

Adaptations, improvements and repairs to the home

A person with dementia may wish to consider adaptations, improvements or repairs to the home. These may help to make life easier or make it possible for the person to remain at home for longer. This information sheet suggests where to go for advice and the grants that may be available.

Adaptations

People with dementia may have difficulty moving around the home or managing daily activities, such as getting in or out of the bath.

Adaptations to the home range from hand and grab rails to wheelchair ramps or specially designed shower and toilet facilities.

An occupational therapist (OT) can visit the home to assess the situation. The OT can advise on whether or not a particular adaptation may be helpful to meet the person's individual needs.

- The OT can arrange minor adaptations, such as hand rails, through social services. Community equipment, aids and minor adaptations that assist with living at home or aiding daily living and cost under £1,000 should be provided free of charge in England.
- If major adaptations are needed, the OT will explain what steps to take. Grants towards the cost may be available in some cases.

You can contact an OT through the social services department of your local authority. A person is entitled to an assessment if they have a diagnosis of dementia.

- An assessment is also usually required if you are applying for a grant from the local authority to help meet the cost of any adaptation due to disability.
- Carers can also ask for an independent assessment of their needs under the Carers' and Disabled Children's Act 2000. These needs may include adaptations to help them to care.

If the wait for an assessment or for adaptations to be carried out is longer than seems reasonable, and you cannot sort it out, you can use the social services' complaints procedure. Social services will explain how to do this.

Improvements and repairs

Improvements or repairs could include draughtproofing, widening doors for wheelchair users, rewiring, or improving heating systems. They may help the person with dementia to remain at home.

Local authority grants and assistance

Disabled Facilities Grants

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grants are designed to help meet the cost of adapting a property for the needs of a disabled person.

A Disabled Facilities Grant can be awarded for:

- Improving a disabled person's access to and from their home
- Making the home safe for a disabled occupant and anyone else living with them
- Improving a disabled person's access to the main family room in their home
- Improving a disabled person's access to their bedroom, or providing a new bedroom
- Improving a disabled person's access to the bathroom, or providing a new bathroom, and making it easier for the person to use the bath, toilet, sink etc
- Making it easier for the disabled person to prepare and cook food
- Improving the heating system, or providing a suitable new heating system
- Making it easier for the person to move around the home to enable them to care for someone dependent on them, who also lives there
- Improving or moving controls for heating, lighting and plug sockets.

Disabled Facilities Grants are means tested. The means test is applied to the person with disabilities and their partner, if they have one. This is so even if the disabled person is not the applicant for the grant. If the disabled person is a child or young person, the means test is applied to the parent(s) or person who has responsibility for their care.

Disabled Facilities Grants are administered by the local housing authority rather than the social services department, if these are different local authorities. An application form should be available from the local housing authority.

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Discretionary power to assist with housing repairs, adaptations and improvements

New legislation, which came into effect in July 2003, has brought about changes in local authorities' powers to provide assistance with housing repairs, adaptations and improvements.

Local housing authorities now have wide discretionary powers to provide financial and other assistance for repairs, improvements and adaptations. They have the power to set their own conditions for assistance, such as whether to perform a means test, and to set the circumstances under which financial assistance should be repaid. Assistance can be given in the form of a grant, a loan, labour, materials, advice or any combination of these. Local

authorities may also take security, including a charge on a person's home.

Local authorities can help owner-occupiers, tenants or landlords. They must have a published policy setting out the type of assistance they are willing to provide and under what circumstances. Ask your local authority for a copy of its policy.

Other sources of funding

Social fund

You may be eligible for a community care grant from the social fund to help with the cost of minor repairs or improvements if you are receiving income support, income-based job seeker's allowance or pension credit.

Contact the social fund at your local Jobcentre Plus office (previously the benefits agency).

Charities

Some charities or trusts may offer help towards the cost of minor adaptations or repairs. Ask at your local library or citizens advice bureau, or contact Charity Search (see below).

The Alzheimer's Society's caring grants are designed to help carers of people with dementia. Grants of up to £500 can be given to cover the cost of special equipment or the cost of improvements to the home. The grants are intended to complement, not replace, statutory grants and carers are expected to have already applied to their local authority. Contact the Society's national office for more information.

Grants for keeping the home warm

Keeping the home warm is important. Older people tend to feel the cold more easily, as do people with dementia who have become less active.

Local authority grants may be available (see above) or the Warm Front Team may provide government grants.

England

Under the Warm Front grants scheme, help towards improvements in insulation, room heating and water heating is available to disabled people and to families with children under 16 who receive a qualifying benefit. Warm Front provides grants of up to £1,500 for installing insulation and improving heating.

People aged 60 or over who get income support, pension credit, housing benefit or council tax benefit may be eligible for a Warm Front Plus grant. These can provide up to £2,500 worth of heating improvements, including installation of central heating systems.

