

**An Roinn Tithíochta,  
Pleanála agus Rialtais Áitiúil**  
Department of Housing,  
Planning and Local Government



## **Housing Aid for Older People Scheme**

### **Administrative Guidance for Local Authorities**

**Implementation January 2020**



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## Housing Aid for Older People Scheme

### 1. General

1.1 The Housing Aid for Older People Scheme is available **to assist older people living in poor housing conditions to have necessary repairs or improvements carried out.**

1.2 The administration of the scheme is a matter for the local authority. Accordingly, local authorities should determine whether a grant is payable in the first instance in accordance with the Statutory Regulations, Housing (Adaption Grants for Older People and People with a Disability), Regulations 2007 [S.I. No. 670 of 2007], Amendment Regulations 2014 [S.I. No. 104 of 2014] and the criteria outlined therein. These guidelines are an updated version of those issued previously by this Department and take effect from January 2020.

1.3 Local authorities should administer the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme in a sympathetic manner bearing in mind the purpose of the scheme, **i.e. to assist older people living in poor housing conditions to have necessary repairs carried out where, in the opinion of the authority, the repairs, whilst less than those appropriate to render the house fit in every respect, constitute repairs it considers are reasonably necessary to prolong the useful life of the house for the applicant.**

1.4 The objective of the new streamlined application form and guidance, launched in January 2020, is to make the grant application process more user friendly and accessible to people. It will also standardise the individual local authority approach to the processing and administration of the schemes.

## 2. Age Limit

2.1 The regulations governing the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme do not specify an age qualification. In general, local authorities should restrict the payment of grants to older people, i.e. those aged 66 years and above, having regard to the means testing criteria outlined and the general needs of individual applicants. However, where in the opinion of the local authority, genuine cases of hardship exist, the authority may consider the payment of a grant to individuals who are less than 66 years of age.

## 3. Types of Housing

3.1 Grants under the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme may be paid, where appropriate, in respect of works carried out to:

- Owner occupied housing, where the elderly person either owns the house, or has a right of residence in the house where the work will be done.

3.2 Local authorities should satisfy themselves that, the person for whom the works are to be carried out, will occupy the property as his or her normal place of residence on completion of the works.

## 4. Completion of Works

4.1 Applicants should be encouraged to carry out the works as quickly as possible following grant approval. In general, works should be completed within **6 months** following written approval from the local authority.

4.2 In cases where works are not completed within 6 months following approval, local authorities should examine each case individually and, if necessary, offer an appropriate time extension for the completion of works.

## 5. Timeline for Decision on Applications

5.1 Local authorities should endeavour to decide on each application under the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme as quickly as possible but within **6 weeks** following receipt of a fully completed and valid application.

5.2 Where an application form is not fully completed, an applicant should be notified as soon as possible and requested to submit the outstanding information. This may involve contacting the applicant by phone where only minor details are missing. Incomplete applications awaiting submission of minor details should not be held by the local authority for longer than 3 weeks.

5.3 Where an application is missing key elements, the local authority should return the full application with a checklist detailing the outstanding documentation to be submitted. The correspondence accompanying the checklist must communicate to the applicant that this does not mean their application has been rejected.

## 6. Prioritisation on the Basis of Medical Need

6.1 Ideally all valid applications should be processed within 6 weeks from the date of submission. However, in the event of a backlog, local authorities should prioritise applications on the basis of the medical needs of the applicant, and on the urgency and necessity of the identified works. The applicants GP should state the level of priority on the Doctor's Certificate section of the application form. Please see below 3 general levels of medical priority identified:

### Priority 1

- The person is terminally ill or fully/mainly dependent on family or a carer;  
**or**
- Adaptations to the home would help them leave hospital/residential care, or reduce the need for hospitalisation in the near future.

## **Priority 2**

- The person is mobile, but they need help to access washing, toilet facilities, bedroom, and so on; **or**
- The person's ability to function independently would be harder without the adaptations.

## **Priority 3**

- The person is independent, but they need special facilities to improve their quality of life such as a separate bedroom or living space.

6.2 In particular, special consideration shall be given to applicants who require essential repairs or improvement works as a matter of urgency, e.g. individuals in hospital who require the works to be completed in order to facilitate the continuance of their care in their own home or to facilitate their direct return home.

## **7. Qualifying Works**

7.1 In assessing applications for the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme, essential works, which will make the property habitable for the person(s) should be prioritised. Other works such as those in the examples listed below should be considered on a case-by-case basis:

- structural repairs or improvements;
- repair or replacement of roof; (See Note 1)
- upgrade electrical wiring; (See Note 2)
- dry-lining;
- repairs or replacement of some/all windows and doors;
- provision of central heating, water or sanitary services; (See Note 3)
- painting/contract cleaning (only as part of a wider suite of works);
- radon remediation; and
- Any other repair or improvement works which are considered reasonably necessary.



