

Norwich Home Improvement Service

Helping people to live independently in warm, safe and secure homes



Norfolk County Council



NORWICH
City Council

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THE NORWICH HOME IMPROVEMENT SERVICE

The Norwich Home Improvement Service provides advice, support and financial help to people living in the private sector. We identify repairs, adaptations, or improvements needed to make your home a warm, safe, and secure place to live. Our aim is to help improve your quality of life and independence. We provide a service that is tailored to your needs, and we guide and support you throughout the whole process.

This leaflet provides you with information on what services are available, who delivers them and the financial help you can expect to receive. We have included a frequently asked questions section at the end of the leaflet to give you as much information as possible about the Norwich Home Improvement Service. The team are always happy to help so please get in touch if you want to know anything else or have any questions about the service.

HOW WE MAY BE ABLE TO HELP YOU

Our advice, support and improvement services are designed to help you live safely and independently in your home. We can help with small scale repairs right through to major refurbishments. Our service is tailored to your needs and we offer advice and support on a wide range of areas, including:

- helping you to apply for grants and/or alternative sources of funding, such as equity release or charitable funding
- carrying out assessments to ensure appropriate and necessary works are carried out
- referring work to the council's approved list of building contractors
- supervising the work throughout to ensure it is completed to a satisfactory standard
- signposting or referring you to other agencies to access welfare benefits, concessions or other support or advocacy services
- looking at alternative housing options if you want to consider moving to more suitable accommodation



WHO IS THE SERVICE FOR?

You can access our service if you live in Norwich and either own your own home, or rent from a private landlord. If you rent your home from the council or a housing association, you should contact your housing officer for help and advice.

If you are not sure whether our service can help you or a family member, please think about the following questions. They are aimed at helping to identify whether there are any housing related issues that may be making your home unsafe, affecting your health or your recovery from an illness or recent operation:

- Can you easily get into and out of both the front and rear doors of your home?
- Is your home warm enough, particularly the rooms you spend most of your time in?
- Is the heating working properly in all the rooms in your home?
- Is your home in reasonable repair, indoors and out?
- Is your home safe? (you may have outstanding repairs that could cause you to have an accident or fall over)
- Are you able to easily use all the facilities in your home without the need for additional help or equipment (kitchen and bathroom etc.)?
- Are you able to manage everyday tasks such as cooking, bathing or gardening etc.?
- Do you have contact with one or more people on a frequent basis?

If the answer to any of the above questions is no, we suggest that you contact us to find out more about the help and advice our team can offer you.

Remember, our service is aimed at a wide range of clients, both adults and children. We also provide our service to people who are not eligible for financial assistance from the council but are able to pay for it themselves.

GRANTS, LOANS AND COSTS

Our advisory service is free and confidential, so it is always worth contacting us for an initial conversation to see if we can help you.

In the majority of cases we provide you with some financial help to pay for works to be carried out. Our caseworkers will assess whether you are eligible for this help and help you to apply for it. In some cases the caseworker will carry out a means test and you may be expected to make a contribution to the cost of the works.

The council provides a number of financial options that will be considered including Disabled Facilities Grants and other discretionary grants and loans. Our financial assistance policy provides further information on grants and loans that are available. This can be found on our website www.norwich.gov.uk or a copy can be provided by contacting the council.

If you qualify for a grant, any applicable fees may be included in the grant. Your caseworker will discuss this with you during your initial assessment.

We also provide our service to people who are not eligible for financial assistance from the council but who are able to pay for it themselves. This means you can still benefit from the expertise of our team, and access our approved building contractors. If you decide to carry out work with the support of our team, there will be a fee for this service. Your caseworker will discuss this with you during your initial assessment.

The fee is used to cover our costs and allows us to provide much valued help and support to those that really need it.

TYPES OF ADAPTATIONS, REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS

We can help with small scale repairs right through to major refurbishments. Adaptations can include work to improve access and mobility around your home, or to make essential facilities available to a wheelchair user and other people with mobility problems in your home.

Some examples include:

- installation of walk-in (level access) showers
- adding ramps, rails and stair lifts
- carrying out minor adaptations and improvements to enable you to return to your home from hospital or another place of care
- small scale emergency repairs
- major electrical or plumbing installations
- damp and dry rot treatment
- structural work.

OUR TEAM

Our specialist team work closely with council approved building contractors, other council departments (such as Norwich Home Options), and other specialist staff when required, to deliver the most appropriate service for you. You will be assigned a caseworker who will guide you through the whole process, and you may meet other members of the team along the way. Here is some information about what the team do and how they may help you.

CASEWORKERS

Every person who contacts the council for help from the Home Improvement Team is assigned a caseworker. Our caseworkers act as a single point of contact for you when accessing help from the team or if you have any questions or concerns about any aspect of the service.

They will:

- check whether you are eligible for assistance, including financial help
- help you apply for council grants, loans or external funding
- advise on what options are available to you, based on your circumstances
- make sure you are claiming all the financial support you are entitled to
- link you into other services and agencies where appropriate
- explain any building works that may be carried out in your home
- make sure you are happy with everything before any works begin
- help you with other housing options if you want to consider moving to more suitable accommodation
- guide you through the whole process.



