

Housing

This Section Contains Information on:-

**Care and Repair
Grants
Other Ways of Raising Money
Safety in The Home
Piper Lifeline**

Housing

As a Carer you may have particular concerns or worries about the property of the person you care for.

Housing includes such a large range of options from being a tenant of the Council, a Housing Association or a private landlord to being a home owner. It is not possible to cover this difficult and at times complex topic in great depth within this section.

If you do have a housing problem then firstly you should consider raising your concerns with the landlord or building society. If you have a mortgage, you may prefer to obtain independent advice, in which case you should consider contacting Citizens Advice Bureau or Age Concern. The Social Care and Housing Department in the County Council can also help you with general advice.

Pembrokeshire Care and Repair 2000 Ltd

This is a non-profit organisation which offers free advice, help and support to local elderly and disabled home owners who would like to get repairs or improvements, both large and small, carried out to their home.

They can arrange to visit you at home to discuss the repairs and improvements you would like done. If you decide to have work done they can:-

- discuss the options available to you;
- give you technical advice on how best to tackle the repairs;
- help you fill in the forms for grants or loans, and deal with the administration of the work;
- ensure that you are satisfied with the work before payment is made;
- ensure you are receiving the correct benefits.

Grants

There are two types of grant available:-

- Disabled Facilities Grant
- Small Works Grant

Information is available on each of these grants from the Private Sector Housing Team of the Social Care and Housing Department.

You apply in the same way for each kind of grant.

How to Apply for a Grant

Contact the Private Sector Housing Team (details in contacts list) and ask for an application form. Applications must include details of the property and of the work required.

You will also (in the case of a Disabled Facilities Grant) need to complete either an owners certificate stating that the applicant or a member of a family will live in the property for the next five years or for as long as their health or other circumstances permit. A tenant's certificate or a landlord's certificate can also be supplied where appropriate. The Council supplies these blank certificates with the application form.

Disabled Facilities Grant.

A Disabled Facilities Grant is designed to help make the home of a disabled person more suitable and to help the person manage more independently. People who are registered (or registerable) as disabled, or their carers, can apply. A Disabled Facilities Grant is awarded on the basis of a person's income and savings. There is a maximum amount that can be awarded currently £30,000. Work must not start before the grant has been awarded.

Who is Eligible?

To be eligible for a disabled facilities grant you must be:-

- an owner/occupier;
- a private tenant;
- a private landlord of disabled tenant(s);
- a council tenant;
- a housing association tenant.

Before a decision is made, the Council must be satisfied that the proposed work is reasonable and practicable, taking into account the age and condition of the property. It must also be satisfied that the work is necessary and appropriate for the disabled person; the Private Sector Housing Team consults with the Community Care Division about this. This usually involves the Community Care Division arranging for someone to visit the person applying for a grant to make an assessment of their needs.

What can you Get a Grant For?

A Disabled Facilities Grant can either be mandatory or discretionary. Mandatory means the Council must award a grant if the person qualifies. Discretionary means that the Council can decide whether or not to award a grant. In view of the high demand for mandatory grant Pembrokeshire County Council has determined not to award discretionary Disabled Facilities Grant.

Mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant.

You can get a mandatory Disabled Facilities Grant for:-

- improving access in and out of the property;
- making the property safe for the disabled person and others who live there;
- improving access to a room used as the principal family room;
- improving access to, or providing a room used for sleeping in;
- improving access to, or providing a room in which there is a toilet, bath or shower, and wash hand basin, or improving the use of any of these;
- improving access to facilities for preparing and cooking food;
- improving the heating system to meet the disabled person's needs, or providing a suitable heating system;
- improving access and movement around the home to enable the disabled person to care for someone dependant on them, who also lives there;
- improving use of a source of power, light, or heat.

The maximum value of a mandatory grant is £30,000 in Wales. If the work costs more than the maximum, the Council may, in some cases, be able to pay the extra as a discretionary disabled facilities grant (see following text).

