

Factsheet 42w ● February 2024

Obtaining disability equipment and home adaptations in Wales



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1 Information about this factsheet

This factsheet covers the help you can get from the local authority and/or the NHS to manage your daily tasks at home, via the provision of specially designed equipment or home adaptations.

There is also information on hiring or buying equipment and possible sources of funding.

This factsheet can be read in conjunction with some of our other related resources, including:

- Factsheet 67w *Home improvements and repairs for older people in Wales*;
- Factsheet 6w *Finding help at home*;
- Factsheet 46w *Paying for care and support at home in Wales*;
- Age Cymru's Factsheet 41w *Social care assessments for older people with care needs in Wales*; and
- Information Guide 17 *Adapting your home*.

Note: The information given in this factsheet is applicable in Wales. Different rules may apply in England, Northern Ireland and Scotland. Contact Age UK, Age NI and Age Scotland respectively for further information.

1.1 Local authority social services departments

In this factsheet references to the 'local authority' or 'council' will refer to the **adult social services department of the local authority**. You might also see the relevant social services department referred to elsewhere using similar variations – for example:

- social care department;
- adult social services;
- older persons' department; *or*
- older persons' team.

Adult social services teams are responsible, among other duties, for assessing people's need for 'care and support' or 'social care' services and deciding whether those needs meet the eligibility criteria. **As part of meeting someone's needs, social services may provide disability equipment and/or adaptations.**

Note: Finding contact details for the local authority's social services department

If you have internet access, you can search for your local authority using your postcode on the Welsh Government's website:

www.gov.wales/find-your-local-authority

Alternatively, our Age Cymru Advice service can provide them – see section 14 for contact details.

2 Introduction to disability equipment and home adaptations

2.1 Disability equipment

There are various names for the specially designed equipment that assists people with disabilities to manage their daily living tasks more independently and safely. For consistency, throughout this factsheet we use the term '**disability equipment**'. However, you may also see similar terms, such as 'community equipment'; 'daily living equipment'; or 'disability aids' used elsewhere.

Note: Will the NHS or local authority social services have responsibility for providing the disability equipment?

Certain types of equipment may be provided via NHS health professionals – such as physiotherapists and nurses – rather than via the local authority social services. For example, this may be the case if the equipment is needed more for meeting health-related needs, rather than social care needs (in reality these different types of needs may well overlap).

Section 4 below covers the topic of disability equipment provided by the local authority, whilst section 5 provides information on NHS provision of disability equipment.

2.2 Adaptations

Home adaptations also assist people with disabilities to manage daily living tasks and remain independent, but are generally attached to a property or permanently change its fabric in some way, as opposed to disability equipment which is usually ‘standalone’ in nature and thus removable or portable.

2.3 Differences and overlaps between disability equipment and home adaptations

Welsh Government guidance splits adaptations into three groups, ‘**small, medium and large**’¹ – this is outlined and explained further in section 6 below.

There is a significant overlap between small or minor adaptations and disability equipment. Something may be classed as a small or minor adaptation if there is a certain amount of ‘fitting or fixing’ required by a technician or builder (as opposed to the supply of ‘standalone’ equipment). Also, small scale adaptations may be “relatively routine and straightforward and do not [necessarily] require the input of an occupational therapist before being approved and provided².

¹ Housing Adaptations Service Standards, Welsh Government, April 2019.

² Clements, L and Thompson, P (2011). Community Care and the Law (5th edition), Legal Action Group

Larger scale adaptations involve more substantial changes, or structural alterations to a property – for example, installing a stairlift.

If you rent your home, due to the changes to the property that an adaptation may entail, you will need to consult with your landlord before any work is undertaken, though this may not be necessary in the case of disability equipment, if it is ‘standalone’ in nature and doesn’t involve any alterations to the fixtures and fittings in the property.

Note: Disability equipment / home adaptations and other social care services

Equipment and/or adaptations are often provided *alongside* other services, such as packages of **home care and/or personal care support** – see section 3 below.

3 Local authority care needs assessments and provision of disability equipment and/or home adaptations

3.1 Getting a care needs assessment

If you feel you need specialist equipment to help you manage more safely and easily around your home, you can contact the social services department of your local authority and ask for a care needs assessment (there is a link to find your local authority in section 1.1 above, if you’re unsure of the details).

You do not have to have a letter from your doctor supporting your needs, but this can sometimes speed up the process.

The local authority will generally not be able to assist you until it has first carried out the assessment (this may be referred to by a number of similar terms, such as ‘social care assessment’, ‘community care assessment’, ‘care needs assessment’, or simply ‘needs assessment’). Social services will usually arrange for you to have the assessment in your own home, carried out by a social worker/s and/or an occupational therapist (OT).

An OT will typically take the lead in a case where the main element of someone’s care requirements appears to be a need for disability equipment or a home adaptation. An OT is someone trained to assess the special needs of people with disabilities and to make recommendations on what work needs to be done to address your needs.

See Age Cymru’s Factsheet 41w *Social care assessments for older people with care needs in Wales* for further information on the care needs assessment process.

Note: If you have a carer, they can also ask for their own needs to be assessed – carers are eligible for their own needs assessment because they may require assistance or support from social services to carry out their caring role.

Local authority duties to provide information & advice and/or advocacy as part of the care needs assessment process

Section 17 in Part 2 of the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014* places duties on local authorities to provide “information, advice and assistance...relating to care and support”, including – as a minimum – “publication of information...on how the care and support system operates in the local authority area...the types of care and support available [and] how to access [this]”³. This will include information and advice on the provision of social care services and paying for care, including the provision of disability equipment or adaptations as a way of meeting care and support needs.

The *Act* also contains duties for local authorities in regard to advocacy services and has strengthened people’s rights to advocacy support in relation to the social care assessment process. In many instances, the requirement on the local authority will be to make people aware of the availability of advocacy support, should they wish to utilise this; in others the authority will have a *specific duty* to “arrange an independent professional advocate” for someone⁴.

³ Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: Part 2 Code of Practice (General Functions), Welsh Government

⁴ Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: Part 10 Code of Practice (Advocacy), Welsh Government

3.2 Legal duty to carry out an assessment

The local authority has a **legal duty** to carry out an assessment of anyone living in its area who *may* need community care services, once it becomes aware of this need. The assessment must take into account *all* aspects of your needs.

The right to a needs assessment is **not** affected by the level of your financial resources or other circumstances (however, subsequent services provided as a result of the assessment may be charged for).

3.3 The provision of equipment and/or an adaptation if you are found to have eligible needs

After the completion of a needs assessment, based on the results, the local authority will decide whether or not it should provide or arrange social care services for you.

Each local authority in Wales must use national eligibility criteria to make this decision.

Having established that your identified needs fall within the national eligibility criteria (that you have ‘eligible needs’), the local authority then has a legal duty to arrange or provide services for you to meet those needs.

Amongst a range of other potential services, this could include the provision of disability equipment or a home adaptation.

An example of a typical assessment recommendation could be where an individual needs to be hoisted from a bed to a chair in their home as part of a care and support package to cater to their dressing, hygiene and domestic needs. In this hypothetical case, the recommended hoisting equipment, its use by properly trained home care staff and its ongoing maintenance will be an essential and integral element of the local authority’s legal duty to meet the service user’s assessed eligible needs.

Note: As mentioned in section 3.1 above, further information on the care needs assessment process and meeting eligible care and support needs can be found in Age Cymru’s Factsheet 41w *Social care assessments for older people with care needs in Wales*.

4 Disability equipment provided by local authorities

4.1 Examples of disability equipment

Disability equipment may include:

- Products for personal care and maintenance of hygiene.
- Those that assist in using the bath or toilet – for example, bath boards or raised toilet seats.
- Products for food preparation – for example, lever taps and adapted kitchen utensils.
- Products to help with the use of beds and chairs – for example, bed raisers and rising/reclining chairs and hoists.

The charity, Living Made Easy, provide extensive information on disability equipment – see section 14 below for their contact details.

4.2 Charging for disability equipment provided by the local authority social services department

Note: The Welsh Government published **Housing Adaptations Service Standards** in April 2019 which include details on the charging rules in relation to adaptations, including that small adaptations should not be means tested – see section 6 below.

A copy of the standards can be accessed on the Welsh Government website at:

www.gov.wales/housing-adaptations-guidance-providers

These standards, however, **only** cover adaptations and not disability aids or equipment, so there is a potential that aids or equipment may be charged for, as outlined in the rest of this section.