**Note 1:** Repair or replacement of a roof: the local authority will require a letter from the property owner's insurance company stating that the repairs are not covered under the policy.

**Note 2:** Upgrade of electrical wiring, a report from an electrician: who is registered with the Registered Electrical Contractors of Ireland (RECI), will be required describing the necessary repairs.

**Note 3:** Upgrade of an existing central heating system: a report from a heating contractor will be required stating that the existing heating system is beyond economic repair.

## **8. Radon Remediation Works**

8.1 Where a suite of works is being grant aided under the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme, local authorities may also, as part of the package of works, assist with the provision of radon remediation works, where applicable.

8.2 Grant aid towards the cost of remediation works shall be restricted to homes with reference levels of 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> and above.

8.3 The types of radon remediation work necessary will vary according to the reference level. For homes with measurements between 200 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> and 400 Bq/m<sup>3</sup>, the following remediation works are deemed appropriate:

- the sealing of floors and walls;
- increasing indoor ventilation such as unblocking air vents;
- providing additional wall vents;
- increasing under floor ventilation, i.e. the installation of additional sub floor vents or airbricks or the clearing or replacement of existing ones.

8.4 For homes with reference levels of 400 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> and above the most appropriate remediation works are the installation of a passive or fan assisted sump.

8.5 Local authorities should satisfy themselves as to the appropriateness of the proposed remediation works while bearing in mind the ongoing need to obtain best possible value for money.

8.6 Grant aid shall not be available towards the cost of carrying out radon measurements in homes or towards the cost of re-testing homes following remediation.

8.7 Local authorities should contact the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government to seek clarification on any issue relating to radon remediation.

## **9. Approval and Payment Process**

9.1 If the application qualifies for grant assistance, a letter of approval should be issued to the applicant, which includes the following details:

- Local authority estimated cost for the approved works
- Eligibility percentage as determined by household income
- Value of grant approved
- Request for a written itemised quote from the contractor(s) selected to complete the approved works, along with their tax clearance details
- Request for details of planning permission if applicable
- Request for bank account details for payment of grant

9.2 Where the actual cost of the work is significantly higher or lower than the estimated cost notified to the applicant, a revision of the grant amount approved may be considered, at the discretion of the local authority.

9.3 In contrast to the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability and Mobility Aids Grant schemes, the VAT cost of works under the Housing Aid for Older People Grant scheme is eligible for funding, as no refund can be claimed from the Revenue Commissioners.

## 10. Alarms – Smoke / Carbon Monoxide

10.1 Local authorities should include smoke/heat alarms in any suite of works undertaken, if not already present and operating in the dwelling. It is recommended that at least two self-contained 10-year battery operated alarms are installed.

10.2 If the heating in the property is powered by a fossil fuel, oil, gas or open fire, local authorities should include carbon monoxide alarms in any suite of works undertaken, if not already present and operating in the dwelling. Local authorities should ensure an audible carbon monoxide detector, that is an EN 50291 standard, and displays the CE Mark with an end-of-life indicator is present in every room with a fossil fuel powered heating device.

## 11. Grant Level and Recoupment

11.1 The effective maximum grant under the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme shall be **€8,000** which may cover up to 95% of the cost of work as approved by the local authority.

11.2 The Department will recoup to local authorities **80%** of the grant paid (or €6,400), whichever is the lesser. Local authorities will be required to provide the remaining 20% from their own resources as provided for in the annual budget process.

11.3 In the event that a local authority is not in a position, or anticipates not being in a position to provide the remaining 20% from their own resources, the authority should notify the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government immediately.

## 12. Means Testing

12.1 All applications for grant aid under the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme shall be assessed on the basis of household means. The maximum grant of €8,000 to cover 95% of the cost of works as approved by the local authority, will be available to those with gross annual household incomes of less than €30,000, tapering to 30% for those households with incomes of between €50,001 to €60,000.

