

Guidance on adaptations that can be considered for a Disabled Facilities Grant

The following categories of adaptation are detailed in the **Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996** as being works which must be considered for Disabled Facilities Grant assistance. An Occupational Therapist will determine that the works are “necessary and appropriate” and they must be “reasonable and practical” to carry out following consultation with the Social Services Authority.

Disabled Facility Grants are means tested and have a limit of £30,000 - there is no discretion within Runnymede Borough Council to go above this level. When determining works regard must be had as to how the applicant will finance any additional costs or means tested contribution.

Facilitating access by the disabled occupant

Works may include:

- Ramping and/or handrails to the main external door. Only one access point will be adapted for each dwelling. External stair lifts or step lifts will be considered if works are reasonably practicable and they are not prone to vandalism.
- Widening one entrance door and the doorways to the bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and living room. Automatic door opening to main entrance doors will only be allowed for persons who are otherwise unable to open the door. Door entry systems will be considered where the person has severe mobility problems.
- Alterations to facilitate wheelchair access to the bedroom, bathroom, kitchen and living room. Access to other rooms may be considered where the disabled person is a carer.
- Other adaptations that are necessary to facilitate access to any of the relevant rooms by the disabled person, for example, stair lifts or through floor lifts in some cases.
- Provision of hard standing where the disabled person is a wheelchair user or has difficulty walking to the house. This will only be given where existing on-street parking is considered unsatisfactory and a marked disabled parking bay is not possible, or where it affords a more economic solution than providing additional paths/ramping from the roadside.

Facilitating the use of washing facilities by the disabled occupant

Adaptation of the facilities in the bathroom and toilet, including the provision of a level access shower, lever taps, specialist WCs, wall mounted wash hand basin, slip resistant flooring and grab rails. The provision of a heater will be funded if no other heating exists. The provision of storage cupboards, units, mirrors, towel rails and shaver points will not be eligible. The adaptation or provision of more than one bathroom to a house will only be considered if evidenced by a functional need.

Facilitating the preparation and cooking of food

Where someone other than the disabled person does and will continue to do the cooking and preparation of meals, it will not normally be necessary to carry out full adaptations. However, it may be possible to carry out minor adaptations to allow the disabled person to

prepare light meals or hot drinks, typically this may include a low-level worktop with power points for a kettle/microwave.

Adaptations can be considered where the disabled person is the only or main user of the kitchen. Works may include:

- The kitchen sink, including alteration to its height or position or the type of taps to it. Powered and adjustable-height sinks will not generally be allowed, as the provision of a second sink is often a more economic solution.
- Cooker point and oven-housing unit ensuring its height and position is in a safe location and the provision of worktops on either side. The cost of ovens, hobs and appliances (white goods) are not eligible.
- Work surfaces located beside the sink and on each side of the cooker having a total length of approximately 1.5m, all at a suitable height for the disabled person.
- Food storage in an accessible position, usually space for a refrigerator with power supply. And the fitting of pull out or carousel unit to an existing double floor unit or where none exists the provision of a 1000mm floor unit with pull out or carousel units. Replacement units or storage space lost by the requirement to lower work surfaces will not be funded.
- Alterations to the kitchen door, light switches and power points, but only if it is necessary.
- Extensions or enlargement to kitchens can only be agreed where they are absolutely necessary in order to provide turning space for a wheelchair and if suitable space cannot be achieved by rearrangement of the existing facilities.
- Mechanical ventilation where required by Building Regulation Approval or if access to openable windows is impractical.

Other works that will be considered:

- Alterations to the height and/or position of light switches and power points to make them accessible to the disabled person.
- Heating the rooms that are in everyday use by the disabled person where a medical need can be demonstrated. This does not include repair to existing systems.
- Carrying out structural alterations where necessary to provide fixings for disabled equipment e.g. fixing for tracking /overhead hoists.
- Where an adaptation is required to a listed building any additional works that are required to comply with listed building requirements.
- Where an adaptation cannot be carried out due to disrepair issues those repairs, within reason, may be carried out. Such works as replacement of rotted flooring or strengthening of the floor as part of a level access shower installation, electrical repairs to enable works to be carried out safely, and dealing with low water pressure. Replacing defective drainage and a full rewire will not be eligible.
- Additional bathrooms or bedrooms may be allowed where they are specifically for the disabled person and it can be demonstrated that adaptation of other rooms or space or access to those rooms in the property is unsuitable. Extensions will only be allowed following a detailed cost/benefit analysis of alternative options.
- In cases of small terraced properties with narrow passageways or very difficult access, effective adaptation can only proceed where it can be reasonably and practicably carried out without having a detrimental impact on neighbouring properties.
- Requests are sometimes received to provide separate bedrooms where disabled children with behavioural difficulties share a room with other siblings and disturb their sleep. This will only be considered under mandatory grant where it can be demonstrated the child is prone to violent outbursts and there is risk of damage to the house, physical harm to the child or to other people. Where such need has been identified, grant is available to carry out appropriate adaptations to eliminate or minimise that risk.

Access to the Garden

Grant assistance will not be given where there is already access to the garden but grant may be given to improve an existing access to make it safe for the disabled occupant to use. It does not include extending an existing access e.g. creating a side access so a person can also go around the side of a house. Generally, the most modest solution for providing access to both the house and the garden will be considered and this can mean that one access may be sufficient to access both the house and the garden. Where homes have communal gardens, e.g., blocks of flats served by a single access, grants will not normally be provided for an individual access to the garden unless it can be demonstrated that because of the disabled persons condition the travel distance to the garden would be excessive and unreasonable.

Many gardens consist of various areas and levels and contain out-buildings, sheds and greenhouses. The grant will simply be for providing immediate access to the garden and does not include landscaping gardens to make them more suitable for the disabled person to access.

Works considered non-mandatory

Runnymede Borough Council is unfortunately unable to fund non mandatory works of adaptation to the homes of disabled people. This includes;

- Replacement of rooms or parts of rooms which have been "lost" by carrying out adaptations (by way of explanation, where a ground floor living room or dining room is converted into a bedroom with en suite shower room for a disabled person, the construction of a "replacement" living room or dining room for use by the rest of the family could not be grant aided on a mandatory basis),
- Fitments in rooms, for example built-in cupboards, wardrobes, storage units etc,
- Extensions to living rooms,
- Provision of secondary access from the dwelling house, formation of patios, garden paths etc including walkways from garages and sheds,
- Storage areas and charging points for wheelchair/ scooters,
- Service contracts for lifts and other equipment,
- Provision of treatment rooms,
- Floor coverings (except slip resistant floor coverings as recommended by an Occupational Therapist),
- Wall tiling (except splash backs and immediate shower areas),
- Creating a safe play area and/or fences,
- Storage areas for example scooters, wheelchairs, children's equipment,
- Portable/non-fixed items,
- Drop kerbs, hard standings and ramps for non- wheelchair users/non-drivers,
- Formation of hard standing above 4 sq meters,
- Walkways to and from garages or scooter storage areas,
- Formation of bin store areas,
- Provision of clothes drying facilities,
- General provision of external lighting.