

Frequently Asked Questions

The delivery of housing support services in Leicestershire has changed recently. These are now delivered by the Lightbulb project. Lightbulb brings together county and district councils and other local partners to help people stay safe and keep well in their homes for as long as possible by bringing together a range of support. We've put together this list of FAQs to help you understand how Lightbulb works.

What kind of help can I get through the Lightbulb project?

The Lightbulb Team provides a range of housing support to meet different needs. This includes: aids or equipment, minor adaptations, assistive technology, warm homes or energy advice and home safety checks. The Lightbulb Team also deals with major adaptations - such as installation of a stairlift or replacing a bath with a level access shower – and disabled facilities grants.

Who do I contact to get help?

Whatever kind of housing help you need, the first step is to contact the Customer Service Centre at Leicestershire County Council. An advisor will go through some questions with you in order to understand your needs and make sure your case is passed on to the right team so you get the help you need as quickly as possible. If it's right for you, your details will be passed onto your local district Lightbulb Team.

 Customer Service Centre 0116 3050004

Who can get help?

Lightbulb can offer support to all residents of Leicestershire who have housing related needs regardless of tenure. You may be able to get help whether you own your own home, are a tenant with a registered social landlord or with a private landlord.

This could include providing aids and equipment to promote independence and home safety. The service can support anyone over the age of 18.

If you require housing related support for a child or young person please contact the Children's and Young Peoples service on 0116 3050005.

Anyone receiving services from the Lightbulb Team must have both a right to live in the UK and a right to receive public funds.

Do I have to pay for services?

Many services, including equipment or minor adaptations, are free of charge if they are deemed necessary following assessment by the Lightbulb Team. However, some services are means tested. If you require a major adaptation, you may be eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant to help pay for some or all of the costs. For more information, please read the FAQs relating to Disabled Facilities Grants.

What happens next?

A member of the local Lightbulb Team will contact you to arrange a visit by either an Occupational Therapist or Housing Support Co-ordinator. We aim to visit you within

10 working days of receiving your referral from the Customer Service Centre. The first visit can sometimes take 2-3 hours. This is in order to allow time for you and your allocated support worker to have a conversation with you to help advise and decide on what support is most suitable. The officer will also explain any charges if they apply and support you to complete any forms if you need help. If a service you need is means tested, the officer will also need to ask you details about your financial circumstances. You are welcome to arrange to have a family member or someone else there to support you at the visit.

The range of support that the support worker will talk to you about includes:

- Housing Repairs
- Future Housing Needs/options
- Warm Homes or Energy Advice
- Home security and safety
- Assistive Technology e.g. Lifeline
- Equipment e.g. perching stool or toilet frame
- Minor adaptations

After the visit, your Occupational Therapist or Housing Support Co-ordinator will order any necessary equipment or arrange further support for you. They will always ask your permission if they need to share your details with anyone else.

If you require a **minor adaptation** such as a grab rail or stair rail an order will be placed by the OT or HSC. You will then receive a call to arrange for the item to be fitted.

If you require a **major adaptation** such as a stair lift or wet room you can apply for a disabled facilities grant to assist with this. For further details see below.

Disabled Facilities Grants

What is a Disabled Facilities Grant?

Disabled Facilities Grants provide financial help for disabled people who need an adaptation in their home. This includes people who own their own home, tenants and people living in houseboats and caravans.

What kind of work can I have done with a Disabled Facilities Grant?

Disabled Facilities Grants cover adaptations that are necessary for a disabled person to move into and around their home to access essential facilities, as well as essential facilities themselves. For example:

- Widening doors or installing ramps
- Installing a stairlift or through-floor lift
- Installing a level access shower

Any adaptations must be recommended by the Occupational Therapist or Housing Support Co-ordinator. Please remember what you **want** and what you **need** may be different and a range of alternatives may be discussed with you before deciding that a major adaptation is needed. Our Technical Officers in the Lightbulb Team work alongside the Occupational Therapists and Housing Support Co-ordinators to make

sure any recommendations are practical and advise on the most appropriate schemes.

Who can apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant?

In order to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant, you must be the owner, named tenant or occupier (in the case of houseboats/caravans) of the property to be adapted. This is not necessarily the same as the disabled person who will benefit from the adaptation. We will always check the ownership of a property as a disabled facilities grant will only be approved with the owner's consent for the adaptation to take place.

Will I have to pay for the works to be done?

If the adaptation is for a child or dependent young person, there is no means test. Grants are automatically approved up to a maximum of £30,000 for necessary works.

