

# Bathroom Adaptations & DFG Funding

*A Practical Guide for You and Your Family*



An essential guide to  
DFGs for any home  
adaptation - with a focus  
on bathroom planning  
and equipment.

Compiled by  
Astor Bannerman



# Welcome

If you are planning a bathroom adaptation for yourself, a disabled child or a family member using a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG), you may be feeling overwhelmed, confused - or just unsure where to start. You're not alone.

This guide is here to walk you through the entire DFG process. From first conversations to finished adaptations - whether you're replacing a bath with a new bath or wet room, planning a major extension, or just choosing the right piece of equipment - this is your step-by-step companion.



## We Will Help You:

- Understand what a DFG is and who it's for
- Know what to expect during the assessment and building process
- Learn how to navigate equipment choices
- Decide how involved you want to be in managing the project
- Hear from other families who've been through it
- Ask the right questions and make informed decisions

This guide was created by Astor Bannerman as part of our commitment to making bathroom adaptations easier to understand and more accessible for everyone.

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## What is a DFG? (Disabled Facilities Grant)

A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is money from your local council to help adapt your home to better meet the needs of a disabled person - adult or child. The aim is to make the home more accessible, safe, and functional, so the person can live as independently and comfortably as possible.

DFGs are available across England, Wales and Northern Ireland. (Scotland has a different system - check local council guidance.)

## Who Can Apply?

You can apply for a DFG if:

- You or someone in your home is disabled. The person will live in the property for the duration of the grant period (usually 5 years, but this can be shorter if the person is terminally ill)
- You are one of the following:
  - An owner occupier
  - A private tenant
  - A housing association or council tenant
  - A landlord applying on behalf of a disabled tenant



This grant is paid after the work is completed and approved by the local authority.

## How Much Can You Get?

The maximum DFG amounts are:

- £30,000 in England
- £25,000 in Northern Ireland
- £36,000 in Wales

## Do I Have to Pay Anything? (Means Testing)

Whether you need to contribute financially depends on:

- The income and savings of the person the adaptation is for (and their partner if they have one)
- If the application is for a child under 18 for whom Child Benefit is paid, there is no means test - the grant should be fully funded

If you're unsure whether you're eligible, try the 'Adapt My Home' self-assessment tool at

[www-foundations-uk-com/how-we-help/adapt-my-home](http://www-foundations-uk-com/how-we-help/adapt-my-home)







## What Can the Grant Pay For?

The grant can help cover adaptations such as:

- ✓ Widening doors or installing ramps for easier access
- ✓ Creating or adapting a bathroom - e.g. installing a wet room or specialist bath
- ✓ Adapting a kitchen to make it easier to cook safely
- ✓ Installing hoists or changing tables
- ✓ Creating safe spaces or improving lighting for sensory or visual needs
- ✓ Adding or adapting bedrooms or living spaces  
Improving or installing heating systems
- ✓ Safe access to gardens or outdoor spaces
- ✓ Supporting the the person the adaptation is for to care for others (e.g. a parent caring for a child)

You can even use the DFG to adapt a houseboat or flat above a shop, so long as it's your permanent home.

## Do I Have to Pay it Back?

You don't have to repay any part of the grant unless you sell your home within 10 years of the work being finished AND the grant was over £5,000 (max payback: £10,000).

## What if the DFG Isn't Enough?

If the work costs more than the maximum DFG, your local council may offer a Top-Up Grant (sometimes called a Discretionary DFG) of up to £30,000 extra. This isn't guaranteed and depends on your council's policy and available funding. To apply, you may need to show that you've looked into other options first, like:

- Equity release (if you own your home)
- A bank loan
- Charity or community funding

Ask your OT or housing officer early on if a top-up might be possible in your area.





# The Assessment: What to Expect



## Who is Involved?

At a minimum:

- An Occupational Therapist (OT) or Trusted Assessor
- A local authority grants/housing adaptations officer
- You - the family or carer, and the person the adaptation is for

If your adaptation is more complex (e.g. building an extension or installing specialist equipment), an architect or surveyor from the council's approved list may also get involved.