The Council can delay payment of a mandatory disabled facilities grant (or part of it) for up to twelve months from the date of the application.

Discretionary Disability Adaptation Supplementary Grant (DASG)

Social Care and Housing may be able to top up a mandatory grant in some cases where the cost of the work required exceeds the maximum Disabled Facilities Grant available after means testing; and where individuals or families have extra outgoings which were not able to be counted in the original grant calculations because of the strict criteria used by the Government in establishing eligibility. Applications for such grants will be made following a referral to the Social Care and Housing. If you are already applying to the council for a Disabled Facilities Grant, the Community Care Division will be empowered by the Housing Division if they think you may be eligible for a Supplementary Grant.

How are The Grants worked out?

A Disabled Facilities Grant is also worked out by means testing. If the disabled person owns or rents their home, their income and savings (and those of their partner if they have one) will be taken into account. If the disabled person is under 18 years old, the means test applies to the parents. There are however proposals by the Welsh Assembly Government to abandon means testing for Children.

If an application for Disabled Facilities Grant is approved, but the situation changes before the work is finished, the Council must take into account all the circumstances and then take such action as appears to them to be appropriate. For example, if the disabled person moves to other accommodation, or dies, or the work becomes unnecessary or inappropriate, the Council may decide that:-

- no further grant can be paid;
- no further instalments of grant can be paid;
- the work should be completed;
- some of the work should be completed and the grant should continue to be paid;
- the application should be reviewed.

Equipment and Minor Adaptations

The Council has a duty to provide any additional facilities, which they consider to be 'necessary for the greater comfort and convenience of the disabled person'. This might include equipment and minor adaptations such as handrails, grab rails, and ramps. This kind of help might be available without applying for a disabled facilities grant or if a disabled facilities grant is refused. Telephone Pembrokeshire County Council on 01437 764551 for more information.

Small Works Grant

Small Works Grant is available for small but essential repairs, improvements, or adaptations. Assistance can be in the form of cash or materials or both. There is a maximum amount that can be awarded. Work must not start before the grant has been awarded.

The Small Works Grant is discretionary which means that the Council can decide whether or not to give it.

Who is Eligible?

To get a Small Works Grant, you must: -

- be aged 18 or over;
- live in the property as your only or main residence, or be applying for assistance for the benefit of a person who is aged 60 or over, or disabled, or infirm;
- be an owner/occupier or private tenant or have a right of exclusive occupation of the property for at least five years;
- have a power or duty to carry out the building works;
- be aged 60 or over, or disabled, or infirm, or getting at least one of the following benefits:-
 - Income Support/Pension Credit
 - Income based Job Seekers Allowance
 - Housing Benefit
 - Working Tax Credit
 - Council Tax Benefit
 - Disabled Persons Tax Credit

If you are not an owner/occupier or tenant but you have a right to exclusively occupy the property, you must have lived in the property for at least three years before you apply for small works grant, unless: -

- the work is for fire precautions;
- the work is to enable someone to be cared for who is aged 60 or over, or infirm, or disabled;
- the property is in a 'renewal area'.

Small Works Grants are also available to some occupiers of mobile homes and houseboats.

What can you get a Grant For?

There is no restriction on the type of repairs, improvements or adaptations that can be funded by Small Works grant. Assistance can be in the form of cash or materials or both.

A Small Works Grant is limited to a maximum of £5,000 over any three-year period. This amount may be spread over several applications within the 3-year period.

If you are not happy

If you apply for a grant and you are not happy either with the service you have received or with any decision made, you can complain in writing to the appropriate person. If you are still not satisfied you can complain to the Complaints Officer in Social Care and Housing.

Other Ways of Raising Money

If someone doesn't qualify for a grant or the grant does not cover the full costs of the work, there are other ways of raising the money for repairs and adaptations, including: -

- a) help from the Home Energy Efficiency Scheme;
- b) raising a loan e.g. extra mortgage using your home as security;
- c) applying for help through the social fund;
- d) applying for grant or loan from a charity or benevolent fund.

