

# Scheme of Assistance Grants

## Your Questions Answered



## **Scheme of Assistance Grant (SoA)**

The outcome of the *All About Me* assessment completed with your Occupational Therapist (OT) has identified the need for a major adaptation to your property.

This assessment process is governed by West Lothian Council's Occupational Therapy Service's "Criteria for Service Provision" and assistance with funding for this adaptation may be sought from the "Scheme of Assistance" Grant.

We appreciate there is a lot of information to absorb regarding this process, so we have produced this leaflet to hopefully answer the most frequently asked questions.

## **Frequently Asked Questions**

### **Why do I have to go through a grant process?**

If you are an owner occupier, shared owner, or tenant of a private landlord, then the Scheme of Assistance grant is the way funds are accessed to help adapt your home to meet your needs.

The Scheme of Assistance is regulated under Section 72 of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006. This requires local authorities to provide assistance and support to the private sector with major adaptations to their home.

### **What does the grant cover?**

The grant covers essential works only and no allowance is made for decoration costs. However, if a person wishes to carry out additional work over their assessed need they can do so but they would have to privately fund the additional costs.

Similarly, if a person wishes to complete adaptations other than those recommended, as long as the alternative works would also meet the assessed needs of the person with a disability as approved by their OT, a grant may be awarded on a comparative cost basis. In this circumstance, the grant will be provided based the cost of the original recommendation, or the cost of the alternative works as proposed by the applicant, whichever is lower.

Some approved adaptations may include the installation of major items of equipment. For example, a curved stairlift, automatic wash/dry toilet or a through floor lift. These items are also funded via the grant process and are subject to the same assessment and funding criteria. Except where advised otherwise, applicants will be responsible for the on-going servicing and maintenance of such items and the council will not fund their removal if they are no longer needed. The council can provide information and advice regarding the above responsibilities.

All adaptations/major equipment will only be provided where it is reasonably practical to do so. The long term suitability of the property for the applicant's on-going needs will be taken into consideration.

## **What are the conditions of the grant?**

To ensure that public funds are used effectively and for the purpose intended, the following statutory conditions will apply to **all** grants for **10 years** from the date the grant is awarded:-

- i. The house must be used as a private dwelling (does not prevent the use of part of the house as a shop or office or for business, trade or professional purposes).
- ii. The house must not be occupied by the owner or a member of the owner's family except as that person's only or **main residence**.
- iii. The owner of the land/premises must take all practicable steps to keep the property in good repair.
- iv. The owner of the land/premises must, if required to do so by the local authority, certify that the conditions i to iii are, in so far as they apply, being observed.

**NB:** These conditions will be registered on the Title Deeds of the property. If there are any loans secured on the house the lender should be informed of this application.

**Any breach of the above grant conditions may result in the grant having to be repaid in full to the council.**

**Similarly, should the property be sold, the cost of the grant awarded may require to be repaid to the council under certain circumstances.**

In addition, the council will not provide the same adaptation again in the same property **within a 10 year period** unless:-

- i. The need for the work to which the further application relates was not reasonably foreseeable when the original application was approved.
- ii. It would not have been reasonably practicable to carry out that work at the same time as the work to which the original application related.
- iii. That the work to which the further application relates was not considered by the local authority to be eligible for a grant or subsidised loan when the original application was approved.
- iv. The application is made in response to an invitation made by the authority to the applicant under section 90(1) of the Housing (Scotland) Act 2006, i.e. work to improve energy efficiency and safety.

### **Wet Floor Shower Area**

The installation must conform to the standard specification and must not include full height fixed screens, or power showers (your OT will provide you with a copy of this specification). The grant does not include full tiling/wall covering of the bathroom, nor a new toilet & wash hand basin (unless assessed). If you decide to purchase a new toilet and/or wash hand basin, it must be 'like for like' in terms of size, footprint and design. This will be subject to a private quotation between you and the appointed contractor and authorisation from your Occupational Therapist.

Similarly, should you wish to retain/replace vanity units, or other bathroom furniture, please be aware that the Occupational Therapist will need to authorise this prior to installation by the contractor. This is to ensure that it does not adversely impact on the available mobility space required for equipment, either now or in the future.

Also, while you may be able to access a shower cabinet at present, we need to consider a facility that will be suitable for your long term needs. Therefore, only barrier-free shower areas will be supported by the grant.

### **Stair Lift**

A stair lift is fixed to the stair treads and is considered an adaptation to the property. If the stair lift requires to be removed for any reason, e.g. for carpet fitting, the cost of removal and re-installation will be your responsibility. Therefore, if you are considering changing your stair carpet it would be advisable to arrange this before installation of the stair lift.

Please note that stairlifts will be covered by a manufacturer's &/or contractor's guarantee for an initial period, however you will be responsible for all maintenance costs thereafter. You may wish to consider taking out a maintenance/servicing contract. These vary in cost from around £150 to £300 per year, though you may claim VAT relief on these costs.

