



Department for Levelling Up,
Housing & Communities

Felicity Buchan MP

Minister for Housing and Homelessness

**Department for Levelling Up, Housing
and Communities**

2 Marsham Street

London

SW1P 4DF

Clive Betts MP
Chair of the Levelling Up, Housing and
Communities Select Committee
House of Commons
London SW1A 0AA

4 April 2024

Dear Clive,

Thank you for inviting me to appear in front of the Levelling Up, Housing and Communities Select Committee on 18 March. I very much appreciate the opportunity to tell the Committee about the work the Government is doing to support disabled people in the housing sector.

The Committee requested further evidence in writing, which I now set out below.

Accessibility standards

The Committee requested data the Department holds on the number of new builds completed to M4(2) and M4(3) standards, evidence of how DLUHC communicated that the 2020 consultation on raising accessibility standards of new homes would be followed by a second (technical) consultation, and confirmation of whether research to develop statutory guidance for meeting accessibility standards will be published before the end of the Inquiry.

The department does not hold any data on the number of new builds completed to M4(2) and M4(3) standards. Local Authorities currently set the proportion of M4(2) and M4(3) homes needed in their local plans.

In the [raising accessibility standards for new homes consultation](#) (2020) 'next steps' section it states that, following analysis of the responses, 'a government response will follow.' In paragraph 73 of the [government consultation response](#) (2022) it reads, 'Subject to a further consultation on the draft technical details, we will implement this change in due course with a change to building regulations.'

In line with the commitment in the National Disability Strategy 2021, the Government commissioned research that includes demographics, ergonomic requirements and experiences of disabled people, as part of a full review relating to Part M of the Building Regulations. This research will support our forthcoming technical consultation and results from that research will be published in due course, but not in time to be considered as part of this inquiry.

National Planning Policy Framework (NPPF)

The Committee asked for clarification of the Planning Policy Guidance section which states that ‘Local plan policies for wheelchair accessible homes should be applied only to those dwellings where the local authority is responsible for allocating or nominating a person to live in that dwelling’ and whether this discourages local authorities to go further.

This text is set out in the [Housing: optional technical standards](#) which provide guidance on how planning authorities can gather evidence to set optional requirements and the nationally described space standards, paragraph: 009 Reference ID: 56-009-20150327.

However, this guidance does not limit the amount of wheelchair accessible and adaptable housing the Local Planning Authority (LPA) can require in their local plan. As the NPPF sets out, LPAs should assess local housing needs, taking into account the characteristics of their community, and develop local policies that meet those needs.

These optional technical space standards allow LPAs to require specific homes to meet wheelchair accessible and adaptable standards, but LPAs may set their own local plan policies that go further than this, for example in requiring a specified share of housing to be “wheelchair user dwellings” which can be simply adapted to meet the needs of occupants who use wheelchairs; or which can meet the needs of occupants who use wheelchairs when a LPA has designated a particular wheelchair user to live in the dwelling.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

The Committee asked how many people need to self-finance on top of a £30,000 maximum grant, how many councils fail to complete DFG works within 18-months of a claim, whether the DFG means test accounts for the income of anyone other than the disabled person and their partner, such as adult children, and any data on how many landlords apply for remediation funding once a tenant has left an adapted property.

According to unaudited data provided by local authorities, 2,795 Disabled Facilities Grants of between £15,001 and £29,999 and 1,173 grants of £30,000 or over were completed in 2021-22, the last year for which data is available. Grants of this value make up 6% and 2.5% respectively of total grants in this period. The Department does not collect data on self-financing by disabled people to top up the grant.

In the same unaudited voluntary data collection, five out of 297 local housing authorities in England reported that in 2021-22 they exceeded on average the 18-month target from the day the application was made to completion of DFG works.

The DFG means test applies to the ‘relevant person’, which is the disabled person, and their partner if they have one. The income of adult children living in or owning the home is not considered in the means test.

A local authority can award a DFG on condition that equipment (such as a stairlift) will be recovered once no longer required. The Department does not collect information on the number of grants which include funding to recover equipment.

As discussed, I would also be very interested to see any evidence that the Committee has on developers failing to meet agreed local accessibility standards set out in local plans.

Thank you again for the opportunity to feed into your work on this important topic. I look forward to seeing the Committee's report in due course.

Yours ever,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Felicity Buchan".

Felicity Buchan MP

Minister for Housing and Homelessness