NEW HOME ENERGY EFFICIENCY SCHEME (HEES) FOR WALES

This section of the pack gives details on two schemes. They are called the New Home Energy Efficiency Scheme and the New Home Energy Efficiency Scheme Plus. They are run by the EAGA partnership, who can be contacted direct on www.eaga.co.uk or telephone on 0800 316 2815

The New HEES scheme will provide a package of energy efficiency measures. This includes heating improvements in addition to insulation measures. The measures depend on the construction type of the property and the heating and the hot water arrangements. The scheme has been phased in from November 2000.

The New HEES Plus scheme recognises the difficulties experienced by low income householder's aged over 60 and will offer similar packages to HEES with the addition of central heating through gas and electric systems. Lone parent households, chronically sick and disabled households will also be allowed to access the enhanced scheme (with the exception of security measures).

Security improvements (including door and window locks) will be provided to households aged over 60 in high crime areas.

Grants are designed to provide the most cost-effective measures and the new HEES grant maximum is £1500. The New HEES Plus maximum is £2700.

Who Can Apply?

The following will be able to access the New HEES Plus scheme:

- a) Households claiming child benefit, with a child or children under 16 and in receipt of Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance:
- b) Households who are disabled or chronically sick and receiving one or more of:
 - Disabled Persons Tax Credit
 - Attendance Allowance
 - Disability Living Allowance
 - Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit (which includes constant attendance allowance)
 - War Disablement Pension (which must include the mobility or constant attendance allowance)
 - Income Support
 - Housing Benefit
 - Council Tax Benefit
 - Each of the following benefits must include the Disability Premium

The following will be able to apply for the New HEES scheme.

Householders on:

- Working Tax Credit (household income of up to £11,250 before tax).
- Income Support
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit
- Income-based Job Seeker Allowance

For further information about the scheme ring the West Wales ECO Centre on Freephone 0800 512 012. Or the EAGA partnership on Freephone 0800 3162815

Raising a Loan Using Your Home as Security

Owner/occupiers might be able to raise a loan using their home as security. However, anyone who does this but fails to keep up the repayments could lose their home altogether. It is therefore very important to get independent advice first. Contact one of the agencies listed at the end of this section.

Social Fund

The Social Fund gives loans and grants, e.g. for people getting income support, to help them stay in the community rather than residential care. Social Fund payments are made by the Benefits Agency. Contact the Benefits Agency office for more information.

Charities and Benevolent Organisations

Charities and benevolent organisations have a range of grants and loans to help pay for things that the government does not fund. Most of the major organisations are listed in a book called 'A Guide for Individuals in Need'. Libraries and Citizen Advice Bureaux usually have a copy to look at.

VAT

Some works and goods, which are needed for adaptations for disabled people, are exempt from VAT. To find out which ones, contact your local Customs and Excise office and ask for VAT leaflet 701/7/94. They can also give you advice.

To avoid paying VAT, the disabled person signs a statement saying that as a disabled person they are entitled to relief from VAT. They can then give this to suppliers so that they do not add VAT to their bills.

Safety in the Home

There are a lot of simple, straightforward things, which can be done to make the home safer.

Home Safety Checklist

- remove all loose mats and rugs;
- fix carpets down if possible;
- make sure stair carpets are properly fitted;
- fit a strong rail at the side of the staircase. If the person you care for has a stroke, and can only use one arm, fit a rail each side;
- use higher wattage light bulbs in corridors and stairways;
- do not use cupboards or shelves that are so high that you need to stand on a chair to reach them. Use them for storing things, which are seldom used, or leave them empty;
- install grabs rails by the bath or shower if it does not already have a special non-slip surface;
- install grab rails by the front and back steps, and by any internal steps;
- tape trailing flexes around the edges of the wall. Try to avoid tucking them under carpets, as they can fray without anyone realising it, and cause fires;
- use extra table lamps or side lamps to lighten dark corners. This can also help if the ceiling light bulb goes then your cared for will not have to change it him or herself or you wait in the dark until help arrives. As stated above make sure flexes are taped down.