There is, though, an overlap between small scale adaptations and disability equipment (as discussed in section 2 above), so it's possible that some types of equipment will fall within your local authority's adaptations policy, so you may also wish to read section 6 below.

The *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014* makes only a brief mention of disability equipment. This is in the context of confirming that “occupational therapy” and “aids and adaptations” are potential methods for a local authority to **meet someone’s eligible care needs** (as identified in their care needs assessment)⁵.

However, there are **no** specific references to means testing and/or charging for disability equipment in the Act itself or the accompanying Code of Practice for local authorities – the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: Part 4 and 5 Code of Practice (Charging and Financial Assessment)* (version 7 – April 2023)⁶.

Therefore, as was the case under previous legislation and guidance, the general non-residential / homecare charging rules will apply to disability equipment. These rules are explained in detail in Age Cymru’s Factsheet 46w *Paying for care and support at home in Wales*. However, in brief, the following applies:

After paying for non-residential care and support services, people should be left with a minimum level of income

The Code of Practice guidance advises that because a person who receives care and support at home “will need to pay their daily living costs such as rent, food and utilities, the charging framework seeks to ensure they have enough money to meet these costs. As a result after charging local authorities **must** leave a person...with a minimum income amount”⁷.

After paying the required charge, your income should not be reduced below the **total** amount of the following:

⁵ Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014, Part 4: Meeting needs

⁶ This is the specific Code of Practice that covers the means testing and charging rules (a new version may come out in April 2024, though usually there are minimal changes to the main body of content. Contact Age Cymru Advice if you are reading this factsheet from April 2024 onwards and have any queries). There are also a range of other Code of Practice (CoP) documents to accompany the Act. They are “backed by law” and help individuals, professionals and organisations to work within and comply with the Act. They can be accessed at: <https://socialcare.wales/hub/codes-of-practice>. A copy of the Part 4 and 5 Code of Practice can be accessed on the Welsh Government website at: www.gov.wales/code-practice-charging-social-care-services

⁷ Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 – Part 4 and 5 Code of Practice (Charging and Financial Assessment) (version 7 – April 2023), Welsh Government

- Someone’s “basic entitlement” (this is *either* the level of Pension Credit Guarantee Credit that someone receives, *or* if not getting this benefit, an equivalent amount worked out by the local authority based on the person’s age, level of disability and personal circumstances); **plus**
- a ‘buffer’ of at least **35%** of the above basic entitlement; **plus**
- a further allowance of at least **10%** of the basic entitlement in recognition of ‘disability related expenditure’ which service users are likely to have.

A maximum weekly charge and ‘low level, low cost’ care and support

In Wales, there is also a maximum weekly charge for homecare and other non-residential social care services – currently this is **£100 per week**⁸.

Authorities are not able to charge a service user more than this amount a week, regardless of which services, or combination of services, they are receiving.

The only potential exception to this in the charging rules is that local authorities are permitted to set flat rate charges for certain services that constitute “low level [and] low cost care and support”⁹. The services that fall into this category do **not** count towards the maximum weekly charge.

Note: In the Welsh Government’s guidance, low level, low cost services which can attract the flat rate charges are defined as those typically being for “care and support that substitutes for ordinary living, such as meals or laundry. While potentially being care and support provided regularly, in some cases it might be the only care and support a person receives”¹⁰.

Issues with applying the Code of Practice non-residential care charging rules to disability equipment

It can be said that, for the most part, the rules outlined above relate to on-going service provision – for example, where someone receives daily visits from a carer.

⁸ It is possible that this will be increased in April 2024.

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Ibid

As touched upon above, the Welsh Government’s guidance does not make specific mention of disability equipment, but it may be that local authorities will treat such provision as falling within the definition of ‘low level, low cost services’ and thus apply a flat rate charge where it is reasonable to do so¹¹.

Is it ‘reasonable’ to charge a particular service user for their disability equipment?

The Welsh Government has stipulated that all social care services need to support people to achieve “well-being”.

Legislation defines this as when a person is “physically, mentally and emotionally happy”; has their rights; and can enjoy “positive relationships with family and friends”; “a social life and enough money to live a healthy life”; has “a good home [and the person feels] part of the community”¹².

Therefore, local authorities should look at the impacts of their charging policy on the independence, social inclusion and general well-being of older and disabled people, making adjustments if there are any negative impacts.

As such, you may not be charged at all if your financial resources are below a certain level.

If someone felt that they were being asked to pay an unreasonable charge they could use their local authority’s complaints procedure to challenge this – see section 10 below.

5 Disability equipment from the NHS to meet health-related needs

Some items of equipment, such as a commode or a walking aid, could meet both health and domestic daily living needs.

¹¹ Communications between Age Cymru and the Welsh Government clarified that this was the expected approach.

¹² Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: The Essentials, Welsh Government, 2015

Your GP, or a district nurse, might arrange for you to receive these items. They may suggest that you also approach your local authority social services for a broader assessment of your needs (this would allow for any social care services that you require to be put in place alongside NHS provision).

5.1 Equipment to assist with walking

Walking sticks, walking frames or other equipment to assist mobility may be provided following an assessment by a physiotherapist who will be able to recommend the most appropriate aid. They should also ensure that you know how to use it safely. Your GP or other health professional can arrange a referral to a physiotherapist.

The charity, Living Made Easy, may also be a source of useful advice on this type of equipment – see section 14 below for their contact details.

5.2 NHS wheelchairs

If you have long-term mobility problems, use of a wheelchair could help you to maintain your mobility and independence.

Note: Hiring / borrowing a wheelchair, or purchasing one privately

This section details NHS wheelchair provision. If you wish to borrow a wheelchair for a short amount of time, rather than obtain one for an indefinite period, see section 11 below for further information on hiring or borrowing equipment. If you wish to obtain a wheelchair privately, rather than going via the NHS, see section 12 below.

NHS assessments and eligibility criteria for wheelchairs

You can be referred for an NHS assessment to see if you qualify for a wheelchair by your GP, hospital consultant or social services staff. The assessment will look at your medical and lifestyle needs and, if you are eligible, staff can help you to choose a suitable chair.

Someone should be referred for an NHS wheelchair assessment if they have a “permanent physical impairment or medical condition that affects their ability to walk [meaning they] will need a wheelchair for more than 6 months”. However, there can be exceptions to this, such as cases where a person has a “rapidly deteriorating life limiting” condition¹³.

Provision of NHS wheelchairs is handled by the NHS Wales Artificial Limb and Appliance Service (contact details can be found in section 14, though they may not be able to help you directly – i.e. you would most likely require a referral as outlined above).

Note: The NHS provides wheelchairs on a **free, long-term loan**. That is, any wheelchair that is provided officially belongs to the NHS, but is lent to you for as long as required. The NHS will pay for servicing and repairs, so long as these are not needed because of misuse or neglect.

What is available?

Wheelchairs are usually standard models. Depending on your individual needs you may be assessed as requiring a:

- Standard Manual Wheelchair;
- Active Manual Wheelchair (will have some adjustable settings);
- ‘Tilt-in-Space’ Wheelchair (where a tilt facility is needed for the user to maintain sitting balance and/or relieve pressure);
- Powered Wheelchair (either an indoor or outdoor model only, or one for use in both environments); or in **some** situations:
- more than one wheelchair.

¹³ Specialised Services Service Specification: All Wales Posture and Mobility Services, Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee, NHS Wales, April 2017 – a copy is available at: <https://whssc.nhs.wales/commissioning/whssc-policies/posture-and-mobility/cp59-all-wales-posture-and-mobility-services>

Note: More expensive wheelchairs

In exceptional circumstances – where there is a “clinical justification” – you may be able to get a different and/or more expensive wheelchair from the NHS. Guidance states that where this is the case, the NHS “will discuss the client’s case at a local MDT [Multi-Disciplinary Team] meeting to approve ‘Out of Range’ equipment”¹⁴. An MDT assessment is a full, detailed, assessment of an individual’s needs, involving a range of different health and social care professionals.

The NHS does not provide *electric mobility scooters* – however, there is some further information on this topic below, in section 7.

5.3 Hearing or sight issues

Hearing issues

If you have hearing problems and might benefit from a hearing aid, contact your GP who may refer you to your local hospital for a hearing test.

You have a right to have your hearing assessed, particularly if you think your hearing loss is becoming a problem. The NHS issues hearing aids on free loan to patients.

Sight issues

Low vision aids may be able to help with particular **sight problems**. You can mainly find low vision services in hospital eye departments. They can make magnifiers and other low vision aids available on loan.