### **Through floor lift/ ramp/ automatic toilet**

As above, while the above items will be covered by a manufacturer's and/or contractor's guarantee you will be responsible for all maintenance costs thereafter. You may wish to consider taking out a maintenance/servicing contract. These vary in cost from around £150 to £300 per year, though you may claim VAT relief on these costs.

### **Ceiling track hoist**

Ceiling Track Hoists are no longer covered by the scheme of assistance process and are considered a 'Non-chargeable' piece of equipment to meet personal care. If there is an assessed need the Occupational Therapist will discuss this with you.

### **General Points**

If removal of an adaptation is required for whatever reason you would be responsible for this cost.

Architect's plans may be required for more complex adaptations. A standard fee for the approved adaptation, as advised by your OT, will be included within the grant application.

The grant is always based on the most cost effective quotation. However, you will have to pay any difference in cost if you choose an alternative contractor who has quoted a higher price.

## How much grant will I get?

The grant will cover 80% of the actual cost of the work you have been assessed as needing. However, you will be entitled to 100% grant if you receive one of these welfare benefits:-

- Universal Credit
- income support
- Income-based job seeker's allowance
- pension credit (guarantee element)
- income-related employment and support allowance

## What support is available to complete my application?

Once your adaptation is approved you will be contacted again by a member of the Occupational Therapy Service.

Where necessary, they can help you to complete the grant application form and assist you to obtain the relevant supporting documentation, for example:-

- **quotes from contractors:** while staff can provide a list of local contractors they cannot recommend a particular company and you are free to use any contractor you choose as long as they are VAT registered. The Trusted Trader website can also offer suggestions, [www.westlothian.gov.uk/trustedtrader](http://www.westlothian.gov.uk/trustedtrader)
- **a copy of your title deeds:** this is usually lodged with your mortgage lender or solicitor. However, you can also obtain a copy of your title deeds from Registers Scotland. This takes 2-5 working days and there is a small charge paid direct to Registers Scotland. This can be done online and their website is [www.ros.gov.uk](http://www.ros.gov.uk)
- **evidence of qualifying benefits:** a photocopy of a current Department of Work and Pensions letter or a bank statement showing the benefits payment.
- **Power of attorney:** if enacted (i.e. your appointee currently makes legal decisions on your behalf) a photocopy of this document (which must have been registered with the Public Guardian) is required to be submitted.

While OT staff can assist you with the grant process, **the legal contract to supply the adaptation remains between yourself and your chosen contractor.**

## Why do I need to get 3 quotes?

It is best practice to obtain 3 quotes to ensure best value and offer a comparison of the services available. Although ensuring a reasonable cost is important, price isn't everything and other factors are considered, including the quality of product(s), warranties offered and when the work can be scheduled .

## What is the recording fee and why do I have to pay this?

The council also has a statutory obligation to register all grant awards on the deeds of title to the property, the cost of which must be paid for by the applicant. This is an administration fee not covered by the grant. The cost for registration is set by the Registers of Scotland and may vary, however as at 1st April 2018 this cost is £60.

### **How long does it take before the grant is approved?**

Once all the supporting documents have been collected and the application form has been completed, the application is submitted to the Grants Department at West Lothian Council.

There are various stages within the process and we have agreed timescales for completing these. While the council strives to meet these timescales, there may be situations which result in a delay to the standard process. The average time for completion of a major adaptation via a grant is 4-6 months.

### **When can the work begin?**

The Grants Department will send you a letter advising what percentage of grant will be offered and what your monetary contribution will be. Once you have signed and returned this letter, and received your Certificate of Approval, work can be arranged.

### **Can I start work and be reimbursed once the grant is approved?**

No. The work cannot begin until the grant is fully approved and no retrospective payments can be made.

### **What happens if I change my mind?**

Until the point that you have signed the letter of offer from the Grants Department, you can cancel at any time. Once you have signed and returned the letter of offer, a commitment has been made between you and the contractor and there may be cancellation costs to pay to the contractor.

You will have a period of one year from the date you accept the Grant in which to have the agreed work completed.

### **Will my adaptation be subject to a check visit?**

On completion of work, your OT will visit to ensure the adaptation meets your functional needs and to discuss appropriate provision of equipment if required.

Please note that if the adaptation has not been installed to the agreed specification, payment of the grant may be withheld until such times as this is rectified.

In addition you will receive a visit from a technical officer from the Grants Department to ensure the work has been completed to a satisfactory standard.

**If you have any queries, please contact:-**

**The Occupational Therapy Service on telephone number 01506 234440.**

Your Occupational Therapist is .....

Telephone number.....

**Other useful information:-**

“Funding Adaptations To The Home: A guide for home owners” leaflet produced by the Scottish Government & available to download from their website at <https://www.gov.scot/Resource/Doc/348014/0115910.pdf>

VAT relief information produced by HMRC available to download from <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/vat-relief-on-certain-building-work-if-you-have-a-disability>

# NOTES:

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Director: Jim Forrest

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Chair: Frank Toner