## The OT Assessment Will Look At:

- ✓ What the person the adaptation is for can, and wants to do at home
- ✓ What challenges you're currently facing
- ✓ How the home setup affects your lifestyle
- ✓ The likely progression of the condition (to help futureproof)
- ✓ Everyone else's needs in the household (siblings, parents, etc.)
- ✓ What equipment or layouts are essential vs optional
- ✓ Whether the home can be adapted - or whether a move might be more appropriate

Be vocal about your needs, preferences, and ideas. This process should be led by your family's voice.



## Planning Ahead: Things to Think About

Adaptations take time and can be emotionally demanding. Planning ahead is vital:

- Will the condition of the person the adaptation is for change in the future?
- Do you need to install extra power points for hoists or automatic doors - even if they're not needed yet?
- Can walls support hoists or other equipment later down the line?

You might not need all the equipment now, but your OT and architect can build in future flexibility, like:

- Space for ceiling tracking
- Plumbing and electrics for future bath or lift installs
- Reinforced walls or accessible layouts for potential progression

## Project Management: Who's in Charge?

There are three main scenarios when managing your DFG-funded adaptation:

### Fully Managed

The local authority and OT handles everything - builders, schedules, inspections. Best if you want a hands-off approach.

### Part-Managed

You're involved in decisions but supported throughout. You get guidance on builders, materials, timelines.

### Self-Managed

You handle quotes, contracts, payments, quality control. Riskier - if anything goes wrong, you're liable, not the local authority.



*I was so grateful of  
the help and expertise  
at such a delicate and  
sensitive time in our  
lives*



# Step-by-Step: Navigating the DFG Process

- 1 Identification of Need**  
A change in health, mobility or family circumstances prompts the need for adaptation.
- 2 Referral**  
Anyone can refer - the disabled person, a family member, GP, school nurse, social worker or therapist.
- 3 OT Assessment**  
An Occupational Therapist (OT) visits your home to assess your needs, safety, independence, and suitability of your current layout. This may also involve manual handling and risk assessments.
- 4 Initial Planning**  
If adaptations are recommended, the OT works with a surveyor or architect to explore possible layouts, discuss practical needs, and begin forming a plan. This is the ideal time to start involving equipment manufacturers for demonstrations and technical advice.
- 5 Discuss Equipment Needs**  
Together with your OT and a trusted supplier, you'll look at specific equipment options - like baths, toilets, hoists, washbasins, or changing benches - and start narrowing down what's most suitable.
- 6 Refine Plans**  
Feedback from you, the OT, and any clinical teams is used to finalise a proposed plan and specification. This version should include all major equipment, layout choices, and budget considerations.
- 7 Submit DFG Application**  
Once the final design is agreed, your formal DFG application is submitted to the local authority, along with required documents like financial information (if means-tested), drawings, and builder quotes.

**The local authority has up to six months from this point to respond with a funding decision.**





## **8 Permissions**

If planning permission or building control sign-off is needed, it is applied for now. Often it's not required, but check with your architect or council to be sure.

## **9 Quotes**

Approved builders are asked to quote on the agreed plans. Equipment suppliers also provide quotations. You can select from approved providers, or in some cases propose your own.

## **10 Grant Approval**

The local authority reviews your application, plans, permissions and quotes. If everything is in order, they issue a grant approval letter, confirming the total DFG amount and any contributions (if means-tested).

## **11 Pre-start Meeting**

Before work begins, a meeting is held with the OT, builder, surveyor, family, and potentially the equipment supplier - to agree on timelines, responsibilities, access, and contingency planning.

## **12 Work Begins**

The adaptations are carried out. This could be days or weeks depending on the scale of the work. You may need to vacate the home during some or all of this time.

## **13 Completion & Sign-off**

Once complete, the OT and surveyor will inspect and confirm everything has been done to a satisfactory standard and in line with the agreed plans, then the grant funding will be paid.

## **14 Equipment Handover**

You will be shown how to use any specialist equipment, and you'll be provided with:

- User instructions
- Warranty and servicing information
- Contact details for support



# Choosing the Right Equipment

Choosing the right equipment for a disabled person can feel daunting - especially if it's unfamiliar or you're being asked to decide on something you've never seen or used before.

The good news is: you don't have to figure it out alone.

