

Factsheet 42w ● October 2019

Obtaining disability equipment and home adaptations in Wales



Age Cymru Advice

08000 223 444

www.agecymru.org.uk

Contents

1	Information about this factsheet	5
	1.1 Definitions and terminology	5
2	Introduction to disability equipment and home adaptations (including the differences between them)	6
	2.1 Disability equipment	6
	2.2 Adaptations	7
	2.3 Differences and overlaps between disability equipment and home adaptations	7
3	Local authority care needs assessments and provision of disability equipment and/or home adaptations	8
	3.1 Getting a care needs assessment	8
	3.2 Legal duty to carry out an assessment	10
	3.3 The provision of equipment and/or an adaptation if you are found to have eligible needs	10
4	Disability equipment provided by local authorities	11
	4.1 Examples of disability equipment	11
	4.2 Charging for disability equipment provided by the local authority social services department	11
5	Disability equipment from the NHS to meet health-related needs	15
	5.1 Equipment to assist with walking	15
	5.2 NHS wheelchairs	15
	5.3 Hearing or sight issues	18
	5.4 Other items available from the NHS	19
6	Home adaptations and the Welsh Government's 'ENABLE – Support for Independent Living' (encompasses the provision of adaptations by social services, Disabled Facilities Grants and the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme)	19
	6.1 Introduction: ENABLE – Support for Independent Living	19
	6.2 The purpose of housing adaptations (and ENABLE)	20
	6.3 How ENABLE – Support for Independent Living should work: 'small', 'medium' and 'large' adaptations	21
	6.4 Means testing for adaptations	25

	6.5 Who should you contact about getting a housing adaptation?	25
	6.6 Further information on the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme	26
	6.7 Further information on Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)	27
	6.8 Additional local authority discretionary powers in regard to adaptations	33
	6.9 Physical Adaptations Grants for social housing properties	34
7	Outdoor electric scooters or buggies	35
	7.1 The Motability scheme	35
8	Community alarms and other assistive technology	36
	8.1 Community alarms	36
	8.2 Other types of assistive technology – ‘Telecare’	37
	8.3 Telehealth	38
	8.4 Environmental Control Systems	39
9	Equipment for employment	39
10	Problems and complaints regarding disability equipment or adaptations provided by the local authority or NHS	40
	10.1 Complaints to local authorities	40
	10.2 Complaints to the NHS	40
11	Short-term loan of equipment from the British Red Cross	41
12	Purchasing equipment privately	42
	12.1 Private companies, shops and the voluntary sector	42
	12.2 Buying equipment second-hand	42
	12.3 Things to consider when choosing what to buy	43
	12.4 VAT in regard to disability equipment and mobility aids	44
	12.5 Problems with equipment you have purchased privately	45
	12.6 Concerns about doorstep selling (in relation to disability products)	46
13	Sources of funding for purchasing equipment – state benefits, Government loan/grant schemes, or benevolent funds	46
	13.1 State benefits for people with disabilities	47
	13.2 Budgeting Loans from the Social Fund scheme (operated by the Department for Work & Pensions – DWP)	47

	13.3 The Welsh Government's Discretionary Assistance Fund (DAF)	48
	13.4 Charities and other sources of funding, such as benevolent funds	49
14	Useful organisations	50
15	Further information about Age Cymru	57

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 other Age Cymru and Age UK information resources, including:

- Age UK's Factsheet 67 *Home improvements and repairs*;
- Age Cymru's Factsheet 46w *Paying for care and support at home in Wales*; and
- Age Cymru's Factsheet 41w *Social care assessments for older people with care needs in Wales*.

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 – see section 15 for their contact details.

1.1 Definitions and terminology

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 – see sections 3 to 6 below.

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

Contact details for your local authority can be found via the Welsh Government's website at:

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

Alternatively, they should be available in your local telephone directory; local council offices; or a local Age Cymru or Citizens Advice Bureau should be able to provide them.

2 Introduction to disability equipment and home adaptations (including the differences between them)

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

In the main, home adaptations have previously been split into two broad groups – *minor adaptations* and *larger scale adaptations*.

