

Darlington Association on Disability

Information Guide

Housing and Adaptations

Disabled people can find it very difficult to get the housing they need. This is partly because very little accommodation traditionally has been built to accessible standards and many homes are hard to adapt. The amount of funding available to adapt properties is also limited. These factors can combine to make suitable accommodation scarce. This section outlines housing services available locally, regionally and nationally.

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Local Authority Housing

If you would like to apply for council housing you can obtain a Housing Application form from the **Housing Centre** at the Town Hall or from your local Neighbourhood Housing office. If you require assistance to complete the form you can request a personal interview or a housing officer can visit you at home. The Housing Centre may seek information from your GP or Consultant in support of your application, and may also request an occupational therapy assessment. Your application will be assessed and awarded points. Rehousing will be based on this assessment and the availability of suitable accommodation. You must also normally have been based in Darlington for at least 12 months prior to your application being considered.

Housing Associations

A Housing Association is a non-profit making organisation run by a voluntary committee to provide low-cost rented houses or help low-income earners buy their own. Working closely with local authorities, they can provide housing for people with particular needs, including disabled people. Housing Associations normally receive nominations from the local council. You can apply direct to a Housing Association for housing, or you can ask the **Housing Centre** about their nominations system. For a list of Housing Associations with property in Darlington, contact the **Housing Centre**.

Private Rented Sector

Privately rented properties are available through some estate agents and are often advertised in local newspapers. You may find it very difficult to have any adaptations carried out because this would require the agreement of the landlord. Private rented housing does not always give you security of tenure and this may also prevent you from getting grants towards adaptations.

Darlington Bond Scheme was set up to bridge the gap for people wishing to move into private rented accommodation but who cannot raise the usual first month's rent or bond. Anyone can apply to become a client if they have a low income and cannot afford the full bond amount up front. The scheme acts as a guarantor for the first twelve months of the tenancy, during which time the tenant pays the bond to their landlord in instalments. At the end of this period, the full bond amount will have been paid and the responsibility of the bond scheme ends.

Owning your own home

The provision of mortgages is a complex area that requires specialist assistance. A small number of lenders will consider giving loans to disabled people in full time employment or those receiving benefits. An Independent Financial Advisor should be able to provide you with further information. Shared ownership may be an option. Through shared ownership you buy a share of the property and pay a rent on the remaining share you do not own. Gradually you may buy further shares and eventually own

your home outright. **The Housing Corporation** can provide information on shared ownership.

Adaptations, improvements and repairs

If you do not want to move from your present home because of ill health or an impairment, Social Services, Health and various independent organisations will work in partnership to provide the support you need to continue to live independently in your own home.

The **Social Services Occupational Therapy Team** can carry out an Occupational Therapy assessment for anyone with an impairment or long-term illness to establish if an individual is in need of equipment to enable them to remain at home, advice on adapting their home, training or rehabilitation or information on moving to more suitable accommodation. Social Services may be able to provide non-structural adaptations, for example handrails.

Recommendations for larger adaptations or alterations to your home as the result of an Occupational Therapy assessment may be made to the **Housing Centre**. This is a department of Darlington Borough Council that is responsible for any structural modifications, for example ramps, widening doorway, to property owned by the council. The Department works within a fixed budget and may not be able to act on recommendations immediately.

If you do not live in a council property, Disabled Facilities Grants are sometimes available to adapt your home. Grants are only given following a recommendation from Social Services. The grants have an upper limit and are means tested. Contact the **Housing Centre** for information about grants for adaptations, renovations or assistance with home repairs.

Assistance is also available for disabled people and older people living in their own homes or private rented accommodation, from the **Care and Repair Darlington Agency**. This is a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) run by Three Rivers Housing Association. Working in partnership with Darlington Borough Council, Darlington Primary Care Trust and Supporting People, the agency assists homeowners who are elderly, disabled or living on a low income to make repairs, adaptations or improvements to their property. The service includes assistance to access local authority grants and other sources of funding, support with

technical aspects such as writing schedules of work, seeking quotations and supervising contractors while works are being done. The agency also employs a handyperson to undertake small scale jobs for qualifying clients.

