

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



Mobility Aids Grant Scheme

Administrative Guidance for Local Authorities Implementation January 2020

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Mobility Aids Grant Scheme

1. General

1.1 The Mobility Aids Grant Scheme is available **to fast track grant aid to cover a basic suite of works to address mobility problems, primarily, but not exclusively, associated with ageing, in order that recipients are not subject to delays in accessing works.**

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, and if so, the works which are necessary to make the accommodation more suitable for the applicant. 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 Mobility Aids Grant Scheme in a sympathetic manner bearing in mind the purpose of the grant as at 1.1 above.

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. Types of Housing

2.1 The Mobility Aids Grant Scheme may be paid, where appropriate, in respect of works carried out to:

- Owner occupied housing;
- Private rented accommodation;
- Accommodation provided by Approved Housing Bodies; and
- Accommodation occupied by persons living in communal residences.

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

2.3 In the case of an application for grant aid to adapt private rented accommodation to meet the mobility needs of a person who is a tenant of the property, the written approval of the landlord must be sought. In determining eligibility in such cases, the applicant must have earned a security of tenure and must be able to provide a bona fide tenancy agreement which is registered with the Residential Tenancies Board (RTB) and is dated and signed by the tenant and landlord.

2.4 In the case of an application for grant aid to adapt accommodation provided by an Approved Housing Body or a communal residence, to meet the needs of a person with a disability who is a tenant of the property, written approval must be sought from the Approved Housing Body or owner of the communal residence.

3. Completion of Works

3.1 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.

3.2 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.

4. Timeline for Decision on Applications

4.1 Local authorities should endeavour to decide on each application under the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme as quickly as possible but within **6 weeks** following receipt of a fully completed and valid application.

4.2 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.

4.3 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.

5. Prioritisation on the Basis of Medical Need

5.1 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, having regard to the reports and recommendations of the applicant's General Practitioner and Occupational Therapist.

5.2 In particular, special consideration shall be given to applicants who require adaptation works as a matter of urgency, e.g. individuals in hospital who require the adaptation works to be completed in order to facilitate their return

home. 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. Qualifying Works

6.1 The types of works allowable under the scheme can be varied in order to address the mobility problems of a member of the household and can include:

- grab rails;
- access ramps;
- level access showers;
- stair lifts; and
- any other minor works as may be necessary to facilitate the mobility needs of the applicant.

6.2 In cases where grant aid is required for a larger suite of works and where the cost of the works is expected to be in excess of the grant available under

the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme, applicants should apply for grant aid under the Housing Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability.

6.3 Applications received by a local authority that do not satisfy the provisions of the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme means test should instead be considered under the Housing Adaptation Grant Scheme for People with a Disability, without the need for completion of a new application.

7. Approval and Payment Process

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

- Local authority estimated cost for the approved works
- 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

7.2 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.

7.3 Grant payments under this scheme shall not cover the VAT charged in respect of the works carried out. The VAT cost of disability/mobility related works can be reclaimed by the applicant from the Revenue Commissioners.

8. Alarms – Smoke/Carbon Monoxide

8.1 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.

8.2 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.

9. Grant Level and Recoupment

9.1 The effective maximum grant under the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme shall be €6,000, which may cover 100% of the cost of work as approved by the local authority.

9.2 The Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government will recoup to local authorities 80% of the grant paid, or €4,800, 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.

9.3 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.

10. Means Testing

10.1 All applications for grant aid under the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme shall be assessed on the basis of household means. The maximum grant of €6,000 to cover 100% of the cost of works as approved by the local authority, will be available to those with gross annual household incomes of up to €30,000.

11. Calculation of Household Income

11.1 For the purposes of the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme, household means shall be calculated as:

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

11.2 In the case of private rented accommodation where a qualifying tenancy agreement is in effect, or property provided by an approved housing body, household income shall be calculated as:

the annual gross income of all tenants aged 18 or over (or aged 23 or over if in full time education) in the previous tax year.