However, the Welsh Government’s recent initiative, *ENABLE – Support for Independent Living*, has split adaptations into three groups, ‘small, medium and large’ – 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 provided¹.

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.

¹ Clements, L and Thompson, P (2011). Community Care and the Law (5th edition), Legal Action Group.

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

Social services will usually arrange for you to have an assessment in your home by a social worker 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.

If you have a carer, they can also ask for their own needs to be assessed².

Note: 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.

² Carers are eligible for their own needs assessment because they may require assistance or support from social services to carry out their caring role – see Age Cymru's Factsheet 41w *Social care assessments for older people with care needs in Wales* for further information.

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: 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 Disabled Living Foundation provides extensive information on disability equipment – see section 14 for their contact details.

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

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.

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

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 4 – April 2019)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:

- 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.

⁶ This is the specific Code of Practice that covers the means testing and charging rules (it may be updated again in April 2020). 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. A full list is available on the Social Care Wales ‘Information and Learning Hub’ site at: <https://socialcare.wales/hub/codes-of-practice>

⁷ Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 – Part 4 and 5 Code of Practice (Charging and Financial Assessment) (version 4 – April 2019), Welsh Government

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.

Since April 2019 the maximum charge has been £90 per week (it may be revised again in April 2020).

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"⁸. 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"⁹.

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. 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 so¹⁰.

⁸ Ibid

⁹ Ibid

¹⁰ Communications between Age Cymru and the Welsh Government clarified that this was the expected approach.

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”; “a good home [and feels] part of the community”¹¹.

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.

Disability equipment and the Welsh Government's initiative, 'ENABLE – Support for Independent Living': possible effects on charging

The Welsh Government's, '*ENABLE – Support for Independent Living*', is aimed at simplifying the delivery of housing adaptations in Wales – further information on this can be found below in section 6.

Due to the overlap between small scale adaptations and disability equipment (as discussed in section 2 above), it is possible you may be provided with equipment via your social services department as part of ENABLE and there may be no means testing required. Therefore, you may also wish to read section 6 below.

¹¹ Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014: The Essentials, Welsh Government, 2015

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.

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 Disabled Living Foundation (DLF) produces an information resource, '*Choosing walking equipment*', available at:

www.dlf.org.uk/factsheets/walking

See section 14 below for the DLF's 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. NHS wheelchair services for the whole of Wales are managed from two main centres:

- **Cardiff Artificial Limb & Appliance Centre**
- **Wrexham Artificial Limb & Appliance Centre**

See section 14 below for contact details (listed under *NHS Wales Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres*).

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” condition¹².

Note: The NHS provides wheelchairs on **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.

¹² Specialised Services Service Specification: All Wales Posture and Mobility Services, Welsh Health Specialised Services Committee, NHS Wales, September 2012 (a copy is available at: www.whssc.wales.nhs.uk/document/242426)

What is available?

Wheelchairs are usually standard models and there is not always a great choice. 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 – for example, to be used upstairs if a primary chair cannot be transferred there, or a manual chair for someone with a powered wheelchair if needed for temporary or occasional use¹³.

¹³ Ibid

Note: More expensive wheelchairs (including charitable funding)

If you wish to upgrade to a more expensive chair, you could try to negotiate this with the NHS. For example, in exceptional circumstances – i.e. if essential needs cannot be met through any of the standard range of NHS equipment – it might be possible to obtain a more expensive wheelchair from the NHS¹⁴.

Another option may be if you can get assistance with funding for a more expensive chair from a charitable organisation. NHS Wales guidance states that they will “consider joint funding with statutory and third sector [charitable] organisations, for clinically required alternative wheelchairs”¹⁵.

You could discuss the option of charitable assistance with staff when you have your NHS wheelchair assessment. They may have information on bodies that provide funding and might also assist in making an application. Alternatively, your local Age Cymru or a local Citizens Advice Bureau may be able to offer assistance with the application – see section 14 for contact details.

See section 13.4 below for more detailed information on how you can find out about charitable funding.

It should be noted that there is no wheelchair voucher scheme in Wales (as is the case in some areas of England¹⁶).

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

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.