Social services assistance

Your local social services department may *also* provide a range of support services or employ specialist social workers to help people with sight or hearing loss.

¹⁴ Ibid.

Charitable help

The Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID) and the Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) may be useful contacts – see section 14.

5.4 Other items available from the NHS

Some items such as wigs or fabric supports (including spinal or abdominal supports) may be issued on an NHS prescription. If so, they should be free, regardless of your age, income or savings.

The NHS may also be able to provide assistive technology, such as telecare – further information can be found in section 8 below.

Age Cymru's Factsheet 44w *Information on NHS services for older people in Wales* may also be helpful.

6 Assistance with home adaptations via your local authority

6.1 Introduction

Adaptations may be delivered through a number of different funding streams or schemes. The main ones are:

- **The Welsh Government's ENABLE: support for living independently scheme** (provided via local authorities).
- **General provision of small adaptations by local authority social services departments (or other discretionary powers).**
- **The Rapid Response Adaptations Programme.**
- **Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).**
- **Physical Adaptations Grants for social housing properties.**

Further information on each of these can be found in sections 6.5 to 6.9 below.

Note: Although the range of schemes may appear confusing, in practical terms you won't necessarily need to know which one is most appropriate for you as, for example, the local authority social services department would identify this as part of your care needs assessment (as outlined in section 3 above).

Your local Care & Repair agency may also be useful in identifying the best scheme for your needs. Care & Repair Cymru is a charitable organisation that works to ensure older people have safe and secure homes, which are appropriate to their needs.

6.2 Who should you contact about getting a housing adaptation?

If you are a homeowner

If you own your home, you should contact **your local authority**. Their contact details can be found at:

www.gov.wales/find-your-local-authority

You may also wish to contact your local Care & Repair agency for advice and information – see section 14 for contact details.

If you rent your home from the council or a housing association

If you live in this type of property, you should contact **your landlord**. They can then arrange to access the appropriate funding stream for adaptations in this sector (for example a Physical Adaptations Grant).

Note: As per section 3 above, you may also want to contact the social services department for a full assessment of your needs.

If you rent your home privately

If you rent privately, you should contact **your local authority**.

However, as touched upon in section 2 above, you will need to consult with your landlord as well, before any work can be undertaken.

You may also wish to contact your local Care & Repair agency for advice and information – see section 14 for contact details.

Note: Rented property – landlord duties in regard to making ‘reasonable adjustments’ for disabled people

If you have a disability and rent your home, you might have a right, under a duty in the Equality Act 2010, to have certain changes made to the property – these are known as ‘reasonable adjustments’.

Further information on this topic can be found in Age Cymru’s Factsheet 67w *Home improvements and repairs for older people in Wales*.

6.3 ‘Small’, ‘medium’ and ‘large’ adaptations – guidance provided in the Welsh Government’s ‘Housing Adaptations Service Standards’

The tables on the following pages provide further details on the three categories.

There is a ‘*timescale for delivery*’ column in the tables. In this column, reference is made to ‘**service providers**’. The ‘*Housing Adaptations Service Standards*’ (as mentioned above in section 4.2) advise that, depending on circumstances, the ‘service provider’ could be:

- the local authority (for example, the social services department, or housing department);
- the NHS;
- a Care & Repair agency; or
- a housing association (if you are a housing association tenant).

Note: All quotes included in the tables below are from the Welsh Government’s ‘*Housing Adaptations Service Standards*’, April 2019 (a link to them can be found in section 4.2 above).

Small adaptations

Examples	What is the most likely way for this to be delivered?	Timescale for delivery
<p>This type of adaptation will include simple and straightforward items such as grab rails, stair rails, accessible taps, small ramps or key safes.</p> <p>Small adaptations may “fit into the description of ‘immediate falls prevention’ or ‘urgent for hospital discharge’”. Generally, “minimal maintenance and/or servicing” will be required.</p>	<p>Via the local authority social services department (ENABLE funding, or other local authority provision). Also, possibly through the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme.</p> <p>Generally, an “Occupational Therapist assessment [is] not required”.</p>	<p>These should usually be installed “within 3 weeks (if urgent) or 4 weeks (if non urgent)”. The timescale runs from the date someone first makes contact with “the service provider who have deemed it necessary for the adaptation to be installed”.</p>

Medium adaptations

Examples	What is the most likely way for this to be delivered?	Timescale for delivery
<p>This category covers more extensive modifications to the home, though not structural change. Therefore “building/planning approval [is] not required”.</p> <p>It includes items such as “walk in shower[s]...stair lifts [or] large ramps”. It might also include “a combination of adaptations installed as one job”.</p>	<p>These adaptations may require the recommendation of an Occupational Therapist (OT) before they can be provided.</p> <p>Delivery may be via the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) system. Alternatively, other local authority social services department provision could be used (be it via ENABLE or other local authority funding).</p> <p>For social housing properties, the adaptation may be provided via a Physical Adaptations Grant.</p>	<p>Someone should generally be assessed within 2 months by an OT (or equivalent professional) following their first contact with a service provider.</p> <p>If the assessment confirms that the adaptation is necessary, the OT (or equivalent professional) should provide a report or referral to the service provider “within 2 weeks of the decision”.</p> <p>The adaptation should then “usually [be] installed within 4 months (or in line with legislative requirements) from date of referral” by the OT (or equivalent professional).</p>

Large adaptations

Examples	What is the most likely way for this to be delivered?	Timescale for delivery
<p>These are significant adaptations to the home which may involve structural changes and could require planning permission.</p> <p>Examples include: “building an extension” (for example, to create a bedroom or bathroom downstairs); a “through-floor lift”, or significant internal modifications (for example to relocate a bathroom or kitchen).</p>	<p>Due to the complexities involved in this type of adaptation, the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) system is the most likely route for obtaining them.</p> <p>The assessment of an Occupational Therapist will be required.</p> <p>For social housing properties, a Physical Adaptations Grant may be used.</p>	<p>As with medium adaptations, someone should generally be assessed within 2 months by an OT (or equivalent professional) following their first contact with a service provider.</p> <p>Also, as with medium adaptations, if the assessment confirms that the adaptation is necessary the OT should provide a report or referral to the service provider “within 2 weeks of the decision”.</p> <p>Following this, the adaptation should then “usually [be] installed within 15 months (or in line with legislative requirements) from date of referral” by the OT (or equivalent professional)¹⁵.</p>

¹⁵ The longer timescale here reflects the extra steps needed in some cases, “e.g. planning permission” (see: Housing Adaptations Service Standards, Welsh Government, April 2019)

6.4 Means testing for adaptations

The Welsh Government's rules on means testing for adaptations are as follows:

- **Small adaptations** – Means testing is “**not required**”¹⁶.
- **Medium adaptations** – Means testing should also **not** take place for medium adaptations (the *Housing Adaptations Service Standards* from 2019 still contains information that a means test may be required if the ‘medium’ adaptation was a DFG – **however**, subsequent to the publication of this document the Welsh Government, in April 2021, stipulated that the means testing requirement should be removed by local authorities for DFGs in the medium adaptations category).

Confirmation of this decision can be found in a ‘Written Statement’ on the Welsh Government website at:

<https://gov.wales/written-statement-removing-means-test-small-and-medium-disabled-facilities-grants>

- **Large adaptations** – A means test may be required, though “only in relation to a Disabled Facilities Grant”¹⁷ (see section 6.8 below for further information on the DFG means test rules).

6.5 Further information on the Welsh Government's ENABLE: support for living independently scheme

The ENABLE funding programme provides additional Welsh Government funding to local authorities and can be used to provide adaptations which may not have been possible to fund via other sources. It's a ‘flexible resource’ for authorities, “primarily to provide small and medium adaptations without the need to engage complex Disabled Facilities Grant processes”. Some local authorities “delegate part of their ENABLE funding...to local Care & Repair agencies”¹⁸ (there's a bit more information on Care & Repair in section 6.1 above).

¹⁶ Housing Adaptations Service Standards, Welsh Government, April 2019.

¹⁷ Ibid

¹⁸ High-level analysis of data on housing adaptations 2019-20, Welsh Government, July 2021.

6.6 Further information on the general provision of small adaptations by local authority social services departments (or other discretionary powers)

This is essentially the provision by the local authority of adaptations that people have been assessed as requiring through the authority's own resources and/or via funding streams other than those listed in section 6.1 above.