11.3 In the case of communal residences, only the applicant's income should be assessed for the purposes of the means test.

12. Evidence of Ownership of Property

12.1 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.

12.2 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.

13. Evidence of Household Income

13.1 Evidence of household income must be submitted with all applications under the Mobility Aids Grant 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.

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

13.3 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 Mobility Aids Grant falls into a new tax year, applicants will not be required to re-submit updated evidence of income.

14. Income Disregards and Deductions

14.1 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;

15. Indexation

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

15.2 The Income threshold for the purposes of means testing shall be amended annually, 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.

15.3 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.

15.4 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.

16. Occupational Therapists

16.1 It is recommended that an Occupational Therapist assessment is not required for a Mobility Aids Grant, with the exception of provision of a stair lift. However, local authorities may consider whether applications for minor works under the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme will require an Occupational Therapist assessment, bearing in mind the purpose of the scheme, i.e. to fast track grant aid to address mobility problems. Local authorities may consider adjudicating on applications for grant aid for minor works with reference to reports from the applicant's General Practitioner and the local authority's Inspector and the long-term needs of the applicant.

16.2 In cases where local authorities deem that an occupational therapist assessment is necessary, the following arrangements shall apply:

- The applicant may engage a private sector occupational therapist to assess their needs. In these cases, the cost of engaging the occupational therapist shall be recouped to the applicant as part of the total grant paid (subject to the effective maximum grant level of €6,000). The recoupment shall be subject to a limit of €250 per

assessment, 80% of which will be recouped to the local authorities from the Department;

- Local authorities may avail of the following options in relation to occupational therapy assessment:
 - Local authorities may retain the services of a private sector Occupational Therapist on a fee per case basis or on a contract basis.
 - Local authorities may enter into an arrangement with their local HSE office in order to avail of HSE Occupational Therapists in their area;
 - Local authorities may also continue any other satisfactory existing arrangement through which they employ the services of an Occupational Therapist.

16.3 In cases where a local authority engages a private sector Occupational Therapist on a fee per case basis or on a contract basis, the Department of Housing, Planning and Local Government will recoup to local authorities 80% of the cost of each assessment, subject to a limit of **€200** per assessment. This cost should be included in the claim for recoupment submitted to the Department, and not submitted as a separate claim.

17. Repeat Applications

17.1 Generally, the need for payment of a Mobility Aids Grant where a grant has been paid previously under the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme should not occur if the authority and the applicant ensure that the initial grant-aided works are properly executed and appropriate to the current and future 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.

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

17.3 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 Adaptation Grant for People with a Disability, using the same application form. However, two grants of the same type may not be processed concurrently i.e. two Mobility Aid Grants.

18. Appeals Procedure

18.1 In processing applications under the Mobility Aids Grant Scheme, it is recognised that some applicants may be dissatisfied with the decision of the local authority.

18.2 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 with 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.

19. Standard Costs

19.1 Local authorities should assemble a schedule of standard costs for each element of works available for funding under the Mobility Aids Grant 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 should ensure greater transparency in the quote and grant process for applicants and for local authorities.

19.2 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.

19.3 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.

19.4 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.

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

20. List of Contractors

20.1 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 Mobility Aids Grant Scheme.

The list should be available publicly and to applicants to the scheme. Contractors can request to be added or removed from the list.

20.2 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.

20.3 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 a person engaging a contractor from the list.

21. Tax Clearance Procedures

21.1 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.

21.2 **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 and entering the applicants PPSN.

21.3 **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.

21.4 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. Verification can be done

electronically using the on-line verification facility on the Revenue Commissioners' website, www.ros.ie

21.5 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 Mobility Aids Grant Scheme. Copies of the Circular can be accessed at the Department of Finance website, www.finance.gov.ie.

22. Claw Back

22.1 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.

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

23. Monitoring of Expenditure

23.1 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.

24. Application Forms

24.1 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.

25. Enquiries

25.1 Please email any enquiries in relation to this administrative guidance to privatehousegrants@housing.gov.ie

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