TECHNICAL OFFICERS

Once our caseworker establishes that you are eligible for help, or if you decide to pay for work yourself through our service, we will assign you a technical officer. Our technical officers visit your home to look at what works or adaptations are needed.

They will:

- measure up and take more detailed information for the work required in order to assess available options
- advise you of the appropriate works that need to be carried out, and draw up plans accordingly
- source reputable builders (approved by the council) to carry out the work required
- advise you and your caseworker when the works will be carried out, and how long they are likely to take
- oversee the builders to ensure the work is finished to a satisfactory standard
- advise you of any regular maintenance that you need to arrange for equipment that we install, for example, annual boiler checks, or stair lift maintenance.

OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS

If you, your child or another household member requires adaptations to your home due to a disability then we will arrange for an occupational therapist to carry out an assessment at your home. Our occupational therapists are specially trained to identify what we can do to help meet your needs.

They will:

- visit your home to see what difficulties you, your child or another household member are experiencing
- make a recommendation for appropriate and necessary adaptations to be carried out, and/or equipment to be installed
- advise our technical officers and your caseworker of the recommendations, who will then work with you as described above, to get the required works completed
- work with other health and care specialists where appropriate and necessary.

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN YOU GET IN TOUCH WITH US?

When we receive a referral or query from either you, or someone else on your behalf (such as a family member or GP), one of our caseworkers will contact you to discuss your situation and what help may be suited to your needs.

It is likely that the caseworker will arrange to visit you at home to discuss your options in more detail and assess what financial help you may be eligible for. To make sure that we offer you all the help we can, it is important that you supply your caseworker with any relevant information they ask for in order to carry out the assessment. This may include information about:

- your financial situation including income and debts
- whether you have an outstanding mortgage and/or equity in your property
- your landlord if you rent privately
- how long you have lived in your home
- any medical conditions or disabilities you may have.

If you decide you'd like to go ahead with any work to your home, your caseworker will ask you to sign our agreement to say that you are happy for us to help you.

Your caseworker will probably visit you again and may bring another member of the team with them if necessary. For example a technical officer to assess the building works required or our occupational therapist to talk to you in more detail about your medical needs. For more information on what you can expect from these team members, please refer to the previous section 'Our Team' on page 6 of this leaflet.

WANT TO APPLY OR ASK US A QUESTION...

If you think you, or someone you know could benefit from our help or advice, no matter how little or how much, please contact us. Anyone can make a referral, whether it is for yourself, on behalf of a family member or friend, someone you currently provide a service to, even your GP.

To apply or ask us a question, please contact us:

- online via the private sector housing section of our website www.norwich.gov.uk (home improvement and adaptations referral form)
- email privatesectorhousing@norwich.gov.uk
- telephone **0344 980 3333** (8am to 5pm, Monday to Friday)
- write to the Home Improvement Team at **Norwich City Council, City Hall, St Peters Street, Norwich NR2 1NH.**

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

What happens first?

One of our caseworkers will contact you to discuss your needs. In most cases, they will arrange to visit you at home to explain how we can help you and to complete some application forms.

Can a friend or family member be with me for the visit?

Yes, we will arrange to visit at a time that best suits you and you can have a family member, friend or other representative with you during the visit.

Will I have to move out while the works are carried out?

In the majority of cases people remain living in their own home whilst works are carried out. If a temporary move is required, we are unable to fund alternative accommodation.

Do I have to find my own builder?

No, we use a variety of approved builders who we instruct to carry out the work on our behalf.

What happens if I change my mind about having the works carried out?

Please advise us as soon as possible. We may make a charge for the service delivered or any works that have already been carried out up to that point.

How long will the work take?

This varies and is dependent upon the complexity of the works. A level access shower can take up to three or four months from when you first contact us to being fully installed. A more complex schedule of works may take six months or longer. We will keep you informed throughout the process.

Who checks the work?

Our technical officer inspects the work once it is completed. They will liaise with the builder on your behalf if there are any issues with the quality of the works or any defects. Planning and Building Control will carry out their own inspection where appropriate.

Who pays the builders?

Norwich City Council will pay the contractors direct and invoice you where applicable.

Are there guarantees for the works?

Once the works have been completed, there is a six month period in which to report any defects or issues with the works and any equipment installed. If there are any additional guarantees, these will be explained to you by your caseworker.

What about maintenance?

Your caseworker will advise you of any maintenance that you need to carry out, for example, if you have a stair lift installed. Norwich City Council is not responsible for carrying out or paying for any maintenance.

What if I'm not happy with the work?

You should contact your caseworker as soon as possible to discuss your concerns. There is a defects period of six months from completion of the works (see 'Are there guarantees for the works?' on page 9).

Who do I contact if I have any questions or concerns?

Your caseworker will be your main contact for all queries and concerns that you may have. They will act on your behalf during the whole process. This includes arranging any necessary visits to your home by people delivering the home improvement service, for example, technical officers, occupational therapists, and contractors.



If you would like this information in another language or format such as large print, CD or audio cassette or Braille please call 0344 980 3333 or email info@norwich.gov.uk.