Discretionary assistance from the authority could include, for example, the provision of an adaptation on an urgent basis so that someone gets help quicker than might otherwise be possible via a Disabled Facilities Grant or one of the other schemes. Alternatively, the authority might be able to help someone move to a more suitable property where no, or less, adaptations are required, should this be more cost effective than adapting their current home.

Assistance may be provided unconditionally, or subject to certain conditions such as repaying all – or part – of a loan, or making a contribution towards the costs.

Note: Help may be provided via a third party, such as a home improvement agency. Care & Repair Cymru are the coordinating body for agencies in Wales – see section 14 below for contact details.

Local authority policy document on home improvements

Local authorities must have a published policy on how they will allocate and exercise their powers in relation to home improvements. You should be able to view this at their main office, or Citizens Advice should also have a copy (see section 14 below for contact details).

Further information on this topic can also be found in Age Cymru's Factsheet 67w *Home improvements and repairs for older people in Wales*.

6.7 Further information on the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme

The Rapid Response Adaptations Programme (RRAP) is a Welsh Government programme which is administered by Care & Repair Cymru – see section 14 for contact details.

Under the programme, small-scale alterations to a person's home can be completed to allow them to return to live there safely and independently if:

- **they are awaiting discharge from hospital;**
- **have recently left hospital; or**
- **are at risk of needing a hospital admission or needing to go into a care home.**

The RRAP is available to older people or those with a disability who:

- live in and own their own home; *or*
- rent their home from a private landlord.

Note: Assistance provided via the RRAP is **not** means tested. *However*, clients must be referred to the programme by a health or social care professional – such as an occupational therapist (OT) – and cannot apply directly themselves.

Adaptations such as the following may be available under the programme:

- Hand rails / grab rails / stair rails.
- Temporary or permanent ramps.
- Repairs to steps / widening steps.
- Clearing or widening paths / levelling paths (for example, relaying paving stones).
- Levelling of concrete floors.
- Improving access to toilet facilities.
- Community safety alarms.
- Assistive technology.
- Repositioning of light switches and/or power sockets.
- Provision of smoke detectors and/or Carbon Monoxide detectors.
- “Heating repairs to main living areas”¹⁹.

¹⁹ Guidance: Adapt your home before returning from hospital, Welsh Government website: <https://gov.wales/adapt-your-home-returning-hospital> (last accessed 13 February 2024).

- Improving interior and/or exterior lighting.
- Tacking or taping down frayed carpets.
- Fitting / repairing door security chains, locks or key safes.

The Welsh Government advises that the work should be “completed within 15 working days”²⁰.

6.8 Further information on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)

Larger adaptations come under the remit of the local authority housing department through Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs). However, whilst the formal application must be made to the local authority’s housing department – and overall responsibility lies with them – in many cases you may be advised to make your first approach to the social services department.

For example, although the housing department has the overall responsibility for deciding whether you will get a grant, it must consult with the social services department to decide what adaptations might be best, depending on individual circumstances – see below for further details on the likely process.

As noted in section 6.3 above, large adaptations involve more substantial changes, or structural alterations to a property – for example, installing a stairlift, widening doorways, remodelling a bathroom or kitchen, or changing a bath to a level access shower.

The local authority housing department must be satisfied that the works are ‘reasonable and practical’ in relation to the age and condition of the property.

The assessment in this regard is usually done by an environmental health officer or a building surveyor from the council, in liaison with the OT.

Your local **Care & Repair agency** may be able to assist you to make a DFG application – see section 14 below for further information and contact details for Care & Repair.

²⁰ Ibid

Qualifying criteria and means testing for DFGs

Criteria type	DFG rules
<i>Qualifying as disabled (definition of 'disabled' in relation to DFGs)</i>	<p>In order to qualify for a DFG, you must be disabled under the terms of the <i>Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996</i>²¹.</p> <p>This Act classifies a person as being disabled if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">● Their sight, hearing or speech is substantially impaired.● They have a mental disorder or impairment of any kind.● They are physically substantially disabled by illness, injury or impairment (present since birth, or otherwise).● They are registered disabled (or could be registered) with the social services department.

²¹ Amendments to this legislation have also subsequently been made under the *Regulatory Reform (Housing Assistance) (England and Wales) Order 2002*, the *Housing Act 2004* and the *Disabled Facilities Grants (Maximum Amounts and Additional Purposes) (Wales) Order 2008*. The existing legislation in regard to DFGs was not affected by the introduction of the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014* in April 2016.

Type of housing sector you live in

You can apply for a DFG if you are:

- a homeowner;
- someone who rents their home (though you'll need to get your landlord's permission before the local authority can agree to provide a DFG);
- in some cases, an occupier of a houseboat or park home;
- in some cases, an occupier where work is required in the common parts of a building containing multiple flats;
- a landlord who is renting their property to someone with a disability (i.e. **a landlord can apply to have their property adapted on the person's behalf**);
- a contract-holder (tenant) in a community landlord property (i.e. local authority/council properties, or housing associations).

Note: In the case of the last bullet point, you are eligible to apply for a DFG and assessed based on your needs on the same basis as owner-occupiers and people who rent privately – **however**, a community landlord may choose to access other funding streams to complete the work instead. For example, rather than referring the applicant for a DFG, they may seek to access a Physical Adaptations Grant (PAG) – see section 6.9 below.

<p>DFGs and means testing</p> <p>(as well as the information here, also see section 6.4 above in regard to related Welsh Government rules).</p>	<p>In its assessment the local authority must only take into account the disabled person’s income and savings and that of their partner.</p> <p>This applies even if the disabled person is not the applicant – i.e. where the application was made by the owner of the house where the disabled person lives. This means that if you are – for example – a single, disabled person living with your grown-up daughter in the home that she owns, <i>only</i> your income and not hers should be included in the means-test calculation.</p> <p>A person’s landlord will not be means tested.</p> <p>The means test for a DFG will take into account the average weekly income of the relevant people. Certain disability benefits and savings below £6,000 will be ignored.</p> <p>For savings above £6,000, an assumed weekly ‘tariff income’ is taken into account and included alongside your actual income for means testing purposes – £1 per £500 (or part of £500) where the disabled person or their partner is aged 60 or over is assumed on capital over £6,000.</p> <p>The treatment of income and savings for a DFG application is generally similar to that for means tested welfare benefits (such as Pension Credit).</p> <p>If the disabled person’s resources are below a certain level, they will not normally be expected to contribute to the costs of the works. In other circumstances, someone may qualify for a partial grant.</p> <p>If a disabled person receives benefits such as the Guarantee Credit part of Pension Credit; Housing Benefit; an award from their local authority’s Council Tax Reduction Scheme, or Universal Credit, they will not normally have to make a contribution, <i>unless</i> there are others being assessed who are not receiving such benefits.</p>
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A local authority must provide a DFG if certain conditions are met

If someone meets all the qualifying conditions for a DFG, then the grant is mandatory and the local authority is obliged to make the grant available.

The conditions are:

- the disabled person must intend to live in the property as their only or main home for **at least five years** after the works are completed – the ‘grant condition period’ (a shorter grant condition period may be allowed if specific health, or other, reasons apply – also see below for further information);
- the grant must be requested for a specific purpose (including those set out overleaf);
- the local authority must be satisfied that the works are **necessary and appropriate** to meet the needs of the disabled occupant (also see below for further information); *and*
- it is **reasonable and practicable** to carry out the works having regard to the age and condition of the property²².

The grant condition period

The applicant must provide the authority with a certificate stating the disabled occupant will live in the property as their only or main home throughout the grant condition period. If the disabled occupant is a contract-holder, the authority requires a certificate from the landlord (if different from the applicant) to verify this. If you are renting in the private sector, you may find this difficult due to the terms in your occupation-contract. If you are in this situation, you may wish to contact Age Cymru Advice or Shelter Cymru to discuss what your housing options might be.

²² If the local authority felt that the house wasn't in an appropriate state for the work to be carried out, seek further advice from the authority itself and/or a specialist housing organisation, such as Shelter Cymru – see section 14 below for contact details.

DFGs and local authority 'necessary and appropriate' rules

As mentioned at the beginning of this section, the housing department at the local authority will usually consult with the social services department (of the same authority) to help decide whether the proposed work is necessary and appropriate. In practice, this will usually mean that an occupational therapist (OT) will visit you in order to carry out an assessment.

The assessment by the OT may form part of a wider care needs assessment by the social services department – for further information, see Age Cymru's Factsheet 41w *Social care assessments for older people with care needs in Wales*).

