

Home Repairs and Adaptations

This sheet outlines help that is available for people on low incomes to carry out essential repairs or adaptations to their home.

If you are finding it difficult to maintain the home you own or can no longer get around your home easily (because your mobility is reduced, perhaps after hospital treatment), there may be options available to help you.

If you are waiting to be discharged from hospital

If you have undergone or are undergoing hospital treatment that will reduce your ability to cope in your current home, you should tell the hospital's Discharge Co-ordinator as soon as possible. They will help you to contact your local council or will arrange other support for you.

At **Pembury** and **Maidstone** hospitals, there is a Health and Housing Co-ordinator, who specialises in helping people who need small adaptations done to their home before they can be discharged from hospital. If you are at one of these hospitals and live in the Tunbridge Wells, Tonbridge & Malling or Maidstone area, you can receive help from the Co-ordinators. Speak to a nurse or the hospital's Discharge Co-ordinator to request a referral.

Disabled Facilities Grants

If you own or rent your home but since your medical treatment it's no longer suitable for you, you may be eligible for a **disabled facilities grant** (DFG) from your local council. DFG is means tested - but is always worth applying for even if the full cost of works is not covered. If you are already on a means tested benefit then there is no cost for the works. Works for children are also free of charge.

If you apply and are eligible for help, a visit from an Occupational therapist (OT) will be arranged. They will assess your situation and recommend what you need. Then a Grants Officer will usually visit to check whether your current home could be made more suitable for you by carrying out adaptations. Finally, a Surveyor will draw up a specification of works. The Surveyor will appoint and supervise the contractor.

Small adaptations

For smaller adaptations, such as the provision of handrails and key-safes, find out if there is a 'Handyperson' scheme in your area. The works would be carried out by "trusted assessors" who have appropriate training and expertise, and usually cost less than other tradespeople.

If your heating is not adequate enough to keep you warm and well, or if your windows and doors are draughty and are losing heat, the Handyperson scheme may be able to help with this too.

Moving to somewhere more appropriate

If it is not the best option for your present home to be adapted or improved, you may want to look for somewhere different to live, perhaps somewhere purpose-built with mobility needs in mind.

If you are an older person, Sheltered Housing may be an option. Not all Sheltered Housing is for rent – you can also buy. There is a very useful directory of retirement, sheltered and care homes here:

<http://www.housingcare.org/housing/index.aspx>

Applying to the housing register

If you would like to apply for a more suitable property at a social or affordable rent, you can apply to join your local council's register at <https://www.kenthomechoice.org.uk>. When you apply to join the register, you will be asked questions about your health and mobility. Most councils give so preference to applicants who have medical or welfare needs. Ask to see the Allocations Policy for the council you are applying to. Note that you will require a local connection with the council you apply to. Spending time in hospital in an area will **not** give you a local connection, but previously living in the area, or having close family connections there will count. When you apply for the register, a pre-assessment process checks whether you will be able to join.

Most councils exclude households from the register if their income or savings are sufficient to allow renting or buying on the open market. However, councils may have a policy of accepting home owners who cannot afford to maintain their existing home and who need sheltered housing or retirement housing. Check the Allocations Policy.

If you are eligible to join the register, you will be able to express an interest in suitable homes that become available. However, this is not usually a quick option – you may be waiting some time for an offer of a property that suits your specific needs.

Homeless or threatened with homelessness

If you cannot safely return to your former home and can show you have nowhere else to go now (or when you are discharged from hospital) the council will treat you as homeless or threatened with homelessness. This means you are entitled to a 'Personalised Housing Plan' (PHP) which will outline the steps that both you and the council can take to prevent or relieve your homelessness. If you become homeless and are in priority need, the council will provide suitable temporary accommodation for you. If you have been homeless for 56 days and still have not secured anywhere suitable to live (despite following the steps in your PHP), the council may have a duty to offer you accommodation. This duty would be owed to you if you are found to be in priority need and have become homeless through no fault of your own. You would be in priority need if the council finds you would be considerably more vulnerable than an ordinary person.

Contacting your local Council

Ashford: <https://www.ashford.gov.uk>

Canterbury: <https://www.canterbury.gov.uk>

Dartford: <https://www.dartford.gov.uk>

Dover: <https://www.dover.gov.uk>

Gravesham: <http://www.gravesham.gov.uk>

Maidstone: <https://self.maidstone.gov.uk>

Medway: <https://www.medway.gov.uk>

Sevenoaks: <https://www.sevenoaks.gov.uk>

Folkestone & Hythe: <https://www.shepway.gov.uk>

Swale: <https://www.swale.gov.uk>

Thanet: <https://www.thanet.gov.uk>

Tunbridge Wells: <http://www.tunbridgewells.gov.uk>

Tonbridge & Malling: <https://www.tmbc.gov.uk>