

# Housing Modifications

## Occupational Therapy

*Housing modification process*

# Housing Modification Process

*This pamphlet outlines the process that is followed when a person wishes to apply for Ministry of Health funding for a housing modification.*

## **Part One: The Assessment Process.**

This is carried out by an Occupational Therapist (OT) with specialised registration in this area. It begins with an assessment of both the client's functional abilities and their existing home environment. The process may involve trialling adaptive equipment and input from other health professionals. One or more home visits from the Occupational Therapist may be required to complete this assessment process.

If the Occupational Therapist establishes that a housing modification is the best way of meeting disability related needs, then a report is prepared. This report describes the client's functional abilities and how the existing home environment impacts upon task completion. Sketch plans of the proposed modifications are also prepared by the Occupational Therapist.

Before the report is submitted, both the client and the property owner must read and sign the Ministry of Health's terms and conditions plus the sketch plans. This gives permission for the house to be modified.

The report, sketch plans and signed terms and conditions are then sent to Enable New Zealand (the Ministry of Health contracted service which manages their housing modifications budget).

Timeframes for the entire application process vary depending on the complexity of client needs, the type of alterations being proposed, availability of therapist, contractor, and Enable New Zealand processor/ consultant time. Because of time delays, many people are choosing to fund modifications independently. Please discuss this option with the occupational therapist as they can still provide advice with regard to the client's disability related needs.

## **Part Two: Enable New Zealand**

Once Enable New Zealand has received and considered the Occupational Therapist's application they will confirm whether the client meets the Ministry of Health funding criteria.

If Ministry of Health criteria are met, they will engage a building consultant who will prepare final drawings and obtain quotes from Enable New Zealand registered building contractors. When funding becomes available they will notify the client. The timeframe for this varies depending on budget availability. When funding is approved the consultant will organise the appropriate building consents. The building contractor will contact the client when they are ready to start building

### **Housing modification funding approval levels:**

- Under \$200 No funding for housing modifications under \$200.
- \$201-8,076 (GST incl) Approval required from Enable New Zealand. For applications under \$500, a quote is obtained from a contractor by the therapist involved without the use of a consultant.
- \$8,076-\$25,000 (GST incl) Approval is required from Enable New Zealand subject to the outcome of an income and asset test conducted by the department of Work and Income NZ (WINZ). This is sent by Enable New Zealand to WINZ. Enable New Zealand will notify you in writing of your need to be income and asset tested. You may decline (in writing) an income and asset test, in which case the maximum grant that can be made is \$8,076 incl GST.
- \$25,000+ Special permission is sought from the Ministry of Health.
- For applications for access such as lifts or ramps Enable New Zealand now has a maximum contribution of \$15,334 (GST incl).

For current processing times log on to [www.disabilityfunding.co.nz](http://www.disabilityfunding.co.nz) or phone 0800171995

More about Enable New Zealand for housing modifications.

Housing modifications information for caregivers/whanau

The following pages explain the terms that are contained within the housing modifications application. This information is given for your reference and is intended to be used in discussion the OT involved.

If, following this discussion, you have any queries please contact the Occupational Therapist on the following telephone number 546 1660.

# Housing Modification Grants

All applications for **housing modification** grants are made under the criteria below and must be **essential** and **cost effective**.

## Definitions

### 1. Housing Modification

A housing modification is any alteration and/or addition to a house to meet a person's disability needs. It includes the fixture of handrails, ramps etc.

### 2. Essential

**Essential means that there is no other viable alternative.** Without the housing modification, the person would be subject to avoidable harm.

**Where the person has other options available or can “make do”, the criteria of “essential” is not met.**

If the modification will only improve a person's quality of life, and not affect independence, caregiving or increase safety for the person, the criteria of essential is not met.

### 3. Cost Effective

Cost effective is defined as being the most economic and appropriate solution suited for the person's needs. This does not necessarily mean the least expensive option available.

### 4. Mobility into and within the home

Mobility into and within the home is defined as:

- To allow access into the home from where a vehicle could be reasonably parked.
- To allow mobility within the home, enabling the person to have reasonable access to achieve essential activities of daily living.