This section will help you understand how equipment choices are made, what your options are, and why it's so important to try things first - ideally in your home - before committing.

## Start With the Needs of the Person the Adaptation is For - Not What the Bathroom Currently Has

Every person is different. That's why your Occupational Therapist (OT) will start with the disabled person's physical, sensory, and care needs. But there's more to choosing equipment than just ticking a box on a form. Equipment should:

- Make personal care tasks easier, safer, and more comfortable
- Reduce physical strain for parents or carers
- Help the disabled person feel secure, dignified, and (where possible) independent
- Adapt as your child grows or changes

It's not just about what works today - it's about what works next year, and the year after.



*Do your research,  
don't be pressured*



# Involve a Manufacturer Early On in the Process

This is where equipment manufacturers like Astor Bannerman come in.

We design and make the equipment ourselves - so we understand how it works, what options exist, and how it can fit into your specific space.

We can:

- Bring equipment to your home or OT hub for a free demonstration
- Let the person the adaptation is for try out baths, benches, basins and hoists in real life
- Help you and your OT understand what will (and won't) work in your space
- Offer CAD room layouts to help you visualise the full bathroom design
- Advise on futureproofing - like installing electrics or fixings now for later equipment

Don't wait until the end to speak with a supplier. Ask your OT to involve them as early as possible - usually during or just after the OT assessment. You can also reach out yourself.





# Key Equipment to Consider

## Baths

Specialist baths come in many sizes and styles:

- Height-adjustable baths help carers avoid bending or lifting
- Powered seats or cradles assist with safe transfers in and out
- Integrated stretchers allow a child to lie flat for changing and drying
- Built-in showers add flexibility for families with mixed needs
- Control valves maintain a safe water temperature
- Features like lights, music or air spa can create a relaxing sensory experience



## Wet Rooms and Showers

Many adaptations involve installing a wet room or shower:

- A level-access shower area removes trip hazards and suits wheelchairs and hoists
- Wall-mounted shower seats or fold-down benches save space
- Grab rails, slip-resistant floors, and enclosed screens help with safety
- Ask about modular shower pods if you need a short-term or quick-install option



## Changing Tables

Wall-mounted tables save space; mobile ones add flexibility and the option for 2-sided care:

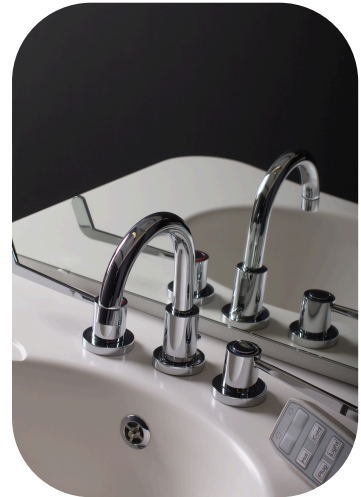
- Wall-mounted tables save space; mobile ones add flexibility
- Some models double as shower stretchers (with drainage trays)
- Padding, fabric or solid surfaces offer different levels of support, drainage and comfort
- Check the height range, especially if different carers will be using it, or if self transfer from the floor is an option



## Washbasins

Used several times a day, the right washbasin setup is crucial:

- Height-adjustable models can be used by both children and adults
- Choose easy-to-use controls - levers, push buttons, or infrared taps
- Integrated mirrors make the space more functional
- Ask about pre-set height options and safety cut-outs for crush prevention
- Options to fit under windows or into tight layouts



## Hoists

Transferring in and out of a bath or shower safely, or from room to room often needs a hoist:

- Mobile hoists can be moved between rooms, but need floor space
- Ceiling-track hoists free up the floor and can be built in seamlessly
- Track layouts vary: straight, H-frame, room-to-room, or with turntables
- Slings must be prescribed by an OT to suit the person the adaptation is for



## Shower Chairs

Ideal for people who need to sit while washing, or for combined toileting:

- Some are basic wheeled chairs, others are fully supportive with tilt-in-space and head/leg supports
- Commode-style seats allow toileting in the same chair

## Toileting Aids

Improving hygiene, comfort and independence:

- Wash-dry toilets clean automatically, reducing carer input
- Rise-and-fall toilets help with safe transfers
- Support frames can be fixed or removable
- Bidet-style systems offer targeted cleansing and drying functions



## Accessories & Extra Supports: The Small Things That Make a Big Difference

While the main equipment - like baths, changing tables, washbasins and hoists - does a lot of the heavy lifting, it's often the smaller items and accessories that make daily routines more comfortable, more dignified, and more personalised.

