

Local Government &  
Social Care  
**OMBUDSMAN**

# Disabled Facilities Grants



*Guide for  
practitioners*

June 2025

# Introduction

This guide forms part of a suite of documents and resources to help council practitioners make good decisions on housing services for Disabled people.

Some of the injustice we find could be avoided. Often this comes down to getting the basics of good administration right. This guide will help with this.

Visit [our website](#) to find other documents and resources in this series.

## About our good practice guides

Our series of good practice guides share the learning from our investigations on chosen topics, to help practitioners in councils and local service providers make better decisions.

We choose the topics based on where we find common faults, emerging issues or when promoting our findings can help to prevent future injustice.

The guides use summaries of our investigation decisions to highlight common problems, suggest good practice tips based on where things have gone wrong, as well as explain to practitioners our approach to handling complaints on the topics.



# Key learning

Councils can improve Disabled people's experiences and avoid adding to the injustice caused by the shortage of suitable housing, by getting the basics right.

In Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), this means:

- > ensuring robust procedures set out expectations for all services involved in delivering DFGs, including timescales, to avoid delay
- > communicating clearly and effectively with applicants
- > keeping accurate and detailed records, particularly of the agreed works and amount of the grant awarded
- > ensuring the completed works meet the assessed needs
- > having regard to the additional guidance on DFGs for children



# Common issues and complaints

## Taking too long

Disabled Facilities Grants are complicated, requiring the involvement of multiple council services, third party contractors, landlords and tenants.

Your council may be the local housing authority that is the decision maker, but often relying on assessments of Disabled people's needs from another department or council. Your council may need permission from a landlord or need to apply for additional funding on complex projects.

This creates scope for delay to occur. Delay is the most common fault we find in complaints about DFGs.

Your council should do all it can to minimise delays. It should minimise the impact of any delays by keeping applicants updated and telling them why.

Your council should have effective processes to manage DFG applications from start to finish.



### Dorota's story

Case ref: [22 014 959](#)

Dorota is a housing association tenant, who uses a wheelchair. She asked for a DFG to adapt her kitchen to make it wheelchair accessible. It took 21 months before the work was completed.

The borough council complained about was not responsible for all the delay. The county council was responsible for a six-month delay in getting an occupational therapist (OT) assessment. And the surveyor Dorota instructed was responsible for a delay in producing a schedule of works and getting quotes from contractors.

Our investigation found the borough council was responsible for around six months of delay, during which Dorota could not use her kitchen safely and independently. We also found it had failed to communicate with Dorota for eleven months, despite her asking for updates, which caused her avoidable distress.

### Putting it right

We asked the council to apologise and pay Dorota a sum to recognise the impact of the faults.

The council told us it had recruited additional staff and provided training to improve its service. It also agreed to share our decision with relevant staff so they could learn from what went wrong.



# Common issues and complaints

## Record keeping

Keeping accurate and sufficiently detailed records is an essential part of good administration.

On DFGs, your council should ensure plans and schedules of works are clear about the extent of works agreed and covered by the grant. Not doing so can leave staff or third parties unclear about what has been agreed and what is expected of them.

This costs significant time and resources to identify and put right.

Your council should have regard to all the available information when deciding a medical assessment and clearly explain its decision.

We have published more detailed [good practice tips](#) on this specific issue.



**Mai's story**  
Case ref: [23 000 219](#)

Mai is a council tenant. She asked the council to make adaptations to her kitchen to make her oven more accessible. An occupational therapist (OT) completed an assessment and recommended moving the oven to a new location at eye level for Mai.

After a visit to Mai's home to assess the works needed and obtaining a quote from a contractor, the council agreed the DFG. However, we found fault with the council for not properly recording the extent of the works needed to achieve the adaptation. This meant a dispute arose about whether the works included fitting the oven into the new location and moving a radiator, which caused a delay in completing the adaptation.

### Putting it right

By the time we made our decision, the council had agreed to carry out appropriate action to complete the adaptation. In addition, we asked the council to apologise and make a payment to recognise the avoidable distress caused by the delay.

We also asked the council to remind relevant staff of the need to keep a clear record of the extent of the work needed and to confirm this in writing to applicants.