¹⁴ Ibid

¹⁵ Ibid

¹⁶ In England, if someone is assessed as needing a wheelchair by the NHS, but wishes to purchase a more expensive model than the NHS is able to provide, they may be able to get a voucher worth the value of a standard chair which can be put toward the cost of their preferred model.

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.

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.

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.

The charities, Action on Hearing Loss 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 Home adaptations and the Welsh Government's 'ENABLE – Support for Independent Living' (encompasses the provision of adaptations by social services, Disabled Facilities Grants and the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme)

6.1 Introduction: ENABLE – Support for Independent Living

The Welsh Government's ENABLE – Support for Independent Living initiative brought together a number of programmes that were already in operation for delivering housing adaptations.

These have largely continued as before, but ENABLE was designed to simplify them under one 'brand'. The programmes and other provision that are united under ENABLE are:

- **General provision of small adaptations by local authority social services departments.**
- **Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).**
- **Additional discretionary powers that local authorities can make use of in the provision of adaptations.**
- **The Rapid Response Adaptations Programme.**
- **Physical Adaptations Grants for social housing properties.**

Further information on each of these elements can be found in the rest of section 6 below.

6.2 The purpose of housing adaptations (and ENABLE)

The Welsh Government's ENABLE initiative describes housing adaptations as "vital in enabling a person to remain living independently and safely in their own home and can transform a person's quality of life".

It advises that "some people may need something as simple and easy to provide as a handrail. Others could need something much larger and more complex like an extension to their home or a through-floor lift. Sometimes the simplest of adaptations, like handrails, can help enable someone to be discharged from hospital to live back home. Similarly, handrails and ramps can also help reduce the risk of trips and falls which may result in hospital admission in the first place"¹⁷.

Adaptations can also help carers by reducing the physical demands that they may have to deal with and ensuring their safety whilst undertaking their caring role.

¹⁷ ENABLE: Support for Independent Living – A Better Way of Delivering Home Adaptations, Welsh Government, 2017

6.3 How ENABLE – Support for Independent Living should work: ‘small’, ‘medium’ and ‘large’ adaptations

The Welsh Government advise that:

“Whether you own or rent your home, the basic arrangements will be the same. There are just three levels of adaptations: Small, Medium and Large”.

“Whilst an individual’s needs may include more than one type, the service aims to provide the quickest, most effective solution to deliver the adaptations”¹⁸.

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

There is a ‘*timescale for delivery*’ column in the following tables. In this column, reference is made to ‘**service providers**’. Welsh Government guidance advises 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)¹⁹.

¹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹ Housing Adaptations Service Standards, Welsh Government, April 2019

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 and stair rails...small ramps [or] key safes”²⁰.</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 required²¹.</p> <p>For a number of years small adaptations have generally been classified as those costing below £1,000, and guidance for the ENABLE programme has maintained this definition: “As a guide, these [small adaptations] are expected to cost up to £1,000”²².</p>	<p>Via the local authority social services department, or possibly through the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme.</p> <p>Generally, there “is no requirement for an Occupational Therapist”²³.</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”²⁴.</p>

²⁰ ENABLE: Support for Independent Living – A Better Way of Delivering Home Adaptations, Welsh Government, 2017

²¹ Housing Adaptations Service Standards, Welsh Government, April 2019

²² ENABLE – Support for Independent Living: An Enhanced System for Delivering Home Adaptations – Guidance for all adaptations providers, Welsh Government, February 2017

²³ ENABLE: Support for Independent Living – A Better Way of Delivering Home Adaptations, Welsh Government, 2017

²⁴ Housing Adaptations Service Standards, Welsh Government, April 2019

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 those requiring planning permission or structural change”.</p> <p>It includes items such as “walk in shower[s]...stair lifts [or] large ramps”²⁵. It might also include “a combination of adaptations installed as one job”²⁶.</p> <p>“As a guide, [medium adaptations will be those that] cost between £1,001 and £10,000”²⁷.</p>	<p>These adaptations “may require [the recommendation of an] Occupational Therapist” (OT) before they can be provided²⁸.</p> <p>The local authority may provide this type of adaptation, potentially via the Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) system.</p> <p>Alternatively, 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)²⁹.</p>