What types of work are covered by a DFG?

Examples of the types of work covered by a mandatory grant include:

- Making it easier for you to get into and out of your home (for example, by widening the doors and installing ramps).
- Making access easier to the living room, bedroom, kitchen and bathroom (for example, by installing a stair lift or providing a downstairs bathroom).
- Providing a lavatory or washing facilities, or making it possible for you to access existing facilities.
- Making it possible for food to be prepared or cooked.
- Making your home safe for you and people living with you (for example, by providing a specially adapted room where it is safe to leave a disabled person unattended or improve lighting to ensure better visibility).
- Adapting heating or lighting controls to make them easier for you to use.
- Improving the heating system in your home to make it suitable for the needs of the disabled person.
- Improving access to a garden by making it easier / safer to navigate.

The maximum amount for a mandatory DFG in Wales is £36,000.

Discretionary supplements to a DFG

If they wish, local authorities are able to utilise discretionary powers and provide additional funding to supplement mandatory DFGs.

Problems and complaints

There can be lengthy delays in applying for a DFG, often because there is a long waiting list for an assessment by an occupational therapist. However, legislation states that you should not have to wait more than six months after you make a formal application for a DFG to hear whether you will get one. The decision must be made in writing and specify the works that are eligible for a grant and the amount of grant to be paid. If your application is refused, you must be told why.

If you do not get a decision within six months of applying, you can make a written complaint to the local authority and request they make a decision. If you still do not get a decision, seek further advice or make a complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales – see section 14 for contact details.

Property charge

If a property has been adapted with a DFG that exceeds £5,000 and is sold within 10 years of the work being carried out, a local authority has discretion to impose a charge on the property (this could also apply if the DFG applicant were to transfer ownership of their home).

In Wales there is no specified maximum charge, though one should only be imposed on a case-by-case basis, after the authority has taken into account individual circumstances.

6.9 Further information on Physical Adaptations Grants for community landlord housing

Community landlord housing is a term that covers housing rented by the local authority (council), or a housing association (private registered providers of social housing will also be classed as a community landlord).

Community landlords are able to access Physical Adaptations Grants (PAGs), provided by the Welsh Government, where contract-holders (tenants) have identified needs where an adaptation could assist them. PAGs will cover the same sorts of areas as a DFG and the works that are needed will be decided in a very similar way (for example, via an occupational therapist assessment).

Note: You won't be able to apply for this grant directly – however, you can ask the landlord to do so on your behalf, or you can submit a DFG application as per the above information and it will then be up to the authority which funding stream they access (this shouldn't affect your ability to benefit from the work needed, however, and you could submit a complaint if there seems to be a delay).

Sometimes a community landlord might recommend rehousing as an alternative to adapting your existing home. However, a DFG application shouldn't be turned down on this basis alone. Seek advice from a specialist housing organisation, such as Shelter Cymru, if you encounter this type of scenario.

7 Outdoor electric scooters or buggies

As mentioned in section 5.2 above, the NHS (or social services) do not provide electric mobility scooters or buggies.

The charity, Living Made Easy, may be a good source of information if you are thinking of buying one – see section 14 below for their contact details. You may also wish to read section 12 that has general information on buying equipment privately. Also, section 13 covers possible financial assistance that could help towards the cost of purchasing equipment.

Things you will need to consider when choosing a scooter:

- It is important to trial this type of equipment before use.
- A reputable company will belong to a trade association that guarantees a good level of customer service, assessment and commitment to safe practices.
- You will need to be aware of government regulations for scooter use on the pavement or road.
- Issues of storage, charging and maintenance are also central to a planned purchase and ongoing use.

7.1 The Motability scheme

You may be able to pay for the use of an outdoor electric wheelchair, scooter, or car through the Motability scheme. In order to qualify, you'll need to be receiving one of the following disability benefits, together with the appropriate mobility element of that benefit:

- The higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA).
- The enhanced rate of the mobility component of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP).
- Armed Forces Independence Payment (AFIP) or War Pensioners' Mobility Supplement.

Note: Attendance Allowance (AA) cannot be used to access the Motability scheme as there is no mobility component element to AA.

You'll also need to bear in mind that you'll only be paying for the lease of the vehicle and won't own it. As such, if circumstances change and you are no longer receiving the qualifying benefit, you'll need to return your Motability vehicle.

If you make use of the scheme, your benefit will go directly to Motability each month to pay for the lease. The amount of your benefit that goes towards the lease will depend on which vehicle you choose.

See section 14 for contact details for Motability. There is also further information on their website at:

www.motability.co.uk

8 Personal alarms and other assistive technology

8.1 Personal alarms

These alarm systems allow you to be linked up 24 hours a day to a central service that can offer help in an emergency. The link is usually either by telephone, a pull cord, a pendant that you wear around your neck, or a combination of these.

If you need to summon help urgently and are unable to make a normal telephone call, you can use the pendant, pull the cord or use a special button on the telephone to contact a control centre.

This centre will be staffed by people who can talk to you, find out what you need and summon help as appropriate. In an emergency, the alarm operator gets in touch with the people you have agreed should be contacted in such circumstances – for example a trusted relative or neighbour – who will have a set of keys to your home. The alarm operator also contacts the appropriate emergency service if this is required.

Note: Some personal alarm schemes may have a service where they are able to send out a ‘mobile warden’ in situations where there are no relatives living in the area.

Personal alarms provided by the local authority

Your local authority may provide you with an alarm service. Each authority will have different rules about who they will supply, how they run the service and how much they charge. Contact your local social services department or housing department for details about the schemes available locally (there is a link to find your local authority in section 1.1 above, if you’re unsure of the details).

Further information

Your local Age Cymru may have details about other community alarm schemes in your area.

Also, Living Made Easy may have information on personal alarms – see section 14 below for their contact details.

8.2 Other types of assistive technology – ‘Telecare’

Technological developments are continually offering new ways to provide support to those who need it. One of the main examples of this is ‘telecare’, which allows remote monitoring and communication with isolated people in their own homes to help them manage risk and to promote independent living and wellbeing. This could be for short or longer periods of time during the day or night. In some situations, GPS-type monitoring equipment might be used to monitor someone outside of their own home in their local area.

Telecare covers services (monitoring, call centres and response teams – who may work alongside emergency services) and a wide range of equipment (detectors, monitors, alarms, pendants etc). For example, items may include:

- a fall detector;
- epilepsy sensor;
- chair and occupancy sensors;
- flood detector;
- gas leak valve shut-off sensor;
- a property exit sensor.

In essence there are three types of telecare systems, parts of which may be used together:

Systems that help predict problems

These systems depend on software that takes signals from sensors and analyses the frequency and severity of monitored events, such as minor falls and alerts carers to visit the person to find out what has changed.

Systems that reduce the chance of problems occurring

For example, a bed sensor can help prevent falls by activating a light when someone gets out of bed. This helps because the person does not need to reach for the light switch or move around in the dark.

Systems that mitigate harm

These devices, such as pendant alarms, heat sensors, smoke detectors or bed sensors can, again, send alerts to a call centre after a pre-determined event so that help can arrive quickly. The bed sensor, for example, can raise an alarm if the person does not return to bed within a predetermined time. An alternative approach is where an alarm is raised if a person fails to press a button by a certain time each day to confirm that they are OK. By getting help quickly, problems do not escalate.

8.3 Telehealth

Telehealth is the delivery of health care from a distance. For example, it may be possible to remotely monitor a patient's vital signs in chronic condition management – blood pressure, glucose level and heart and lung function etc.

It might also be able to assist with diagnosis, review assessments and prevention. However, this must be in conjunction with suitably qualified clinicians as part of an agreed health care plan. The aims of telehealth systems may include:

- Improving quality of life and wellbeing for a patient and/or their carer/s.
- Increasing safety and independence.
- Reducing unplanned hospital admissions and emergency ambulance call outs.
- Reducing pressure on GPs and nurses.
- Management of long-term conditions.

Note: Technology cannot generally substitute for human interaction and support and should therefore not be inappropriately used as a replacement for this. You should query your care arrangements with social services / the health service if this appears to be the case.

Speak to the NHS staff involved in your care to discuss whether telehealth systems could help in your circumstances.

8.4 Environmental Control Systems

Environmental Control Systems help to maintain and improve the independence and security of people with a severe physical disability who have poor manual dexterity. The ability to control everyday equipment such as the phone, television and lighting is provided via a central control unit and a single switch. It can also be used to control access into the home and summon emergency help.