12.2 The percentage of the grant available is set out in the table below:

### Housing Aid for Older People Scheme Means Test

<b>Gross maximum household income p.a.</b>	<b>% of costs available</b>	<b>Maximum Grant available</b>
Up to €30,000	95%	€8,000
€30,001 - €35,000	85%	€6,800
€35,001 - €40,000	75%	€6,000
€40,001 - €50,000	50%	€4,000
€50,001 - €60,000	30%	€2,400
In excess of €60,000	No grant is payable	No grant is payable

12.3 The same means test shall apply in all local authority areas.

12.4 Please see Income Disregards and Deductions at Section 16 below.

### **13. Calculation of Household Income**

13.1 For the purposes of the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme, household income shall be calculated as:

**the annual gross income of the registered property owner and their spouse, together with that of all household members aged 18 or over (or aged 23 or over if in full-time education) in the previous tax year.**

### **14. Evidence of Ownership of Property**

14.1 Local authorities should satisfy themselves that the property to which the application refers is Local Property Tax (LPT) compliant. Proof of payment, deferral, or exemption from LPT should be submitted by the applicant.

14.2 LPT documentation is sufficient to confirm the identity of the registered property owner. In exceptional cases, where the local authority has reason to believe the LPT documentation does not refer to the actual registered owner, a letter should be requested from the applicant's solicitor confirming property ownership.

### **15. Evidence of Household Income**

15.1 Evidence of household income must be submitted with all applications under the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme, as follows:

- In the case of PAYE workers, a P21 End of Year Statement for the previous tax year;

- In the case of self-employed/self-assessed individuals, a copy of their Revenue issued “Self-Assessment – Chapter 4 of Part 41A TCA 1997” Income Tax Assessment for the previous tax year. The figure to be assessed for the purposes of the means test is the “Amount of income or profits arising for this period”, and this is found on the first page of the assessment;
- Income from the Department of Employment Affairs and Social Protection (DEASP) is usually included on a P21 End of Year Statement or Income Tax Assessment. However, some applicants only source of income may be from DEASP, which means they cannot obtain proof of income from Revenue. In this case, a statement from DEASP stating weekly/annual payments will be sufficient. In the case of State Pensioners, one of the following is needed for the previous tax year; a statement of payment, a pension slip or a bank statement.
- Where income is received from more than one source, documentation to support all incomes should be submitted.

15.2 Evidence of household income should be submitted in respect of all relevant household members.

15.3 Applications will be assessed based on income from the previous tax year at the date of application for the grant. In cases where the processing of a Housing Aid for Older People Grant falls into a new tax year, applicants will not be required to re-submit updated evidence of income.

## 16. Income Disregards and Deductions

16.1 In determining gross household income, local authorities shall, for eligibility purposes, reduce the amount of household income by the following disregards and deductions:

- Disregard the amount of the following payments received in the previous tax year:
  - Child Benefit
  - Working Family Payment
  - Domiciliary Care Allowance
  - Carer's Support Grant
  - Foster Care Grant
  - Fuel Allowance
  - Carer's Benefit / Allowance
  - Household Benefits Package
  - Living Alone Allowance
- Deduction of €5,000 for each member of the household aged under 18 years;
- Deduction of €5,000 for each member of the household aged under 23 years and in full-time education, or engaged in a SOLAS apprenticeship (formally known as FAS);
- 
- Deduction of €5,000 where the person for whom the application for grant aid is sought, is being cared for by a relative on a full-time basis;

## 17. Indexation

17.1 The maximum grant levels may be amended in line with the building cost index, as notified to the local authorities by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

17.2 Income bands for the purposes of means testing may be amended in line with the amount of wage inflation in the preceding year, as notified to the local authorities by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government.

17.3 Local authorities shall ensure that applications are determined on the basis of the grant levels and income band levels in force at the time of approval.

17.4 In cases where applicants do not satisfy the means test and are refused grant aid, it is recommended that local authorities should, at the time of refusal, notify the applicant that the income bands may be amended at a future date. The applicant could contact their local authority periodically about this.

## 18. Repeat Applications

18.1 Generally, the need for payment of a Housing Aid for Older People Grant where a grant has been previously made under the Housing Aid for Older People scheme, should not occur if the initial grant-aided works are properly executed and appropriate to the needs of the applicant. **However, there is no legal bar to the payment of a second grant where the applicant's circumstances have changed significantly over time.** No limit applies to the amount of grant funding an applicant can receive in their lifetime.



18.2 Local authorities should not set any minimum time limits between the payment of a first and second grant.

18.3 Only one application form per individual may be processed at a time, with the option of applying for all three grants at once. For example, a Mobility Aid Grant may be considered by the local authority at the same time as a Housing Aid for Older People Grant, using the same application form. However, two grants of the same type may not be processed concurrently i.e. two Mobility Aid Grants.

## **19. Appeals Procedure**

19.1 In processing applications under the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme, it is recognised that some applicants may be dissatisfied with the decision of the local authority.