²⁵ ENABLE: Support for Independent Living – A Better Way of Delivering Home Adaptations, Welsh Government, 2017

²⁶ Housing Adaptations Service Standards, Welsh Government, April 2019

²⁷ ENABLE: Support for Independent Living – A Better Way of Delivering Home Adaptations, Welsh Government, 2017

²⁸ Ibid

²⁹ Housing Adaptations Service Standards, Welsh Government, April 2019

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”³⁰.</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>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)³¹.</p>

³⁰ ENABLE: Support for Independent Living – A Better Way of Delivering Home Adaptations, Welsh Government, 2017

³¹ 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

If you rent your home from the local authority (a council property) or a housing association

Individuals who rent their home in this sector “**will be exempt from means-testing for the costs of adaptations**”³².

This will be the case across all adaptation types – small, medium or large.

If you rent your home privately or are a homeowner

“Means testing will **not** apply to adaptations which fall into the “small” category and [depending on circumstances may also] **not** apply to the “medium” category” (emphasis added).

Means testing continues to be “a statutory requirement for Disabled Facilities Grants” where you own your own home or rent privately. The Welsh Government advises that “this reflects the need for those who can afford to contribute towards the cost of work to do so”³³.

6.5 Who should you contact about getting a housing adaptation?

If you rent your home from the local authority (a council property) or a housing association

If you live in this type of property, “you should contact your landlord in the first instance”.

If you rent your home privately or are a homeowner

“If you own your home, or rent privately, you should contact your local authority”³⁴.

³² ENABLE – Support for Independent Living: An Enhanced System for Delivering Home Adaptations – Guidance for all adaptations providers, Welsh Government, February 2017

³³ Ibid

³⁴ ENABLE: Support for Independent Living – A Better Way of Delivering Home Adaptations, Welsh Government, 2017

Also, in these instances, you may be able to get some additional help and advice to navigate the application process from Care & Repair Cymru – see section 14 for their contact details.

Note: As touched upon in section 2 above, if you rent your home, you will need to consult with your landlord before any work is undertaken.

6.6 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 landlord³⁵.

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:

³⁵ 'Adapt your home before returning from hospital', Welsh Government website: www.gov.wales/adapt-your-home-returning-hospital (last accessed 1 October 2019)

- 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”³⁶.
- Improving interior and/or exterior lighting.
- Tacking or taping down frayed carpets.
- Fitting / repairing door security chains, locks or keysafes.

The Welsh Government advises that the work should be “completed within 15 working days”³⁷.

6.7 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.

³⁶ Ibid

³⁷ Ibid

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 are ‘necessary and appropriate’, which will normally mean applicants will receive a visit from a social services occupational therapist (OT). An OT is someone trained to assess the special needs of people with disabilities and will make recommendations on what work needs to be done to address your needs.

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.

Welsh Government guidance “covers what reasonable and practicable means in practice”. For example, whether:

- “the architectural and structural characteristics of the dwelling may render certain types of adaptation inappropriate”; or
- “the practicalities of carrying out adaptations to smaller properties with narrow doorways, halls and passages which might make wheelchair use in and around the dwelling difficult”³⁸.

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.

³⁸ Home adaptations in Wales Research Briefing, National Assembly for Wales Senedd Research, March 2019

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>³⁹.</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.

³⁹ 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*.

<p><i>Type of housing sector you live in</i></p>	<p>You can apply for a DFG if you are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● a homeowner; ● a private tenant or licensee⁴⁰; ● an occupier of a houseboat or park home (though not in all cases); ● a landlord with a disabled tenant (i.e. a landlord can apply to have their property adapted on behalf of a disabled tenant); ● a tenant in a local authority (council) property or a tenant of a registered provider of social housing (in these instances you are eligible to apply for a DFG and are assessed based on your needs on the same basis as private tenants or owner-occupiers. However, it should be noted that the local authority or housing association 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).
---	---

⁴⁰ "If you rent your home and apply to your local authority for [a disabled facilities grant or other home improvements], you will need to get your landlord's permission before the local authority will agree to help you. If you're disabled and the changes are to do with your disability, your landlord should not refuse permission unless he has a good reason" – 'Help with home improvements', Citizens Advice website (Wales): www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/housing/moving-and-improving-your-home/help-with-home-improvements (last accessed 8 October 2019)

DFGs and means testing

In its assessment the local authority must only take into account the disabled person's income and savings and that of their partner.