To obtain this equipment you should be assessed at home by an occupational therapist (OT).

Any equipment provided will be carefully tailored for each individual. Following the installation of a system, an engineer will provide training in its use. Reviews, ongoing support and advice are provided by the occupational therapist to clients, carers and healthcare professionals. Arrangements are also put in place for maintenance and emergency response.

Environmental Control Systems are provided by the NHS on a long term loan basis and there is no charge to the client for standard equipment.

9 Equipment for employment

The *Access to Work* scheme may fund equipment needed for work. You may be able to apply for a grant if you have a disability, health or mental health condition. The money you get can pay for things like:

- specialist equipment and/or assistive software;
- travel costs to work, if you can't use public transport;
- adaptations to your car, so you can get to work;
- physical changes to the workplace; *and/or*
- a support worker to assist with communication needs.

Contact the disability employment advisor at your local Jobcentre Plus for advice and assistance.

Further information can also be found on the GOV.UK website at:

www.gov.uk/access-to-work

10 Problems and complaints regarding disability equipment or adaptations provided by the local authority or NHS

10.1 Complaints to local authorities

Each local authority social services department is required by law to have a complaints procedure. You can complain about a range of issues, such as:

- a delay in receiving disability equipment or adaptations (there is no legal time-limit within which disability equipment must be provided, but you should not have to wait longer than is reasonable. Excessive delays can be challenged and high risk needs should be dealt with promptly. The local authority occupational therapy department should have procedures for appropriate prioritisation and risk assessment);
- a refusal or delay in providing you with a care needs assessment; *and/or*
- if you are unhappy with the result of an assessment carried out – for example, if you feel that the authority has underestimated your needs.

You could also seek further information or advice from Llais in regard to your complaint – see section 10.3 below.

If you are unhappy with a local authority’s handling of a complaint, you may be able to escalate your issue to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales (see section 14 for contact details).

For further information, see Age Cymru’s Factsheet 59w *How to resolve problems and make a complaint about social care in Wales*.

10.2 Complaints to the NHS

If you have a complaint about a service that you have accessed through the NHS, you can use the NHS complaints procedure – Age Cymru’s Factsheet 66w *Resolving problems and making a complaint about NHS care in Wales* has further information on this.

You could also seek further information or advice from Llais in regard to your complaint – see section 10.3 below.

As with social services complaints, you can also approach the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales if you remain unsatisfied with the way your complaint has been dealt with locally.

10.3 Llais – a ‘citizens voice’ body that can support you to make a complaint

Llais has been set up by the Welsh Government, though it should work independently of government, local authorities and the NHS to support people who have concerns or complaints.

Llais can potentially assist you at any stage throughout the complaints process and cover both the NHS and local authority social services departments.

Complaints advocacy from Llais

Llais have dedicated complaints advocacy staff who you could contact when making a complaint about a social care or NHS service. Their service will be free and confidential. They may be able to help with some, or all, of the following (depending on individual circumstances):

- help to find information, such as copies of any relevant records;
- help you think through your concerns and what you might realistically achieve;
- help to draft letters; *and/or*
- support you to prepare for and attend relevant meetings to do with your complaint.

Further information can be found on the Llais website at:

www.llaiswales.org/have-your-say/raising-concern-about-health-and-social-care-services/llais-advocacy-guide

Note: The Llais complaints advocacy service is unable to help with issues “not covered by complaints regulations. This includes things like privately funded [services or] treatment”²³.

11 Short-term loan of equipment from the British Red Cross

Your local Red Cross can often loan wheelchairs and other equipment for short periods, for example for the visit of a relative, or because of a temporary injury.

See section 14 below for contact details for the Red Cross.

²³ ‘Llais Complaints Advocacy Guide’, Llais website: www.llaiswales.org/have-your-say/raising-concern-about-health-and-social-care-services/llais-complaints-advocacy-guide (last accessed 15 February 2024).

Note: There may also be other organisations who can loan equipment – you could contact Living Made Easy to see if they can advise further.

12 Purchasing equipment privately

12.1 Private companies, shops and the voluntary sector

- Private companies that sell disability equipment may have mail order catalogues or shops and showrooms. Some large high street chemists may also stock disability equipment.
- Some voluntary or charitable sector organisations sell disability equipment. You could check their websites for details.
- The Living Made Easy website is a source of useful information on all types of equipment, including the different varieties available and where you might be able to purchase it from:

www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk

Important: If you are considering purchasing equipment privately, you should bear in mind that you **do** have a right to ask your local authority social services to carry out a care needs assessment for you.

As discussed in section 3 above, the local authority has a legal duty to carry out an assessment of anyone living in its area who *may* need community care services, once it becomes aware of this need. The assessment must take into account all aspects of someone's needs and the right to the assessment is *not* affected by the level of your financial resources or other circumstances.

Another issue to bear in mind is that some items of equipment may require training for safe use – for example a hoist – so you may find advice from social services in this regard to be useful.

12.2 Buying equipment second-hand

You may be able to buy some equipment second-hand. You could contact Living Made Easy for information on potential sources for obtaining second-hand equipment.

Scope might also be able to provide information on this topic.

See section 14 below for contact details for both organisations.

You could also see if your local paper has listings of second-hand items.

12.3 Things to consider when choosing what to buy

Always try to get independent or professional advice in choosing equipment, particularly if it is a large, expensive item.

Occupational therapists or physiotherapists from a hospital or social services department should be able to advise you on equipment that is suitable for your needs and on what is available.

You may also want to consider the following points when choosing equipment for yourself:

- Make sure that any products you buy comply with the necessary British Standards. Equipment that has been tested and approved by the British Standards Institute (BSI) will be marked with the BSI Kitemark.
- Check out how comfortable the equipment is and that it is easy for you to use. Where possible, try it out beforehand. If you are purchasing expensive equipment to help with bathing or toileting, you may want to ask for a trial of the product in your own home so that you can try it out properly. Make sure that it can be used in the environment in which you want to use it.
- Make sure that the equipment is in good condition and that it is suitable for the task you require it for. Check that it is easy for you to use without help and that appropriate and clear instructions for use, or training in use, are provided.
- If you need to transport the equipment, for example a wheelchair or other walking aid, consider how easy this will be. Does it fold up or come apart? Is it easy to do this? Will it fit in your car? Consider whether there is enough space to store it in your home.

- Check in regard to repair and maintenance of the equipment. Will it be possible to find spare parts and someone to repair the equipment if necessary?
- Does the equipment need to be serviced regularly and, if so, how much will this cost? What sort of ‘after-sales service’ does the company you are buying from provide? Does the equipment come with a guarantee?
- Check the company policy on returning equipment if you don’t need it anymore – for example, because your needs change, or you have to move to a care home. Some companies have a buy-back guarantee scheme but check the details – for example, how much money you receive if you return the item.
- Consider getting insurance to cover accidents and breakdown repairs for larger items such as electric scooters or power chairs.

12.4 VAT relief (exemption) on disability equipment

Disabled people do **not** have to pay VAT when purchasing equipment designed or adapted to help with daily living.

To qualify for this exemption **the equipment must be intended for use by disabled people and must relate to their disability.**

In addition, there is no VAT payable on the costs of servicing or maintaining disability equipment.

Note: You will need to ask whether you can receive this VAT exemption **before** buying or ordering equipment.

The supplier needs to be registered for VAT and you need to sign a form declaring that you have a chronic illness or disability.

Further information on VAT exemption is provided in the HM Revenue and Customs VAT Notice 701/7, *VAT reliefs for disabled and older people*. See the entry for ‘HM Revenue and Customs’ in section 14 below for contact details and information on how to obtain this leaflet.

12.5 Reduced VAT rate of 5% for mobility aids for people aged 60 or over

“If you’re over 60, you pay a reduced rate of VAT (5%) on certain mobility aids when you pay for them to be supplied and installed in your home”²⁴.

This covers the supply and installation of grab rails, ramps, stairlifts, bath lifts, showers containing built-in shower seats and walk-in baths with sealable doors.

Note: The reduced rate will **not** apply where the goods are supplied *without* installation (but will apply to installation services alone), or for any repairs or maintenance of the items once they are installed.

For more information see the contact details for HM Revenue and Customs in section 14.

12.6 Problems with equipment you have purchased privately

If you are not happy with the equipment you have purchased, get in touch with the supplier as soon as possible. They may be able to arrange an exchange or replacement. If equipment is faulty it should be repaired or replaced, or you should get a refund.