Disabled Facilities Grants for adults are means tested. The means test applies to the disabled person who will benefit from the adaptation (and their partner if applicable). However, if the disabled person or their partner receives certain benefits they will automatically qualify for a full grant to complete the recommended adaptations (up to £30,000). If the disabled person (or their partner) is not receiving one of the qualifying benefits, they will need to have a means test to determine whether they are entitled to a grant for all or part of the recommended works. The same test is used nationally and is not set by the local council. We will always check if you/the disabled person have received a grant before, as any previous financial contribution made can be taken in account.

What if I can't afford to pay my contribution?

If you are concerned that you will not be able to pay your assessed contribution, you should contact your allocated officer in the Lightbulb Team immediately. You may be able to apply for funding from another source to help meet the cost of your contribution. Your officer will be happy to give you details of local organisations and help you with this if needed.

How long will it take for the work to be completed?

We do our best to progress cases as quickly as possible for your benefit and our officers will guide you through the process, keeping you informed throughout. All cases are different and complex adaptations or schemes usually take longer. There are sometimes delays that are out of our control. For example, if your chosen builder or contractor cannot quote for or start the works immediately or if there are any delays to obtaining proof of ownership of the property, consent or proofs of income. As a guide, we have a target to complete all major adaptations within 12 months and all stair lifts installed within 6 months.

What if I don't like what's being suggested?

Our officers will always recommend the minimum, essential, reasonable and practical, necessary and appropriate option to meet your needs. If you wish to have something different done, for example, build an extension rather than a stair lift or

level access shower, you should speak to the officer dealing with your case immediately. We may still award a grant that covers the equivalent cost of providing the original recommended adaptation. This will only be considered in certain circumstances and conditions apply. Your officer will be happy to discuss this with you.

Will I need an architect?

For some larger or complex adaptations, an architect is needed. Your Technical Officer will be able to advise you if this is the case. It is possible for Architect's fees to be considered as part of your disabled facilities grant entitlement. However, the Council is unable to pay this before the grant has been approved and works have started. This means that if your architect requests payment before this time, you will be responsible for paying this direct. If for any reason your grant is not approved or you do not proceed with the works, you will be fully responsible for paying any architectural fees.

Will I need to arrange the builder myself?

In the case of stair lifts and through floor lifts, the Lightbulb Team use a specialist contractor which can be arranged for you if you wish. For all other works, you will be expected to obtain two quotes from builders. Because you (not the Council) will be employing the builder it is important that you choose one you are happy with. Our Technical Officers in the Lightbulb Team will draw up plans and a schedule of works that you can give to your builder to explain what needs to be done. Our Technical Officers will also review the quotes provided to check they are reasonably priced. We will usually approve the cheaper quote. If you choose to employ the more expensive builder, you must let your Technical Officer know and you will be responsible for paying the difference in cost. Remember: your builder must not start works until your grant has been approved.

Unfortunately the Council cannot recommend a builder or contractor to you. However, you may find it useful to contact AgeUK Leicestershire & Rutland who keep a directory of approved businesses. There are also numerous websites that offer this service.

What if my circumstances change or I change my mind?

Regardless of who owns the property, it is a condition of a Disabled Facilities Grant that the disabled person benefiting from the adaptation must intend to live at the property for the next five years. If it becomes apparent that this is not the case, you may be asked to repay the grant. The Council will always consider the circumstances before making a decision to ask for repayment.

If the property that has been adapted is sold within five years of the grant works being completed, the owner must notify the Council. Some councils require repayment of the grant in this case if it is over £5000. Your local Lightbulb Team will explain to you if you live in an area where this happens.

If any of your circumstances change during the process, it is best to let the Lightbulb Team know to check whether the change affects your eligibility for a grant. This includes if your financial circumstances change. If you are awarded a grant and later found not to be eligible for any reason, the grant may be withheld or reclaimed.

What if I'm not happy with the builder or the work?

Our Technical Officers will keep in contact with you during the works. They may even visit you during the works to check everything is going to plan. If you have any concerns during the building process, it is a good idea to speak to the builder/contractor and your Technical Officer straight away to get things resolved quickly.

Once the works are done, a member of the Lightbulb Team will visit you to check they have been completed according to the schedule of works. Once we are satisfied that this is the case, we will pay the grant money with your permission - directly to the builder/contractor. Please remember that the contract is between you and the builder/contractor and in the event of any dispute – particularly once works have been completed, the Council may not be able to assist.