These additions can help the person the adaptation is for feel more secure, reduce physical strain for you as a carer, and make the bathroom feel like a more welcoming, usable space.

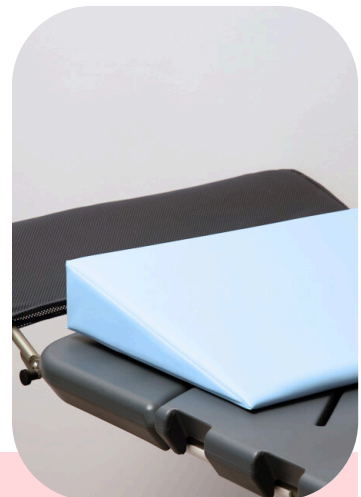
### Bath Accessories

- Bath supports and chairs: These sit inside the bath and provide structure, posture support or comfort for someone who can't sit unaided. Some are padded, some are moulded, and many are adjustable.
- Cushions and cradles: Used with powered baths, these provide extra softness or stability for people who need more body support or reassurance.
- Knee and leg wedges: Positioning aids to support joints and comfort during bathing.



### Changing Table Accessories

- Bumpers: Offer protection and reassurance for people who roll or spasm.
- Headrests and body supports: Help with positioning during changing or washing.
- Lighting features: Some tables come with soft sensory lighting - ideal for people who benefit from calming stimuli.
- Splash guards: Help contain water while still allowing carer access.



## Things to Keep in Mind

Some accessories are essential for safety, while others are nice-to-have for comfort, your OT and equipment supplier can help you decide. Many items are interchangeable or can be customised, so don't feel boxed into one version of a product. Ask if items are included in the grant or need to be funded separately.







## Servicing, Warranties & Support

When the work's done, make sure you:

- Understand how to use new equipment
- Know who to call for repairs or breakdowns
- Ask for manuals, servicing schedules and warranty details

Check what's covered under the DFG - and what you'll be responsible for (especially if the equipment breaks out of hours).

## Plan For the Future

Even if the person the adaptation is for doesn't need certain items yet, it's often more cost-effective and less disruptive to install things like:

- Ceiling tracking (or the structure to add it later)
- Electrical spur points for future hoists or powered baths
- Reinforced walls for fold-down benches or heavy-use grab rails

Your OT and supplier can help you understand what's worth including now - and what can wait.

## Final Thoughts on Equipment

Choosing equipment isn't just a tick-box exercise. It's about making sure the person the adaptation is for feels safe, supported and comfortable, and that your home feels like home, not a clinic.

You have the right to:

- ✓ Ask for demos
- ✓ Try things first
- ✓ Compare models
- ✓ Request layout plans
- ✓ Get second opinions



*What a relief and difference it now makes, I can finally be independent*



## Real Stories From Families

Every family's experience of adapting their home is different. For some, it's a smooth and supported process. For others, it can feel like an uphill battle. Here, families share their journeys - the good, the difficult, and the lessons they learned along the way.

“

### **Family Story #1: “We didn't know where to start...”**

We honestly didn't know where to start with this and found it quite traumatic at first, we didn't expect all the emotions that came with this too. It was yet again another battle to fight and navigate all the obstacles and brick walls. We were given very limited Information, not shown any options, told what we were getting and made to feel grateful. We just went along with it all and didn't want to rock the boat as we were desperate for the adaptations. Whilst it only took a few months it wasn't handled well by the authority and only saw the OT once.

”

“

### **Family Story #2: “Supported from start to finish”**

I found the whole process so overwhelming and had no idea where to start. The OT was helpful and took time going over options of what we may need both now and in the future. We were able to look at possible equipment in advance which was so helpful to enable us to make the right decisions for our child. The local home improvements team supported us every step of the way which was amazing and checked in during the building adaptations. The builders were very efficient and respectful of the family home and now our child can be fully included within our home but also have privacy in their own room now too.