### 5. Return to, or remain in his/her own home

Modifications to enable a person to return to, or remain in his/her own home must establish that without the modification, the person would be unable to manage and/or be physically safe at home and would have to be admitted to a hospital or residential service.

## 6. Primary Care

Housing modifications may be purchased to enable:

- A person to carry out their role as the primary carer of dependent children (dependent can be defined by age or disability)
- A child with a disability to receive disability related care.

***NB: a primary carer is considered an unpaid carer (usually a parent or full time guardian)***

## **Exclusions**

*Housing modification grants are not approved in the following circumstances:*

- Environmental support services for people entitled to payment under Accident Insurance Act 1998 (ACC).
- Individual housing modifications under \$200 incl GST.
- Retrospective funding or reimbursement of any housing modifications undertaken prior to the receipt of written confirmation of the availability of funding from Enable New Zealand.
- The purchase of soft furnishings to a home eg. curtains, light fittings etc.
- Redecoration beyond minimal “make good” to the area affected by the modification.
- Housing modifications for social or economic reasons. The modification must be for the disability related need.
- Repairs and maintenance to a home.
- Work place modifications, including modifications to the home to enable the person to undertake self-employment from the residence.
- Housing modifications for Rest Homes, Private Hospitals, Residential *Homes and other similar residential services.*
- Housing modifications where the provider of the dwelling is being paid by the person and/or the Ministry of Health to provide housing suitable for their needs. Eg. housing purchased on a licence to occupy basis.
- Assessment costs including any related travel and accommodation.

## Roles & Responsibilities

*The following roles and responsibilities are in addition to those in the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumer Rights Act 1996.*

### 1. Disabled Person, their Advocates, support people, family or Whanau

Note: A support person is deemed to be someone who resides with, or provides ongoing support for, a disabled person and is not employed to provide that service.

A disabled person will:

- Have a disability which is likely to continue for a minimum of 6 months and they do not have any entitlement to payment through the Accident Insurance Act 1998.
- Reside in the area covered by the Wellington, Hamilton or South localities of the Ministry of Health to access funding through Enable New Zealand.
- Be a New Zealand resident or qualify under a reciprocal funding agreement.
- Have undergone an assessment undertaken by a Specialised Housing Assessor.
- Be given information on their rights and responsibilities, assessment services, environmental support services available, and options for funding by the Specialised Housing Assessor.
- Have access to accurate information on housing modifications, the process that will be followed when determining eligibility and the level of funding available.
- Be made aware of the right to a second assessment.
- Complete and sign an Enable New Zealand application form including the relevant Terms and Conditions for the provision of housing grants. If the person is under sixteen years of age, or is unable to sign, the person signing on their behalf must have the appropriate authority to do so.
- Consider and approve the plans and specifications of the proposed modifications.
- **Where appropriate, participate in the trial of environmental support options (ie. an item of equipment), and attempt the solutions identified with the Specialised Housing Assessor to determine suitability.**

- Have a right to seek a review from the appropriate service provider if they are dissatisfied with the service they have received.
- Be made aware that the housing modification grant will only be used to pay for the recommended modifications.
- Seek written approval from the Property Owner where they are not the Property Owner.
- Be made aware that all repairs and maintenance are the Property Owner's responsibility.
- **Be made aware that there is no entitlement to access another grant for the same or similar modification, unless extenuating circumstances exist.**
- Be made aware that if any of the terms and conditions are not met or kept by the person, they may be required to repay part or all of the grant.
- Be made aware that no retrospective funding or reimbursement will be provided for any work undertaken prior to the receipt of written confirmation of the availability of funding from Enable New Zealand.
- Be made aware that any modifications which include any of the following (or similar) types of equipment:
  - Low rise lift
  - Ceiling hoist
  - Stairlift

Must be returned to Enable Stores so that it can be re-issued when the person no longer requires the equipment or when it is no longer meeting their needs. Enable New Zealand should be advised when the equipment is no longer required and arrangements will be made for its removal. The full cost of removal and refurbishment will be met by Enable New Zealand.

In situations where the person has made a contribution toward the cost of the equipment, they should be made aware that the equipment belongs to the Ministry of Health. No reimbursement will be made for any contribution the person has made.

If there are any questions at any stage of the process it is important these are discussed with the Occupational Therapist to ensure a streamlined process and successful outcome.