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, *only* your income and not hers should be included in the means-test calculation.

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.

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 £6,000⁴¹.

The treatment of income and savings for a DFG application is generally similar to that for means tested welfare benefits (such as Pension Credit).

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.

If a disabled person receives the **Guarantee Credit part of Pension Credit; Housing Benefit; or an award from their local authority's Council Tax Reduction Scheme** (or certain other means tested benefits⁴²), they will not normally have to make a contribution, *unless* there are others being assessed who are not receiving such benefits.

⁴¹ Disability Rights Handbook (Edition 44 – April 2019 – April 2020): A guide to benefits and services for all disabled people, their families, carers and advisers, Disability Rights UK

⁴² Income Support; Income-related Employment and Support Allowance; Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance; or Working Tax Credit or Child Tax Credit with gross taxable income of less than £15,050.

Important: An applicant for a DFG will have to provide the local authority with a certificate stating that the disabled occupant will live in the property for **at least five years** after the works are completed or for a shorter period if there are health or other special reasons.

What types of work are covered by a DFG?

DFGs are a mandatory grant in specific circumstances. It **must** be given if you are disabled and do not have access to your home and to the basic amenities within it, *provided that you qualify on income grounds*.

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 suitable bathroom and kitchen facilities that a person with disabilities can use independently.
- 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 £36,000⁴³.

A DFG can also be provided for adaptations to common parts of a building containing one or more flats.

⁴³ In England and Northern Ireland the maximum amount is lower. The DFG scheme does not operate in Scotland.

Discretionary supplements to a DFG

If they wish, local authorities are able to utilise discretionary powers and provide additional funding to supplement mandatory DFGs (also see section 6.8 below).

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.

6.8 Additional local authority discretionary powers in regard to adaptations

Local authorities have powers to give discretionary assistance for adaptations or to help you move to alternative accommodation. For example, discretionary assistance may be given by:

- The provision of small adaptations, or to deliver remedies for urgent adaptations more quickly (than might otherwise be possible via a DFG – Disabled Facilities Grant).
- “Low cost loans to fund adaptations”⁴⁴.
- As mentioned in section 6.7 above, a top up to a DFG because the work is particularly expensive, the applicant cannot afford the contribution, or some work required is not eligible under the DFG rules.
- Assisting the disabled person to move to a more suitable property where it is more cost effective than adapting their current home to make it suitable for his/her needs, even though the new property may need some adaptations.

6.9 Physical Adaptations Grants for social housing properties

Registered social landlords in Wales are able to access Physical Adaptations Grants, provided by the Welsh Government. These grants allow registered social landlords to adapt homes for their tenants, where the tenant has an identified need. As with Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs), discussed above in section 6.7, an occupational therapist will assess what works are suitable and necessary to meet the tenant’s needs.

Note: A registered social landlord tenant cannot apply for this grant directly – their landlord must do so on their behalf.

Typical works that may be provided through a Physical Adaptations Grant are very similar to those already detailed above (for example, bathroom adaptations, stair-lifts, hoists, kitchen adaptations, ramps or hand rails / grab rails).

⁴⁴ A Review of Independent Living Adaptations, Shelter Cymru report (commissioned by the Welsh Government), January 2015

7 Outdoor electric scooters or buggies

As mentioned in section 5.2 above, the NHS (or social services) do not directly provide electric mobility scooters or buggies. However, a good source of information on these products is the Disabled Living Foundation – see section 14 below for their contact details.

Alternatively, you can access a factsheet on this topic on their website at:
www.dlf.org.uk/factsheets/scooter

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

If you need an outdoor electric wheelchair, scooter, or car, you can use the Motability scheme to pay for it, provided you receive 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).
- War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement.

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

See section 14 for contact details for Motability.