”

“

### **Family Story #3: “Managing it myself – a hard lesson”**

I chose to manage the work myself as had family and friends that are builders – what a nightmare and mistake that was! I had to get further bank loans as the builders ripped us off then disappeared. The work wasn't to a high standard and didn't meet my changing needs as they thought they knew best and didn't respect my wishes. I had to live in a building site for over 2 years and had a break down due to the stress and exhaustion of trying to project manage. There was no come back as the Local authority happily handed all control over to me, so I was liable and not them.

”  


# Myths vs. Facts

There's a lot of confusion out there about Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs) - and it's easy to get the wrong idea. So we have busted some of the myths surrounding this process.

Myth	Fact
You can't get a DFG if you live in rented housing	<b>Not true.</b> DFGs are available whether you own your home or rent it. Even landlords can apply for a grant to help adapt a property for a disabled tenant.
You won't get a DFG if you have savings	<b>Not quite.</b> There's no savings limit, but savings may affect how much grant you're awarded. If you have a high income or savings, you might need to contribute toward the cost.
You have to be in a wheelchair to qualify	<b>Definitely not.</b> DFGs are for anyone with a disability that affects daily life - including people with physical disabilities, sensory impairments, or severe learning difficulties.
All DFGs are means-tested	<b>Not always.</b> Grants for children under 19 are not means tested. For adults, only the disabled person and their partner's finances are considered - not the whole household.
You have to pay it back	<b>Usually not.</b> DFGs are grants, not loans. However, if you're a homeowner and get more than £5,000, you might need to repay some of it if you sell your home within 10 years. Always check with your local authority.
You can only apply once	<b>You can apply again.</b> You can have more than one grant, but you can only receive up to £30k in any one-year period. If your situation changes, you can apply again in the future.
DFGs take forever	<b>It depends.</b> Simple, urgent adaptations can happen quickly. Larger or more complex projects may take longer - up to a year in some cases. The sooner you apply, the sooner things can move forward.
I don't get a say in the equipment or who does the work	<b>You absolutely do.</b> You should be offered choices when it comes to equipment, builders, and layout. You can also ask to see product demos before decisions are made.
I can't apply without an OT	<b>Not true.</b> While many DFG assessments involve an Occupational Therapist, some areas use Trusted Assessors instead. You don't need to arrange one yourself - your local authority will help with this.





# More Information & Useful Resources

Here are some helpful resources to guide you through the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) process and home adaptations

## Definition of Disability (UK Legal Context)

Under UK law, a person is considered disabled if they have a physical or mental impairment that has a substantial and long-term negative effect on their ability to do normal daily activities.

Read more



## Muscular Dystrophy UK: Adaptations Manual

A practical guide for families and professionals on adapting homes for children and adults with muscle-wasting conditions. It covers funding, planning, and equipment choices.

Download the manual (PDF)



## DFG Champions – Foundations

A national network of professionals and families working to improve DFG-funded adaptations through shared learning and collaboration.

Visit DFG Champions



## DFG Guidance for Local Authorities – GOV.UK

Official government guidance for councils on delivering DFGs effectively and fairly, including best practices and legal duties.

Read the guidance



## Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996

The main legislation governing DFGs, outlining eligibility, application processes, and local authority responsibilities.

Learn more



## Disability Rights UK: DFG Guidance

Clear, accessible information on applying for a DFG, including eligibility, means testing, and what to expect during the process.

Explore the guidance



## How Astor Bannerman Can Help

At Astor Bannerman, we specialise in designing, manufacturing, and installing accessible bathroom equipment - from height adjustable baths and washbasins to hoists and changing tables. We work closely with families, OTs, and local authorities to make sure each adaptation truly meets the needs of the person it's for.

Whether you're just starting out or already mid-project, we're here to help with assessments, product demos, layout planning, and advice every step of the way.

Want to talk to us about your project or arrange a free equipment demo? Visit [www.astorbannerman.co.uk](http://www.astorbannerman.co.uk) or email us at [info@astorbannerman.co.uk](mailto:info@astorbannerman.co.uk) - we'd love to hear from you.

**Contact Astor Bannerman**