# Common issues and complaints

## Ensuring the adaptations meet the person's needs

With DFGs being complex, we have investigated cases where poor processes or changes during works have meant adaptations do not ultimately do what they intended for the Disabled person.

Your council must ensure the adaptations do meet the needs of the applicant, once work is complete.



### Joseph's story

Case ref: [23 001 484](#)

Joseph has limited mobility and cannot use a manual wheelchair independently. He uses a powered wheelchair outside his home but was unable to access his home in the powered wheelchair due to problems with a step-lift installed by the council.

Joseph's mother complained the lift had been in place for three years but Joseph had not been able to use it. This meant he was housebound and had lost his independence.

The council accepted there were considerable delays, which it said was partly due to its reliance on specialist contractors, who in turn rely on specialist parts coming from outside the UK.

While we recognised these difficulties, our investigation found fault with the council for not ensuring the adaptations met Joseph's needs and were completed to a reasonable standard. There was also confusion and a breakdown in communication over a part needed to make the lift work, which led to a significant delay in it being ordered.

The faults left Joseph unable to leave and return to his home when he wished. He was reliant on others, particularly his parents, to help him and was at times housebound and isolated. This had a significant impact on his mental health and wellbeing.

### Putting it right

We asked the council to apologise and pay Joseph to recognise the difficulties he experienced because of the delay. It also agreed to make a payment to his mother, to recognise the distress caused to her and the avoidable time and trouble she was put to by having to pursue the council to get the situation resolved.



## DFGs for children

Unlike DFGs for Disabled adults, a DFG to meet the needs of a Disabled child is not means-tested, although it is still capped at the £30,000 limit.

Housing authorities can consider a further discretionary grant and children's services can consider offering top-up support using their powers under section 17 of the Children Act 1989.

Your council must consider additional factors set out in the Guidance where a DFG is for a child.



### Ahmed's story

Case ref: [22 014 883](#)

Ahmed lives with two disabled children. He applied for a DFG to fund underfloor heating because the children were unable to walk and crawled on the floor. He also asked for access to a cellar so the children could use the space with their walking frames.

The council said there was no need to use the cellar and that a DFG could not be used for underfloor heating. We found fault with the council for using old occupational therapy (OT) assessments when making its decision and for not properly explaining its reasons for refusing.

We pointed out the Guidance says councils should consider the views of the children and their parents. It also says assessments should consider the developmental needs of the child and their progress towards maximum independence, the needs of their parents as carers, and the needs of other children in the family. The council had not demonstrated it had done this.

### Putting it right

We asked the council to apologise to Ahmed and to reconsider the request for a DFG, based on a fresh assessment that specifically addresses his concerns about heating and lack of space.



# Councils' duties on DFGs

Disabled facilities grants (DFG) are provided under the [Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996](#). Councils have a statutory duty to give grants to disabled people for certain adaptations. These include enabling the disabled person to access their home and essential facilities within the home, like bathrooms, bedrooms, and kitchens.

The [Disabled Facilities Grant \(DFG\) Delivery: Guidance for local authorities in England 2022](#) (the Guidance) advises councils how they can effectively and efficiently deliver DFG funded adaptations to best serve the needs of local older and disabled people.

Before approving a grant, a council must be satisfied the work is necessary, appropriate for the disabled person's needs, and is reasonable and practicable.

The process of applying for a DFG usually requires:

- > an assessment by an Occupational Therapist (OT) or other qualified assessor to identify the person's needs;
- > a schedule of works setting out the adaptations to meet the identified needs. Complex adaptations might also need plans or technical drawings;
- > quotes from at least two contractors for the cost of the works; and
- > certificates and approvals from both a tenant and a landlord, where the applicant is a tenant, or an owner's certificate if the applicant owns their own home.

The statutory timescale does not begin until the council receives a complete application, which is when it has all the information set out above.

The Guidance gives the following target timescales for approving the grant and completing the work:

- > urgent and simple works – 55 working days
- > non-urgent and simple works – 130 working days
- > urgent and complex works – 130 working days
- > non-urgent and complex works – 180 working days





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