You may want to complain first verbally to the store manager. If you are not happy with the outcome you should put it in writing. You may also decide to report the seller, with details of your complaint, to the Trading Standards service at your local authority. They can investigate false or misleading claims about services or products and advise on consumer problems.

You could also contact the Citizens Advice consumer helpline – see section 14 for contact details.

If the supplier of your equipment is a member of the British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA) and you are not happy with its service you can complain to the BHTA. A list of member firms is available on the BHTA website – see section 14 below for contact details. Living Made Easy may also be able to provide further advice on making a complaint.

²⁴ ‘Tax on shopping and services’ GOV.UK website: www.gov.uk/tax-on-shopping/mobility-aids (last accessed 15 February 2024).

12.7 Concerns about doorstep selling (in relation to disability products)

Concerns are sometimes raised about inappropriate, high pressure, doorstep sales techniques being employed by companies selling disability products. The *Consumer Contracts (Information, Cancellation and Additional Charges) Regulations 2013* seek to protect you if you take out a contract when a salesperson comes to your home, place of work or during an excursion arranged by the company. You also have protection when you take out a contract during off-premises sales.

The cancellation period for doorstep sales is 14 calendar days after delivery of the goods. For service contracts, the cancellation period is 14 calendar days after the contract has been entered into. If you want the service to start immediately, you can still cancel in the 14-day cooling-off period but you may not get a full refund. Providers can deduct an amount for the service you receive before cancelling.

There are situations where the regulations do not apply, for example goods and services costing less than £42.

You should be given information about your cancellation rights by the seller.

Which? provides information and advice about how to deal with poor sales practices:

www.which.co.uk/consumer-rights//doorstep-selling

Their full contact details can be found below in section 14.

13 Sources of funding for purchasing equipment – state benefits, Government loan/grant schemes, or benevolent funds

If you are purchasing equipment privately (or are getting social services assistance, but it is only meeting part of the cost), you may be able to get financial assistance via the sources outlined in sections 13.1 to 13.4 below.

13.1 State benefits for people with disabilities

If you have a disability, you may be entitled to:

- Attendance Allowance (for people over State Pension age); *or*
- Personal Independence Payment (for people under State Pension age).

These benefits help people meet the extra cost of living expenses relating to their disability. For further details see Age UK's:

- Factsheet 34 *Attendance Allowance*; *or*
- Factsheet 87 *Personal Independence Payment and Disability Living Allowance*.

13.2 Budgeting Loans from the Social Fund scheme (operated by the Department for Work & Pensions – DWP)

If you receive Pension Credit, Income Support, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance or income-related Employment and Support Allowance, you might be able to get a Budgeting Loan from the Social Fund²⁵.

Budgeting Loans are for people who have been receiving one of the relevant benefits outlined above for the past 6 months.

They are designed to help with intermittent expenses which are difficult to budget for on a low income.

Budgeting Loans do have to be paid back, but they are interest-free.

You can apply by contacting your local Jobcentre Plus office, or online at:

www.gov.uk/budgeting-help-benefits/how-to-apply

It may be a good idea to get advice about completing the application form. A local Age Cymru organisation or Citizens Advice may be able to help with this – see section 14 for contact details. For more information about the Social Fund see Age UK's Factsheet 49 *The Social Fund, advances of benefit and local welfare provision*.

²⁵ Universal Credit claimants can apply for a Budgeting Advance instead.

13.3 The Welsh Government's Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF)

There are two parts to the Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF) – *Individual Assistance Payments (IAP)* and *Emergency Assistance Payments (EAP)*.

The help will be in the form of a **non-repayable grant**, though you may not receive this in cash – for example, you might be given a prepayment card.

The scheme is aimed at those in urgent need of assistance where they cannot access any other help or funding and can only be used for essential needs and items where your health and wellbeing may otherwise be at risk.

Note: When you apply you will need to explain why you need a DAF award, plus what other sources of help you have tried to access first. For example, generally you should of determined first that you are **not** eligible for assistance from the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) via a Budgeting Loan (see section 13.2 above).

DAF award decisions are taken by NEC Software Solutions, who have been appointed by the Welsh Government to run the DAF scheme across Wales. Contact details can be found in section 14, listed under '**Discretionary Assistance Fund (The)**'.

A local Age Cymru organisation or Citizens Advice may be able to assist with an application – again, see section 14 for contact details.

Individual Assistance Payments (IAPs)

These payments are targeted at enabling people to remain living at home independently, in circumstances such as the following:

- you want to remain in your own home, rather than having to enter a care home (or another similar type of institutional care);
- you have previously been in a hospital or a care home for 3 months or more and are now returning home to live independently;
- you are setting up home after an unsettled way of life; *or*
- you need to move home quickly due to a relationship breakdown or domestic violence.

The payments are designed to help with one-off, essential, purchases. It is possible that an IAP might be available for essential household equipment such as heaters, a cooker, washing machine or fridge. You may be able to receive one if you get Pension Credit Guarantee Credit, income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, income-related Employment and Support Allowance, Income Support or Universal Credit.

Note: "The amount of any IAP an applicant can receive [will] be reduced, on a pound for pound basis, for any savings or capital that the applicant or their partner have"²⁶.

Emergency Assistance Payments (EAPs)

To get an EAP, you must:

- be experiencing "extreme financial hardship" – for example because you have "lost your job, applied for benefits and [are] waiting for your first payment or have no money to buy food, gas and electricity";
- "be in a crisis situation and in need of immediate financial support"; *or*
- "have no other money" (for example, money in a savings account which you could access). You will also be expected to have looked into "all other legal and responsible lenders such as credit unions"²⁷.

13.4 Charities and other sources of funding, such as benevolent funds

You may be able to get financial help with buying mobility and disability equipment from charitable organisations or benevolent funds.

However, it is advisable to find out whether equipment should be provided by your local authority, the NHS or another statutory organisation beforehand, as charities/benevolent funds will not generally provide funding unless this option has been fully investigated.

²⁶ The Discretionary Assistance Fund: Guidance for Decision Makers, Welsh Government, February 2015

²⁷ Guidance: Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF), Welsh Government website: <https://gov.wales/discretionary-assistance-fund-daf/eligibility> (last accessed 15 February 2024).

The following are examples of charities that may be able to help directly with funding, or organisations that can provide advice – based on your particular circumstances and/or background – of other sources, such as benevolent funds, that you could apply to.

Note: Benevolent funds may specialise in helping people who have worked in a specific trade or profession, or who belong to particular religious groups; those who live in particular areas, or people with specific illnesses and disabilities.

See section 14 below for contact details of all the organisations listed:

- **Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) or Veterans' Gateway**

These organisations can provide support to those who have served in the armed forces (or other members of their family, depending on circumstances).

- **Charities that specialise in a particular condition, illness or disability** – for example:

- the Alzheimer's Society;
- Parkinson's UK;
- the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB);
- the Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID); *or*
- the Stroke Association

These charities may run grant schemes to help people who are affected by the issue which they specialise in.

- **Living Made Easy**

A charity that provides information about equipment for daily living, including ways of raising funds to purchase equipment.

● Turn2us

Turn2us offer a service to try and identify grants or other funding sources for people in need. They are likely to ask a range of questions so that they can best identify possible funding sources for you – for example, the area where you live; age; marital status and/or family responsibilities; health problems; your income and expenditure; career and work history; any service in the armed forces; membership (past or present) of a trade union; or your religion.

14 Useful organisations

Age Cymru Advice

Free and confidential information and advice on matters affecting the over 50s in Wales.

Tel: 0300 303 44 98

E-mail: advice@agecymru.org.uk

Website: www.agecymru.org.uk/advice

Age Cymru organisations (local)

Your local Age Cymru may be able to provide advice and support on a range of issues. **Age Cymru Advice** can provide details of your local Age Cymru (see above), or visit the Age Cymru website at:

www.agecymru.org.uk/local

Alzheimer's Society

Provides information about all types of dementia. They may also operate services in your area to support people with dementia, along with their families and carers.

Tel: 0333 150 3456

Website: www.alzheimers.org.uk

British Healthcare Trades Association

A not-for-profit trade association covering healthcare and assistive technologies. Work to improve industry standards and consumer protection.

Tel: 020 7702 2141

E-mail: info@bhta.com

Website: www.bhta.com

British Red Cross (The)

Offer a range of services, such as disability equipment and wheelchair loans, domiciliary care, home from hospital support and transport services. Some services may only be available in certain geographical areas.

