

The Child Brain Injury Trust is a national charity supporting anyone affected by childhood acquired brain injury. The following information has been developed to help the reader understand more about brain injury and some of the associated issues. Every effort has been taken to ensure the information is accurate and up to date. If you require more immediate support or assistance please contact our Helpline 0303 3032248 or email helpline@cbituk.org where we will be able to respond to your specific enquiry and or offer support.

Alterations to your home

This Factsheet is for families of children who experience physical difficulties as a result of their acquired brain injury. The current layout of your home may restrict your child's ability to access all areas and you may need to have alterations made.

When your child returns home from hospital certain alterations, adaptations or equipment may be needed particularly if your child requires a wheelchair. Usually an occupational therapist (OT) who has expertise in this area would carry out an assessment of your child's needs before your child returns home.¹ However, if alterations are not made and once your child is home you feel that some are needed, you can contact an OT through your local social services department or your child's GP.

What about funding?

If you are a tenant of the Council or a registered Social Landlord you may be able to get funding from your landlord. Alternatively, you may be eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) from the District Council. Although this grant is not means tested for disabled children there is a maximum limit, and if the cost rises above this limit you may be asked to pay the remaining amount. It may however, be possible to secure funding from other sources such as charities, your Local Council, your landlord or the County Council. Your local Home improvement Agency (HIA) can advise you about this and if necessary, help you with the process. There may also be funding available if you decide to move from your current home to one that is more suited to adaptation.

Disabled Facilities Grants

A disabled facilities grant is a grant that you can get from your local authority for work that is essential to help a disabled person live an independent life. You can, for example, get a disabled facilities grant for the following things:-

- Making it easier to get in and out of your home, for example, by widening doors or providing ramps.
- Making it easier to get to a living room, bedroom, toilet, bathroom or kitchen, for example, by putting in a stair lift or providing a downstairs bathroom.
- Making it easier or safer to get access to your garden.
- Providing suitable bathroom or kitchen facilities.
- Providing or improving a heating system.

- Ensuring your child's safety, for example, by providing a specially adapted room in which it would be safe to leave your child unattended or by providing improved lighting for better visibility.
- Helping you get around at home so you can care for your child.

A local authority must give you a disabled facilities grant if you meet the conditions for getting one.

Applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant

Owner-occupiers, landlords, tenants, licensees and occupiers of some houseboats and park homes can apply for a disabled facilities grant provided the work is for the benefit of a disabled person who lives or will live in the property.

To apply for a disabled facilities grant you need to fill in a form which you can get from your local authority. They may ask for information and/or for tests to be carried out before you make a formal application. You may also need to get approval for building regulations, planning, listed building or conservation area purposes.

Your local authority may have a list of local architects, surveyors and builders who specialise in renovation work which you could ask to see when choosing a contractor for the work to your home. If you intend to carry out the work yourself you will not be able to claim for the cost of your labour.

Once you have applied for a grant, your local authority must tell you about its decision in writing as soon as it can and no later than six months after you applied. You must apply for a grant before you start any work. You won't normally get any grant if you start work before the Council approves the application.

Qualifying for a Disabled Facilities Grant

You can only get a disabled facilities grant if the work you need done on your home is:-

- Necessary and appropriate to meet your needs. Your local authority will normally ask an occupational therapist for their opinion on whether or not you need the work done
- Reasonable and practical given the age of your home and the condition it is in. For example, if your home is in a serious state of disrepair it might not be practical to do the work you need.

If you live in rented accommodation and are applying for a disabled facilities grant for work to a communal area of the property in which you live, you should make sure that you are responsible for doing the work. If your landlord is responsible for doing the work you will not be able to get a grant. Your landlord may be able to apply for a grant instead.

If you would like help with applying for a disabled facilities grant you can consult an experienced adviser, for example, at a Citizens Advice Bureau.

How much grant will you get?

A disabled facilities grant will be no more than £30,000 in England, £36,000 in Wales or £25,000 in Northern Ireland. ⁱⁱ However, your local authority can top this up as it can give you other help with home improvements. The amount of grant you get depends on your income and savings unless the work is to meet the needs of a disabled person under 16 or in some cases over 16 but under 19. If you live in Scotland it would be a good idea to contact your Local Council's Social Services Department first to discuss the best way to meet your needs before applying for a Home Improvement Grant.

Getting a Disabled Facilities Grant if you live in rented accommodation

If you rent your home and apply to your local authority for a disabled facilities grant you will need to get your landlord's permission before your local authority will agree to help you. However, your landlord must not refuse permission without a very good reason. If you need to make changes to your home because of a disability your landlord must agree to this as long as the changes are reasonable. If your landlord doesn't agree this could be disability discrimination and they could be breaking the law. This rule doesn't apply in some cases where the landlord lives in the same property as you.

If you need to make changes to your home because of your disability your landlord may be responsible for making them.

If your home is in need of repair your landlord may also be responsible for doing them.

Home Improvement Agencies

Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) are not-for-profit organisations run by housing associations, local authorities and charities. They can help people who own their own homes or who live in privately rented accommodation and who are elderly, disabled, or on a low income to repair, maintain or adapt their home.

For example, a HIA can:

- Arrange for repairs to be carried out to your home
- Help you to get funding for repairs to be carried out to your home
- Give you advice about a range of issues which affect your living conditions
- Organise the fitting of small aids and adaptations to help you live independently in your home
- Install security measures to your home such as door and window locks, door chains and viewers

Who does the work?

The agencies that usually carry out this work are home improvement organisations. These organisations can take the hassle out of organising adaptations to your home, although it can take longer than if you were to use an independent body. It is worth checking whether an occupational therapist will still be able to deal with the alterations once the agency is involved.

To find your local agency contact:

- **England:** Foundations at <http://www.foundations.uk.com> or 0300 124 0315
- **Scotland:** Care and Repair at <http://www.careandrepairsotland.co.uk>
- **Northern Ireland:** Northern Ireland Housing Executive at <http://www.nihe.gov.uk> or 03448 920 900
- **Wales:** Care and Repair at <http://www.careandrepair.org.uk> or 02920 674830

If you decide to choose a builder yourself your local council can provide you with a list of approved agencies to contact. Also the House Adaptations Advisory Service (HAAS) has a UK-wide register of architects and surveyors and you can contact them on 020 7840 0125 or email info@cae.org.uk.ⁱⁱⁱ

What if there is a problem with the work that has been done in your house?

If there are issues with the standard of work or structural problems resulting from the work you have had done using the money from a Disabled Facilities Grant or Home Improvement Grant there is no additional funding to correct the problem so it is worth checking the builders against the local council register before any work commences.

What if you need more than alterations?

Sometimes alterations to your home to meet your child's needs may not be possible so you may have to move home. In these instances contact your local Housing Options Team through the Council to get advice on your housing situation and any options you may have for being re-housed. Sometimes this can involve a long wait even if you are prioritised.

Still need help?

If you need further help or wish to complain about your housing situation you can contact the [Local Government Ombudsman](#) (click the link if you are viewing online).

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ⁱ http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/HealthAndSupport/WhosWhoinHealthServices/DG_4003761

ⁱⁱ http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/DisabledPeople/HomeAndHousingOptions/YourHome/DG_4000642

ⁱⁱⁱ <http://www.cae.org.uk/haas.html>