8 Community alarms and other assistive technology

8.1 Community 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 community 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.

Community 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.

Further information

Your local Age Cymru may have details about other community alarm schemes in your area. The Disabled Living Foundation also produces information on this topic – see section 14 for 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 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 contained in the Alertacall Safety Confirmation system where, if a person fails to press a button by a certain time each day to confirm that they are OK, then an alert is raised. By getting help quickly, problems do not escalate.

8.3 Telehealth

Telehealth “is the delivery of health care from a distance”⁴⁵. 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.

⁴⁵ Telemedicine/Telehealth, National Leadership and Innovation Agency for Healthcare (NHS Wales) website: www.wales.nhs.uk/technologymis/english/faq1.html (last accessed 7 October 2019)

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). If appropriate, they can then refer you to the **NHS Wales Electronic Assistive Technology Service**.

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.

Note: The Assistive Technology Service does not fund items such as additional phone lines or power sockets; window, curtain and door operators; door locks; electrical or carpentry work. The local social services occupational therapy service should be contacted to enquire about the funding of these items.

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.
- Travel when you can't use public transport.
- A communicator at a job interview.

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:

- Delay in receiving disability equipment or adaptations⁴⁶.
- A refusal or delay in providing you with a care needs assessment.
- If you are unhappy with the result of an assessment carried out – for example, if you feel that the authority has underestimated your needs.

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.

⁴⁶ There is no legal time-limit within which disability equipment must be provided, but you should not have to wait longer than is reasonable and excessive delays can be challenged; high risk needs must be dealt with promptly. The local authority occupational therapy department should have procedures for appropriate prioritisation and risk assessment and for arranging prompt equipment delivery in each particular case, following a care needs assessment.

If you would like support to make your complaint, you can contact the local Community Health Council (CHC) which covers your area (see section 14 for contact information). 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.

For further information see Age Cymru's Factsheet 66w *How to resolve problems and make a complaint about the NHS in Wales* for further information.

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.

Contact details to see what the Red Cross can offer in your area are in section 14 below.

Equipment is provided free of charge, though a refundable deposit may be required.

Note: There may also be other organisations who can loan equipment – you could contact the Disabled Living Foundation 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.
- Various voluntary or charitable sector organisations sell disability equipment. For example, Age Cymru sells products, such as bathing adaptations or stairlifts (further information can be found at: www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru/products).
- The Disabled Living Foundation's AskSARA website portal provides a free 'guided self-assessment' tool to assist you to identify disability equipment that could suit your requirements. You can access the site at:

<https://asksara.dlf.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 the Disabled Living Foundation for information on potential sources for obtaining second-hand equipment.

Scope might be a useful source of information too. 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 any more – 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 in regard to disability equipment and mobility aids

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.

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 order this leaflet.

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”⁴⁷.

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.

12.5 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.

The Disabled Living Foundation may also be able to provide further advice on making a complaint.

⁴⁷ ‘Tax on shopping and services’ GOV.UK website: www.gov.uk/tax-on-shopping/mobility-aids (page last accessed 7 October 2019).

12.6 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* look 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.

The charity **Which?** provides information and advice about how to deal with poor sales practices at the following web address (their contact details can also be found below in section 14):

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

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 following:

13.1 State benefits for people with disabilities

If you have a disability, you may be entitled to Attendance Allowance (AA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP). 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 Fund⁴⁸.

Budgeting Loans are for people who have been receiving one of the relevant benefits outlined above for *at least 26 weeks*. 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 should apply to your local Jobcentre Plus office for a Social Fund Budgeting Loan. It is often 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*.

⁴⁸ 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 part most likely to be relevant to help with funding disability equipment will be the Individual Assistance Payment.

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 first of all determine 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 *Northgate Public Services*, who have been appointed by the Welsh Government to run the DAF scheme across Wales. Applications will be made to Northgate Public Services. 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, rather than having to enter a care home or hospital (or another similar type of institutional care). They are designed to help with one-off, essential, purchases.

You may be able to receive one if you get Pension 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”⁴⁹.

