

# Housing and housing adaptations - how we can help

If you have sustained a spinal cord injury and you are planning your return home from hospital, you may face a number of challenges. Your home will require a range of adaptations in order for you to continue to live there independently. Typically this can include the following:

- Access to and from the property including ramps and lifts
- Converting a bathroom into a wet room
- Kitchen adaptations so that you can cook and prepare food
- Improving or providing a suitable heating system
- Easier access to the garden

Completing this work can be an expensive process, so there may be a source of funding available from your local authority called a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG).

Council tenants and those living in private accommodation are eligible to receive a DFG, which is designed to fund the adaptations your home requires. The DFG is provided and administered by the housing department at your local authority. As long as all the relevant conditions have been met, housing departments are in theory obliged to approve DFG applications up to a maximum of £30,000 in England.

Some housing departments have the discretion to exceed this in certain circumstances. The application process is means tested and in our experience, most people will not receive anywhere near the maximum grant available.

## Our partnership with the charity Aspire

If you are concerned that you and your family will not have anywhere suitable to live after discharge from hospital, we can help by referring you to our partners at the charity Aspire.

Aspire is a national spinal cord injury charity that offers practical support to the 40,000 people living with Spinal Cord Injury in the UK, so that they can lead fulfilled and independent lives in their homes, with their families, in work places and in leisure time.

The housing team based at the National Training Centre in Stanmore Middlesex and can help you with some of the housing problems you may be experiencing.



### Aspire's website

The Aspire website can be found at [www.aspirelaw.co.uk](http://www.aspirelaw.co.uk). Here you will find lots of useful information on a whole range of issues.

### Aspire's housing helpline

For help with queries about housing issues, please call the Aspire Housing Team on 0208 420 8950.

### Welfare benefits

If you are concerned about how you are going to pay the mortgage or rent in the wake of an accident to yourself or the main earner in your family, Aspire's dedicated welfare benefits advice service will be able to help. They can provide information on the whole range of benefits to which you may be entitled, including housing and council tax benefit. The welfare benefit advice line number is 0208 420 6711, or you can email them on [welfarebenefits@aspire.org.uk](mailto:welfarebenefits@aspire.org.uk).

### Aspire houses

The Aspire Housing Programme provides a nationwide network of fully adapted houses for spinally injured people to use whilst a permanent housing solution is being found. All the Aspire houses are fully accessible and come with wet rooms and adapted kitchens, but most importantly, they have two bedrooms so your family or personal assistant can stay with you.

To find out more about the Aspire Housing Programme you can contact a member of the team on 0208 420 8950.

## How Aspire Law can help you

Sometimes the process of applying for a grant or securing suitable accommodation does not go according to plan and you may need the help of a solicitor who is an expert in this area of law.

The Housing Act specifically requires housing authorities to give additional preference or priority within their allocation schemes to people with a disability. Disputes can often arise around allocation especially when there is a shortage of social housing in the area.

The process of applying for a DFG can also run into serious problems. Disputes often occur in relation to the assessment process and often local authorities will claim that the work you need to be carried out on your property is impractical and unreasonable.

Aspire Law has a dedicated team of solicitors who specialise in this particular area.

We help families and individuals throughout the assessment process by drafting the necessary applications and providing written representations based on your individual needs as a person with a spinal cord injury.

We work with a range of independent experts including housing professionals and occupational therapists who conduct a thorough analysis of your condition and your occupational needs. This allows us to put together a compelling and accurate case to present to the housing authority to persuade them to grant you the appropriate funding to cover all necessary adaptation works.

We will also conduct any negotiations with local authorities to ensure that where appropriate all discretionary powers are applied to provide you with any additional funding or support to make sure that all your housing requirements are met.

## CLIENT STORY

Our client was a child who had been born with tetraplegia and used a wheelchair to get around. He was living with his parents and siblings in one room at his grandparent's local authority home.

The family had been on the waiting list for suitable accommodation for four years because the local authority and a local housing trust could not agree who had responsibility for providing specially adapted accommodation

We persuaded the local authority to cover the cost of adapting a suitable property provided by the housing trust. We engaged a housing expert to work with both parties to ensure the correct package of adaptations was provided.

Within six months, our young client and his family had moved into a fully adapted new home with adequate space for a wheelchair, a lift from the kitchen diner to the bedroom, an ensuite wet room, hoists, ramps and covered canopies.

For a free and no obligation discussion about your housing issues, please call us on 0800 030 20 40.

“ I would thoroughly recommend Paula Barnes - excellent all round. ”

“ Paula Barnes was brilliant. I cannot believe that anyone could have done a more professional job. ”

“ Paula is a very competent lawyer with unquestionable ability and I would have no hesitation in recommending her. ”

Client quotes

Call us free on: 0800 030 20 40 Email: [help@aspirelaw.co.uk](mailto:help@aspirelaw.co.uk)



Solicitors for people with spinal injury

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