If you live in London, the South East, the South West, the North East or the West Midlands contact:

EAGA Partnership Ltd
Freepost NEA 12054
Newcastle upon Tyne NE2 1BR

Freephone: 0800 316 6011
Minicom: 0800 072 0156
Website: <http://www.eaga.com/>

If you live in Eastern England, the East Midlands, Yorkshire or Humberside contact:

TXU Warm Front
Ltd Suffolk House
Civic Drive
Ipswich
IP1 2AE

Freephone: 0800 952 1555

Wales

The home energy efficiency scheme (HEES) provides grants of up to £1,500 on a similar basis to Warm Front grants. HEES Plus provides up to £2,700 for central heating for householders over 60, disabled people and single parents with children under 16 and a qualifying benefit.

Further information is available from:

Unit 4 Ty Nant Court
Ty Nant Road
Morganstown
Cardiff
CF15 8G2

Freephone: 0800 316 2815

Northern Ireland

The Warm Homes scheme offers grants of up to £750 for disabled people and families with children under 16 and a qualifying benefit. Grants can be used for insulation and heating improvements. Grants of up to £2,700, designed to pay for an enhanced package of heating and insulation measures, are awarded to people over 60 with a qualifying benefit.

Further information is available from:

EAGA Partnership Ltd
Freepost BE2107
Dungannon
County Tyrone
BT70 5BR

Freephone: 0800 181 667
Minicom: 019 1233 1054

Sources of help

There are a number of voluntary organisations that can offer information and advice.

Advice agencies

A citizens advice bureau or other local agency, such as a housing advice agency, should be able to help.

For your nearest advice agency, ask at your local library or look in the phone directory.

Age Concern England

Age Concern England publishes a number of helpful factsheets:

- Number 13
Older home owners: financial help with repairs and adaptations
- Number 35
Rights for council and housing association tenants
- Number 36
Private tenants' rights.

For a free copy of any of these factsheets contact:

Age Concern England
Freepost (SW30375)
Ashburton
Devon
TQ3 7ZZ

Freephone: 0800 009966

Email: boonp@ace.org.uk
Website: <http://www.ageconcern.org.uk/>

Centre for Accessible Environments

This organisation can give information over the phone on building design for people with disabilities and can supply fact sheets.

Centre for Accessible Environments
Nutmeg House
60 Gainsford Street
London
SE1 2NY

Telephone: 020 7357 8182
Email: info@cae.org.uk
Website: <http://www.cae.org.uk/>

Charity Search

This national charity gives information on other charities relevant to older people and people with disabilities. It can point you in the direction of charities that may be able to offer financial help relevant to your needs.

Charity Search
25 Portview Road
Avonmouth
Bristol
BS11 9LD

Telephone: 0117 982 4060 (Mon to Thurs 9am-3pm)

DIAL network

DIAL (Disablement Information and Advice Line) is a network of over 140 local groups throughout the UK. It provides information on a range of issues connected with disability, including adaptations.

DIAL centres are run by people with personal experience of disability. Most advice workers are volunteers. Contact DIAL UK to see if there is a DIAL group serving your area.

DIAL UK

St Catherine's
Tickhill Road
Doncaster
DN4 8QN

Telephone: 01302 310123
Email: enquiries@dialuk.org.uk
Website: <http://www.dialuk.org.uk/>

Home Improvement Agency

Home improvement agencies, also known by names such as Care and Repair or Staying Put, offer free advice and information to older and disabled homeowners who want to stay in their own homes but whose homes are in a poor state of repair or unsuited to their needs.

Activities vary from place to place but may include:

- Helping people to apply for local authority grants or funding from charities
- Supplying a list of recommended builders
- Liaising with a wide range of professionals on the person's behalf
- Overseeing the work from start to finish to ensure it is of a high standard.

There are over 200 home improvement agencies at present. To find out if there is one in your local authority contact:

England

Foundations
Bleaklow House
Howard Town Mill
Glossop
Derbyshire
SK13 8HT

Telephone: 014 5789 1909
Email: foundations@cel.co.uk
Website: <http://www.foundations.uk.com/>

Wales

Care and Repair Cymru
Norbury House
Norbury Road

Fairwater
Cardiff
CF5 3AS

Telephone: 029 2057 6286
Email: enquiries@careandrepair.org.uk
Website: <http://www.careandrepair.org.uk/>

Northern Ireland

Staying Put Department
Fold Housing Trust
3-6 Redburn Square
Holywood
County Down
Northern Ireland
BT18 9HZ

Telephone: 028 9042 8314
Email: stayingput@foldgroup.co.uk
Website: <http://www.foldgroup.co.uk/>

References

The Carers' and Disabled Children's Act 2000

The Community Care (Delayed Discharges etc.) Act (Qualifying Services) (England) Regulation 2003

The Disabled Facilities Grants and Home Repair Assistance (Maximum Amounts) Order 1996, as amended

The Home Energy Efficiency Schemes (England) Regulations 2000, as amended

The Home Energy Efficiency Schemes (Wales) Regulations 2000, as amended

The Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996, Part 1

The Housing Renewal Grants Regulations 1996, as amended

The Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002

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Last updated: October 2003
Last reviewed: October 2003