The **House Adaptation Advisory Service (HAAS)** is a national register of architects, surveyors, health care professionals and others who have a detailed knowledge of the housing needs of disabled people. If you are a disabled person intending to adapt your home and need to employ a professional designer to plan and oversee the work HAAS can put you in touch with a local professional with experience in designing homes for disabled people. People registering with the service are sent a list of all the members in their region, with details of their prior work, free of charge.

General Housing Advice

Darlington Citizens Advice Bureau can provide information and advice on a range of housing issues.

Darlington Association on Disability can assist disabled people with obtaining and/or completing council or Housing Association application forms.

The **North East Housing Aid Centre** offers support and advice to people who are homeless or badly housed. As well as a telephone helpline they provide a casework service.

The **Housing Mobility and Exchange Service (HOMES)** works with local authorities and registered social landlords throughout the UK, offering a range of services that assist people to move including disabled tenants.

Housing Options is an independent advice and information service for people with learning difficulties. The aim is to assist people with learning difficulties achieve greater control over aspects of their life and to provide more housing and support choices. Housing Options aims to support people to obtain the best option for their circumstances. This includes independent supported living and home ownership for people with learning difficulties. It does this by providing practical assistance, advice and information.

Other Sources of Information

Other sections of the Darlington Association on Disability Information Guide may contain further information relevant to Housing and Adaptations issues.

See the **Equipment** and **Living Independently** sections for advice on home adaptations.

See **Money Matters** for details of benefits available for disabled people.

There are a number of local and national organisations providing broad information and advice resources. Please refer to this guide's Introduction for contact details.

Contact **Darlington Association on Disability's** Information Service for assistance with searching for information about any subject in this guide or for support in dealing with your information requests.

Contacts

Care and Repair

2nd Floor

CVS Building

Church Row

Darlington

DL1 5QD

Telephone : 01325 460 114

Fax: 01325 464 515

E-mail : jackie.moyle@threerivershousing.co.uk

Darlington Bond Scheme

Grange Road Baptist Church

Grange Road

Darlington

DL1 5NH

Telephone : 01325 467617

Fax : 01325 467617

E-mail : bondscheme@darlingtoncharity.fsnet.co.uk

First Stop

The Old Museum

Tubwell Row

Darlington

DL1 1PD

Telephone /Fax 01325 254463

E-mail : contact@darlingtonfirststop.org.uk

Website : www.darlingtonfirststop.org.uk

Housing Adaptations Advisory Service(HAAS)

Centre for Accessible Environments

Nutmeg House

60 Gainsford Street

London

SE1 2NY

Telephone and minicom : 020 7357 8182

Fax : 020 7357 8183

Housing Centre

Darlington Borough Council

Telephone : Free phone 0800 3891227

Main Town Hall - 01325 380651

e-mail: housing@darlington.gov.uk

Website : www.darlington.gov.uk

Housing Corporation : North Region

4th Floor

1 Piccadilly Gardens

Manchester

M1 1RG

Telephone: 0845 230 7000

Fax: 0161 242 2001

E-mail : enquiries@housingcorp.gsx.gov.uk

Website : www.housingcorp.gov.uk

Housing Mobility and Exchange Service (HOMES)

242 Vauxhall Bridge Road

London

SW1V 1AU

Telephone : 0845 080 1089

E-mail : customer.services@homes.org.uk

Website : www.homes.org.uk

Housing Options

78a High Street

Witney

Oxfordshire

OX28 6HL

Telephone : 01993 776 318 or 0845 456 1497

E-mail : enquiries@housingoptions.org.uk

Website : www.housingoptions.org.uk

North East Housing Aid Centre (Shelter HAC)

1-2 Blackfriars Court

Dispensary Lane

Newcastle upon Tyne

NE1 4XB

Telephone : 0191 232 3778

Fax : 0191 230 2829

E-mail : tyneside@shelter.org.uk

Occupational Therapy

Initial contact via -

Access and Contact Team

Social Services Department

Central House

Gladstone Street

Darlington

DL3 6JX

Telephone : 01325 346200

Fax : 01325 346474

Minicom : 01325 360862

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