19.2 The following procedure shall apply to each appeal:

- Applicants are invited to submit a written appeal on any decision notified to them by the local authority on their application within 3 weeks of the date of the decision;
- The appeal must state the reasons for the appeal and the grounds for same;
- Appeals will be considered and adjudicated on by a Council Official who was not involved with the original assessment, as designated by the Director of Services of the Housing Section;
- Appeals will be considered and adjudicated upon within 4 weeks of receipt of the appeal;
- A decision on an appeal will be notified to each applicant within 2 weeks of the decision being made.

## **20. Standard Costs**

20.1 Local authorities should assemble a schedule of standard costs for each element of works available for funding under the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme. It is intended that the standardisation of unit costs should have a cost-stabilising effect on grant levels in each local authority area. The publication of standard costs will create greater transparency in the quote and grant process for applicants and for local authorities.

20.2 Where possible, authorities should keep an up to date list of costs charged by local contractors and suppliers which should be an accurate representation of the cost of each element of work in their area.

20.3 It is not open to authorities to reduce the percentage cost of any element of works below what has been identified as the standard cost. It is open to authorities to fund a higher cost than the identified standard cost for that set of works, if the authority feels that such a higher cost is justified.

20.4 In cases where quotations are considerably lower than the standard cost, local authorities should satisfy themselves that the proposed works are appropriate and will meet required standards.

20.5 It is recommended that local authorities should review their schedule of standardised cost on a twice yearly basis using the services of a Quantity Surveyor.

## **21. List of Contractors**

21.1 It is recommended that local authorities should advertise for interested contractors who wish to have their names included on a list of contractors available for the carrying out of works under the Housing Aid for Older People Scheme. This list of contractors should be available publicly and to applicants of the scheme. Contractors can request to be added or removed from the list.

21.2 It is not intended that the list, once assembled, should be an exclusive list of contractors who applicants may employ to carry out works under the scheme, but rather should be considered as an administrative mechanism to assist applicants.

21.3 The inclusion of a contractor is not an inference as regards the quality of work which an applicant can expect. Local authorities shall not be held liable for any deficient works which may arise as a result of an applicant engaging a contractor from the list.

## **22. Tax Clearance Procedures**

22.1 Department of Finance Circular 44/2006 sets down revised procedures in relation to tax clearance requirements in relation to grant payments from State and public sector bodies, which apply to all applications received after 1 January 2007. In line with changes introduced in the Finance Act 2014, Revenue introduced online electronic Tax Clearance (eTC) on 1 January 2016.

22.2 Tax clearance issues for Applicants - In the case of a grant application totalling €10,000 or more, applicants are required to hold a valid Tax Clearance Certificate. Local authorities may confirm an applicant's tax clearance status by using the on-line verification facility on the Revenue Commissioners' website, [www.ros.ie](http://www.ros.ie) and entering the applicants PPSN.

22.3 Tax clearance issues for Contractors - In the case of payments exceeding €650, applicants are required to provide the name, address and tax reference number of each contractor chosen to complete the approved work.

The provisions of Department of Finance Circular 44/2006 state that 10% of grant payments between €650 and €10,000 requires confirmation of the contractor's tax clearance status by the local authority. For all grant payments totalling **€10,000 and above**, the local authority must confirm the contractor's

tax clearance status. Verification can be done electronically using the on-line verification facility on the Revenue Commissioners' website, [www.ros.ie](http://www.ros.ie)

22.4 The provisions of Department of Finance Circular 44/2006 should be brought to the attention of all staff involved in the processing of grants under the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme for People with a Disability. Copies of the Circular can be accessed at the Department of Finance website, [www.finance.gov.ie](http://www.finance.gov.ie)

### **23. Claw Back**

23.1 It is intended that, in due course, a graduated claw back provision will apply where grant aid is provided in respect of an extension and the house is sold within a period of 5 years. The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government will review legislation which includes provision for such claw back arrangements and local authorities will be notified of any changes in this regard.

23.2 Until local authorities are advised accordingly, no claw back arrangements will apply.

### **24. Monitoring of Expenditure**

24.1 From time to time the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government will contact local authorities to request certain data in relation to applications/approvals etc. Returns should be made promptly on receipt of such a request.

## **25. Application Forms**

25.1 Each local authority will be required to use the standardised single application form as issued by the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government. It is a matter for each local authority to insert their contact details such as address, contact person, telephone or email address into the text box on page 2 of the single application form. This is the only part of the form that can be edited by a local authority.

## **26. Enquiries**

26.1 Please email any enquiries in relation to this administrative guidance to [privatehousegrants@housing.gov.ie](mailto:privatehousegrants@housing.gov.ie)

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