- keep a lamp or a torch by the bed so it can be switched on if someone needs to get up during the night in the dark;
- if glass doors are not made of safety glass, cover them with shatterproof film (available from DIY shops);
- have gas appliances and flues checked annually by a CORGI fitter. If possible, use gas installations with a flame supervision device. This means the gas will be turned off automatically if it is not lit;
- have electrical wiring checked by an electrician. Make sure that sockets and fuses are not overloaded. Check that the plug is fitted with the correct strength fuse; 3 or 5 amp for appliances up to 730 watts, 13 or 15 amp for those over 730 watts;
- if there are open fires, make sure there is a fireguard, and that it is easy to use. Put the guard around the fire, especially before leaving the room;
- do not dry clothes or tea towels over the fire or on top of the cooker because they can easily catch fire;
- install a smoke detector that will sound a warning if there is a fire;
- Get into a safety routine at bedtime;
 - unplug any unnecessary appliances, e.g. the TV;
 - put a guard around the fire or switch it off.
 - close all doors and windows. This reduces the spread of fire and smoke;

If you or the person you care for has some money to spend, you could also consider getting fixed carpets which reduce the risk of slipping, as well as being easy to keep clean. A microwave cooker may be easier to use, and may cut down the risk of burns on hot pans, provided the person you care for is capable of understanding the instructions. Microwaves are also more economical for cooking or heating up small quantities of food.

A deep fat fryer is a good buy for anyone deep frying food regularly and is much safer than a conventional chip pan. Most kitchen fires are caused by unattended chip pans or those that have been filled with too much oil. The rule is - never more than one third full of oil.

Piper Lifeline

Pembrokeshire has its own community alarm system, which is called Piper Lifeline. It is a local service that provides reassurance and 24-hour emergency support to those in need. Using of a specially designed telephone and mobile radio trigger; people can continue living an independent life in their own home, knowing they can contact someone for help easily and quickly.

There is a small weekly charge to subscribe to the service.

Telephone Pembrokeshire County Council on 01437 764551 for more information.

Section 10 - Contact Details

Age Concern Pembrokeshire

A charitable organisation that helps older people in Pembrokeshire. Providing information, befriending, hospital homecoming and odd job services through volunteers.

2a Holloway
Haverfordwest
SA61 2JL

☎ (01437) 769972

Citizens Advice Bureaux

19 Cartlett
Haverfordwest

☎ 0845 1202939

10 Meyrick Street,
Pembroke Dock

☎ (01646) 683805

Pembrokeshire Care and Repair 2000 Ltd

The agency works with older people, and people of any age with a disability who need advice about housing options if they are owner occupiers, or live in privately rented accommodation. Help is given to consider what housing options may be the most appropriate in individual circumstances and advising on grant applications. If there is a decision to proceed with a housing grant application, the agency can assist with a grant application. Help is also given to find suitable building contractors. Where help is required with a Disabled Facilities Grant, the service is offered in consultation with the Community Occupational Therapists.

Meyler House,
St. Thomas' Green,
Haverfordwest

☎ (01437) 766717

Hours: Office hours Monday to Friday, 9.30 am to 4.30 PM.
Answerphone at all other times

Referrals: Accepted from all sources provided the person being referred is aware of the referral

Pembrokeshire Community Alarm Service - “Piper Lifeline”

An emergency telephone service with special features to suit people with a visual impairment, hearing impairment, or with mobility/other disabilities.

Community Alarms Liaison Officer
Haverfordia House
Haverfordwest SA61 2DN

☎ (01437) 764551

Pembrokeshire County Council

County Hall
Haverfordwest SA61 1TP

☎ (01437) 764551

website: www.pembrokeshire.gov.uk

Housing

Grants and all housing enquiries

☎ (01437) 764551

Housing Applications:

For information on making a housing application, or sheltered accommodation

☎ (01437) 764551