Emergency Assistance Payments (EAPs)

EAPs are only available for essential costs after an emergency or disaster – for example, there has been a fire or flood in your home. Additionally, you would need to show in your application that you do not have access to any other resources that would help you through the crisis.

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.

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:

⁴⁹ The Discretionary Assistance Fund: Guidance for Decision Makers (Version 2), Welsh Government, February 2015

- **Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA)**

This charity supports those who have served in the armed forces.

- **Charities that specialise in a particular condition, illness or disability – for example, Action on Hearing Loss; the Alzheimer’s Society; Parkinson’s UK; the Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB); or the Stroke Association**

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

- **The Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)**

The DLF provides information about equipment for daily living and specialist advice on clothing, 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

Action on Hearing Loss

The largest charity in the UK tackling hearing loss.

Free Helpline: 0808 808 0123 (or Textphone: 0808 808 9000)

E-mail: informationline@hearingloss.org.uk

Website: www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Age Cymru Advice

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

Tel: 08000 223 444

E-mail: advice@agecymru.org.uk

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

Alzheimer's Society

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

Helpline: 0300 222 11 22

Website: www.alzheimers.org.uk

British Healthcare Trades Association

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

E-mail: contactus@redcross.org.uk

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

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 UK

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

Advice Line: 0808 808 7777

Website: www.carerswales.org

Citizens Advice Bureaus (CABs)

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

Tel: 03444 77 20 20

Details of your nearest CAB can be found at:

www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales

Citizens Advice consumer helpline

Tel (English): 03454 04 05 06

Tel (Welsh): 03454 04 05 05

Website: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales/consumer/get-more-help/if-you-need-more-help-about-a-consumer-issue

Community Health Councils (CHCs)

CHCs are a statutory and independent voice in health services in Wales. They work to enhance and improve the quality of local health services. For information on the CHC covering your area, see the NHS Direct Wales website at:

www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/localservices/communityhealthcouncils

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 consisting of Individual Assistance Payments (IAPs) and Emergency Assistance Payments (EAPs)

Tel: 0800 859 5924

E-mail: DAF.Feedback@northgateps.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

Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)

The DLF provides detailed advice and information on disability equipment.

Tel: 0300 999 0004

E-mail: info@dlf.org.uk

Website: www.dlf.org.uk

HM Revenue and Customs (HMRC)

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

www.gov.uk/government/publications/vat-notice-7017-vat-reliefs-for-disabled-people

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

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 Wales Artificial Limb & Appliance Centres (ALACs)

- Cardiff ALAC (*for South Wales*)

Tel: 01443 661799

- Wrexham ALAC (*for North Wales*)

Tel: 01978 727524

Depending on postcodes, some local authorities have certain areas that fall within the Cardiff ALAC, whereas others are within the Wrexham ALAC catchment area. At the link below, you can download a document which confirms which service is the correct one:

www.alas.wales.nhs.uk/wheelchairs

NHS Direct Wales

NHS Direct Wales can provide contact details for local services and telephone or web advice on health issues and common illnesses.

Tel: 0845 46 47

Website: www.nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk

Older People's Commissioner for Wales

Independent champion for older people across Wales.

Tel: 03442 640670

E-mail: ask@olderpeoplewales.com

Website: www.olderpeoplewales.com

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 the NHS or a local authority.

Tel: 0300 790 0203

E-mail: ask@ombudsman.wales

Website: www.ombudsman.wales

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.

Tel: 0330 555 0310

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

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 731 4880

Website: www.ssafa.org.uk

Stroke Association

A charity dedicated to conquering stroke.

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.

Helpline: 0808 802 2000

Website: www.turn2us.org.uk

Welsh Government

The devolved government for Wales.

Tel: 0300 060 4400

E-mail: customerhelp@gov.wales

Website: www.gov.wales

Which?

National membership charity 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

Age Cymru is the leading charity for all older people in Wales. We campaign, we research and we fundraise to make sure we build a better life for all older people. We ensure older people's voices are heard, we challenge and change attitudes, we fight discrimination wherever we find it and we tackle elder abuse in all its forms. Together with our local Age Cymru partners we provide vital services in communities across Wales.

