access number must be provided in all cases to enable the Local Authority to verify that a tax clearance certificate has been issued.

The relevant tax clearance certificate(s) must be current on date of receipt of the application, at approval stage and on the date the grant is paid.

The Actual Works.

Commencement of Works

Under no circumstances should works commence prior to the granting of the Final Approval as Grants will not be considered where works have already commenced.

Inspections / Overseeing the Works

Pre Works - The Council will reserve the right to carry out any inspections/investigations it deems appropriate in the context of the consideration of the application. These inspections/investigations need to be carried out by Officers of Donegal County Council or other agencies acting on the Councils behalf. Access to the complete house will be required.

Post Works - The Council will not be responsible for any loss or damage that the applicant may suffer as a result of defects in the works whether structural or otherwise. Applicants should be aware that any inspections of the works by staff employed by the Council or by any of the Councils agents is purely for the information of the Council to establish by visual and cursory examination that the approved works have been completed and the Council does not accept any statutory or common law duty of care to the applicant to ensure that the works have been properly constructed or free of defects. It is therefore in the applicants own interest to employ a suitably qualified person to oversee the works and to ensure that the works are properly constructed and free of defects.

Health & Safety

Applications are reminded that the Safety Health and Welfare at Work (Construction) Regulation 2013 place new responsibilities on persons having construction work done in their home. These responsibilities include appointing competent persons and contractors to undertake the work. Please refer to the Guide for Homeowners Getting Construction Work

Done published by the Health and Safety Authority which is available from their website on www.hsa.ie

Completion of Works

It is a requirement that the works be completed and the Grant claimed within one year of the date of approval.

Payment of Grant

Payment of the grant will be made by cheque on completion of the works to the satisfaction of the Council. Request for payment must be accompanied by the Invoice you received from the Contractor who carried out the grant aided works. The Tax Clearance of the Contractor will be re-checked at this stage to ensure that their tax affairs are in order. Similarly the position in relation to compliance with the Local Property Tax will be checked and any updated proof necessary will be requested. This will mostly apply where the grant is being paid in a different year to that in which it was applied for. Cheques can only be cashed by lodgement to an individual's bank account. An applicant can authorise the payment of the grant to the contractor if required.

Maintenance of Completed Works / Payment of Second Grants

The applicant / owner of the house is wholly responsible for the maintenance of the completed works and any equipment provided under the scheme. The Housing Adaptation Grant is generally a "once off" grant and necessitates taking a long-term view of the needs of the applicant. This in some cases can result in more invasive works being hoisted upon applicants.

There is however no legal bar to the payment of a second grant where the needs of a person with a disability change. This is seen as a more practical approach where appropriate and it is often more acceptable to the person with a disability. A time span of approximately 7 years from the initial grant would be reasonable in such circumstances.

Payment of second grants are limited to instances where the needs of the person with the disability changes and different works not previously grant aided may be required (a grant is not payable for any works which were previously grant aided). Where a second grant is paid, this will be subject to the maximum limits set down with regard being had to the amount paid on any previous grant. The need for second grants should only arise in extreme circumstances and it will not be the norm for payment of them.

Appeal Process

In processing applications under the Mobility Aids Housing Grants Scheme the Authority recognises that some applicants may be dissatisfied with the authority's decision.

Applicants are invited to submit a written appeal on any decision notified to them by the local authority on their application within 3 weeks of the date of the decision stating the reasons for the appeal. The appeal will be considered and adjudicated upon within 4 weeks of receipt. A decision on an appeal will be notified to each applicant within 2 weeks of the decision being made.

The appeal should set out in detail how the applicant disagrees with the Council's decision having regard to the terms of the scheme and how it is believed that the decision is not in line with the policy as set out herein. Where the appeal relates to the nature and extent of works being proposed, the applicant should set out, how they feel they are inappropriate and how they feel other works are better and more suited having regard to the terms of the scheme which is to render a house more suitable for the accommodation of a person with the mobility problems and the ongoing need to obtain the best possible value for money.

Any such appeal will be reviewed initially by the Council and where deemed necessary, will be referred to the Manager of the Occupational Therapy Department for consideration with the appropriate staff and the preparation of a further Report thereon for the consideration of the Council. The decision as subsequently notified by the Council will be final.

An applicant will not be discriminated against for inability to submit "good quality" appeals.

Submitting your Application

When completed, your application should be forwarded to your local Public Information Service Centre at the following address:

- Glenties Municipal District, Gweedore Road, Dungloe
- Inishowen Municipal District, Malin Road, Carndonagh
- Letterkenny Municipal District, Neil T Blaney Road, Letterkenny
- Donegal Municipal District, Drumlonagher, Donegal Town
- Stranorlar Municipal District, County House, Lifford

Telephone Number for all offices: 074 9153900

IF YOU REQUIRE ASSISTANCE IN FILLING OUT THIS FORM PLEASE CONTACT YOUR LOCAL HOUSING OFFICE AT THE ABOVE ADDRESS AND PHONE NUMBER