Tel: 0344 871 11 11

Website: www.redcross.org.uk/get-help

Care & Repair Cymru

Care & Repair Cymru work to ensure all older people have homes that are safe, secure and appropriate to their needs. There is a network of local Care & Repair agencies across Wales.

Tel: 02920 107580

E-mail: enquiries@careandrepair.org.uk

Website: <https://careandrepair.org.uk>

Care Inspectorate Wales (CIW)

CIW inspects and regulates care and social services in Wales.

Tel: 0300 7900 126

E-mail: ciw@gov.wales

Website: www.careinspectorate.wales

Carers Wales

A charity providing information, advice and practical and emotional support for carers.

Tel: 029 2081 1370

E-mail: info@carerswales.org

Carers UK Helpline: 0808 808 7777

Website: www.carerswales.org

Citizens Advice

National network of free advice centres offering confidential and independent advice, face to face or by telephone.

Tel: 0800 702 2020

Details of your nearest CAB can be found at:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales

Citizens Advice consumer helpline

Tel (English): 0808 223 1133

Tel (Welsh): 0808 223 1144

Website:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/about-us/contact-us/contact-us/consumer-service

Dewis Cymru

This is a website owned and funded by local authorities across Wales. The site was set up by the Welsh Government to assist in the delivery of certain provisions in the *Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act*. The Dewis Cymru site contains an extensive database of a wide variety of services that can help people with their well-being.

www.dewis.wales

Discretionary Assistance Fund (The)

Welsh Government scheme to provide grants to people in urgent need of assistance.

Tel: 0800 859 5924

E-mail: daf.feedback@necsws.com

Website: www.gov.wales/discretionary-assistance-fund-daf

Disability Rights UK

An organisation run by and for disabled people which works on campaigns and policy.

Tel: 0330 995 0400 (*this is for general enquiries and is not an advice line*)

E-mail: enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org

Website: www.disabilityrightsuk.org

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC) information on GOV.UK

The HMRC *VAT Notice 701/7, Reliefs from VAT for disabled and older people* can be obtained on the GOV.UK website at:

www.gov.uk/guidance/reliefs-from-vat-for-disabled-and-older-people-notice-7017

Information on the reduced VAT rate of 5% for mobility aids for people aged 60 or over can be found at:

www.gov.uk/tax-on-shopping/mobility-aids

Living Made Easy

A charity that provides detailed advice and information on disability equipment.

E-mail: info@dlf.org.uk

Website: www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk

Motability

The Motability Scheme allows people with certain disabilities to exchange their mobility allowance to lease a new car, scooter or powered wheelchair (as outlined in section 7.1 above, you need to qualify for particular Government disability benefits in order to get a mobility allowance as part of that benefit).

Tel: 0300 456 4566

Website: www.motability.co.uk

NHS 111 Wales

NHS 111 Wales can provide contact details for local services, as well as telephone and web advice on general health issues and common illnesses.

Tel: 111

Website: www.111.wales.nhs.uk

NHS Wales Artificial Limb and Appliance Service

Website: <https://cavuhb.nhs.wales/our-services/artificial-limb-and-appliance-service>

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Independent champion for older people across Wales.

Tel: 03442 640670

E-mail: ask@olderpeople.wales

Website: www.olderpeople.wales

Parkinson's UK

Provides information and advice for people affected by Parkinson's.

Helpline: 0808 800 0303

E-mail: hello@parkinsons.org.uk

Website: www.parkinsons.org.uk

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

The Ombudsman looks to see whether people have been treated unfairly or have received a bad service from a public body, such as a local authority.

Tel: 0300 790 0203

E-mail: ask@ombudsman.wales

Website: www.ombudsman.wales

Royal National Institute for Deaf People (RNID)

A charity which works to make life fully inclusive for deaf people and those with hearing loss or tinnitus.

Tel: 0808 808 0123

E-mail: contact@rnid.org.uk

Website: www.rnid.org.uk

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

Contact RNIB for information and advice about sight problems and products or publications available to support people who are blind or partially sighted.

RNIB Helpline: 0303 123 9999

E-mail: helpline@rnib.org.uk

Website: www.rnib.org.uk

Royal Voluntary Service (RVS)

RVS operate various services in Wales to help older people stay independent at home.

Website: www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

Scope

Scope campaigns to make sure that disabled people have the same opportunities in society as everyone else. They can provide a range of information and advice.

Tel: 0808 800 3333

E-mail: helpline@scope.org.uk

Website: www.scope.org.uk

Shelter Cymru

A charity providing advice to people with housing problems. This covers a wide range of topics, including the rights of contract-holders, homelessness and repairs.

Tel: 08000 495 495

Website: www.sheltercymru.org.uk

SSAFA (Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association)

Can provide support to anyone who has served in the Royal Navy, British Army or Royal Air Force.

Tel: 0800 260 6767

Website: www.ssafa.org.uk

Stroke Association

A charity providing specialist support to make sure people affected by stroke get the very best care and services to rebuild their lives.

Stroke Helpline: 0303 3033 100

Website: www.stroke.org.uk

Turn2Us

A charitable service helping people access the money available to them – through welfare benefits, grants and other help.

Website: www.turn2us.org.uk

Veterans' Gateway

The Veterans' Gateway service is the first point of contact for veterans – those who have served in the Royal Navy, British Army or Royal Air Force – and their families. It covers a range of welfare areas, including housing, employment, finances, mental wellbeing and physical health.

Tel: 0808 802 1212

Website: www.veteransgateway.org.uk

Welsh Government

The devolved government for Wales.

Tel: 0300 060 4400

E-mail: customerhelp@gov.wales

Website: www.gov.wales

Which?

National organisation aimed at supporting consumers by testing goods, providing information and campaigning.

Tel: 029 2267 0000

Website: www.which.co.uk

15 Further information about Age Cymru

15.1 Who we are

Age Cymru is the national charity for older people in Wales. We work to develop and deliver positive change with and for older people.

Together with our local partners:

- we provide information and advice;
- we deliver wellbeing programmes;
- we provide independent advocacy;
- we support carers;
- we campaign and research.

Age Cymru

Mariners House
Trident Court
East Moors Road
Cardiff
CF24 5TD

029 2043 1555

15.2 How we can help

Age Cymru Advice: our information and advice service for matters affecting people over 50 in Wales

Age Cymru Advice is committed to being the foremost information and advice service to older people in Wales. We aim to provide effective, accessible, high-quality information and advice while offering a free, impartial and confidential service. Age Cymru Advice can assist older people themselves, their family, friends, carers, or professionals. All of our guides and factsheets are available to download from our website, or you can contact our advice line to have copies posted to you for free.

Local support

Age Cymru Advice also acts as a gateway to our local services. Face to face support via local offices and home visits may be available to people requiring additional or more specialised support.

Getting in touch

If you want to talk to one of our expert advisers, in Welsh or English, call us on **0300 303 44 98**. Our advice line is open between 9am and 4pm, Monday – Friday.

(Calls are charged at the same rate as a call to a standard 01 or 02 number. They will also be automatically included in any landline or mobile inclusive minutes package).

You can also:

- email us at **advice@agecymru.org.uk**; *or*
- visit our website at **www.agecymru.org.uk/advice**



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www.agecymru.org.uk/agematters

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15.3 How you can help

All the information and advice we provide is free and completely impartial. In many cases our timely intervention can be life changing. We are an ageing population and more people than ever are coming to us for support. You can help us be there for those that need us most.

Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

Call: **029 2043 1555**

Visit: **www.agecymru.org.uk/donate**

Every donation we receive helps us be there for someone when they need us.

- £10 helps towards a fully trained expert advice worker to respond to queries from people who need the support of our information and advice service.
- £20 helps towards the cost of us producing free information guides and factsheets that provide useful advice on issues affecting people over 50.

Fundraise

Whether it is having a bake sale, running a marathon or knitting small hats for the Big Knit, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work.

Call: **029 2043 1555**

Visit: **www.agecymru.org.uk/getinvolved**

Volunteer with us

All volunteer roles at Age Cymru support us to improve lives. However you'd like to get involved, we'd love to hear from you.

Call: **029 2043 1555**

Visit: **www.agecymru.org.uk/volunteer**

Leave us a gift in your will

With a gift to Age Cymru in your will, you can do so much to make sure older people have the support they deserve in the years to come. Leave a world less lonely.

Call: **029 2043 1555**

Visit: **www.agecymru.org.uk/legacy**