The Age UK family

Along with Age UK, Age Scotland and Age NI, Age Cymru is a member of the Age UK family.

Age UK (Age UK Advice: 0800 169 65 65; website: www.ageuk.org.uk)

Age NI (Age NI Advice: 0808 808 7575; website: www.ageni.org)

Age Scotland (Tel: 0845 833 0200; website: www.agescotland.org.uk)

Our information materials

Age Cymru and Age UK publish a large number of free Information Guides and Factsheets on a range of subjects, including money and benefits, health, social care and housing. Some resources, such as this factsheet, are produced 'in-house' by Age Cymru, whilst others are branded Age UK and – depending on the subject matter – contain either information which is applicable in England and Wales, or for the whole of the UK.

Contact details

Age Cymru Advice

Tel: 08000 223 444

E-mail: advice@agecymru.org.uk

Website: www.agecymru.org.uk



www.facebook.com/agecymru



www.twitter.com/agecymru



www.youtube.com/agecymru

Contact us if you would like:

- To order copies of any factsheets or information guides.
- Further advice if you cannot find the information you need in this factsheet.
- Details of your nearest local Age Cymru organisation.

Disclaimer and copyright information

This factsheet is not a comprehensive statement of the law in this subject. Age Cymru cannot give individual legal or financial advice and some rules may have changed since the publication of this factsheet. Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, companies, products, services or publications in this factsheet does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by Age Cymru. Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy, Age Cymru cannot be held responsible for errors or omissions.

© Age Cymru 2019. All rights reserved. This factsheet may be reproduced in whole or in part in unaltered form by local Age Cymru organisations with due acknowledgement to Age Cymru. No other reproduction in any form is permitted without written permission from Age Cymru.

Age Cymru is a registered charity 1128436 and a company limited by guarantee 6837284.

Age Cymru
Ground Floor, Mariners House
Unit A, Trident Court
East Moors Road
Cardiff
CF24 5TD

Can you help Age Cymru?

Please complete this donation form with a gift of whatever you can afford and return to: Age Cymru, FREEPOST RLTL-KJTR-BYTT, Ground Floor, Mariners House, Trident Court, East Moors Road, Cardiff, CF24 5TD. Alternatively, you can phone 029 2043 1555 Monday to Friday 9am – 5pm or visit www.agecymru.org.uk/donate. Thank you.

Personal details

Title:	Initials:	Surname:
--------	-----------	----------

Address:
Postcode:

Tel:	Email:
------	--------

By providing your email address and/or mobile number you are agreeing to us contacting you in these ways. You may contact us at any time to unsubscribe from our communications.

Your gift

I would like to make a gift of: £

I enclose a cheque/postal order made payable to Age Cymru

Card payment

I wish to pay by (please tick) MasterCard Visa CAF CharityCard
 Maestro American Express

(Maestro only)

<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	Signature X
----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------	--------------------

Expiry date / Issue no. (Maestro only)

Gift aid declaration

(please tick) Yes, I want Age Cymru to treat all donations I have made for the four years prior to this year, and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise, as Gift Aid donations. I confirm I pay an amount of income tax/capital gains tax to cover the amount that all charities and Community Amateur Sports Clubs will reclaim on my donations in the tax year. Date: ___/___/___
I understand that other taxes such as VAT and Council Tax do not qualify.



Age Cymru is a registered charity 1128436. Company limited by guarantee and registered in England and Wales 6837284. Registered office address: Ground Floor, Mariners House, Trident Court, East Moors Road, Cardiff, CF24 5TD. We work in partnership with local Age Cymru partners to provide direct help to over a million people every year.
© Age Cymru 2019

We'd like to keep you informed about our vital work. Please tick or circle the areas you're interested in: Arts [] Campaigns [] Events [] Fundraising [] Information and Advice [] Policy/Public Affairs [] Physical Activity [] Volunteering []

Would you like to hear from us, please tick or circle - by post [] email [] telephone [] all []

You can unsubscribe at any time. Call 029 2043 1555 email unsubscribe@agecymru.org.uk or tick / circle this box []

Your details will be kept on a secure database and we will not share your details with any organisations unless required by law.

