

8. REPAIRING AND IMPROVING OCCUPIED PRIVATE HOUSING



The Council operates a number of grant schemes to help people living in owner-occupied or privately rented housing to meet the costs of having their homes repaired, improved or adapted. Other schemes, operated by SCARF, offers home insulation and draughtproofing grants and Hillcrest and Perthshire Housing Associations run local care and repair projects primarily aimed at disabled and older owner occupiers on low incomes.

The grants available include:

8.1 Council Repair and Improvement Grants

8.1.1 Repair Grants

The council can give repair grants for property in a state of serious disrepair, such as structural problems, dry rot and defective roofs. Priority will be given to the most serious cases.

Repair Grants are available for up to 50% of eligible costs of up to £7800. This is a maximum grant of £3900 for tenement flats. For other forms of housing, a maximum grant of up to 50% of eligible costs of up to £5500 is available, ie a maximum grant of £2750.

The council can in appropriate cases seek Scottish Executive approval to increase the eligible cost levels to a maximum of £11 700 for tenements and £8250 for other housing. The application for enhanced cost levels are meanstested by the council.

8.1.2 Improvement grants

Improvement grants are made available at the Council's discretion - they are **not mandatory grants** - to bring owner occupied or privately rented property, which is assessed as being Below the Tolerable Standard (BTS), back into good condition and permanent residential use for at least 5 years after the grant is paid.

Below tolerable standard includes one or more of the following:

- Removal of rising damp and installation of a damp-proof course
- Provision of a toilet for the first time
- Provision of electrical lighting and power points for the first time
- Provision of adequate daylighting and ventilation
- Provision of adequate drainage system and
- Installation of a fixed bath or shower

Essential repairs to bring the house into a good state of repair can also be included.

The maximum grant that can currently be awarded is 75% of eligible costs up to £12,600 ie a grant of £9,450, with applicants having to find the balance - of the works costs from their own resources. For application procedure see 10.1.8.

8.1.3 "Enhanced" improvement grant

The Council can again apply to the Scottish Executive for permission to pay out Improvement Grants on a higher level of eligible costs of up to £19 000. These applications for enhanced cost levels are means tested by the Council.

8.1.4 Disabled Adaptations

Grants are available through the improvement grant scheme to make permanent adaptations to properties where work is necessary for the benefit of a disabled occupant. A disabled occupant need not be the owner or tenant but the property must be their only or main home.

The type of work that is eligible includes:

- The provision of an accessible bathroom
- The provision of an accessible bedroom
- Permanent ramps to external doors
- External handrails
- Widening of internal or external doors
- Fitting of special doors and windows
- Fitting of special kitchen units, bath or shower units
- Special lever taps
- The provision of high level power points and
- The provision of floor lifts can also be included.

The provision of equipment and fittings which are readily removable and redeployable can in some situations attract financial help from Social Work.

8.1.5 Improvement Order Grants

The Council rarely serves Improvement Orders on properties but where it does a higher level of statutory improvement grant may be available

The standard level of this grant is 75% of the approved expense but could be up to 90% in cases of financial hardship. This is only where the owner is able to satisfy the local authority that he or she would not be able, without undue hardship, to finance the expense of the works without the assistance of the higher rate of grant. All works required by the Improvement Order should be completed within 180 days

8.1.6 Standard Amenity Grant

The Council is obliged to make a Standard Amenity Grant available to help meet the costs of installing essential items - like a bath, shower, WC or wash hand basin - in an occupied private property which does not have them and which otherwise would meet the tolerable standard. **The maximum grant available is 50% of the approved expense limit for each essential item, up to a maximum eligible cost of £3010.**

8.1.7 Application process

- é **Contact Environment Services** who will be happy to provide information and guidance on what grants may be available.
- é If the renovation appears to be grant-eligible then the applicant must write to the Council at the above address giving their name, address and a basic description of what improvement works needs to be done to the property.
- é Officials will then contact the applicant to arrange and make a visit to assess the grant-eligible improvement works required and explain the application process etc.
- é The applicant submits an application form with a set of plans for the work, estimates from at least **2** builders, the title deeds to the property, a building warrant and, in certain circumstances, planning permission.
- é Once approval for the renovation work has been received by the applicant, the building work is expected to be completed within 12 months.
- é **Grants may be paid when work is complete or by a first and then a final instalment .Payment by installations will be considered only from owner occupiers and the first installment is payable only if 50% of the work has been done to our satisfaction and completion is anticipated within 3 months.The first instalment will not exceed 90% of the total grant approved, and instalments will not normally be processed for amounts less than £1 000 000.**

8.2 Insulation and Draughtproofing Grants

Two complementary grant schemes are available to help those living in privately owned properties to meet the costs of insulating and draughtproofing their homes, resulting in a big saving in heating costs to the household concerned.

Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) Grants

The Home Energy Efficiency Scheme (HEES) provides Government grants to make homes more energy efficient.

Contact SCARF 35 Kinnoull Street Perth PH1 5DG tel 01738 476183

8.3 Care and Repair

Care and Repair operates in Strathearn, Kinross, Eastern and Highland Perthshire.

The aim of Care and Repair is to assist older and disabled owner-occupiers and private sector tenants in substandard properties with housing repairs and improvements therefore enabling them to remain in their own homes. The role of the Care and Repair projects is to assist older or disabled clients with applications for grants, advice on funding the balance of the costs and the organisation of the works, including the appointment of architects/surveyors and the selection of a builder. Care and Repair projects also give energy advice.

In relation to Care and Repair projects the Council has approved an increase in eligible costs up to a maximum £32 500 for any grant type, subject to approval by the Secretary of State.

Where Improvement Orders have been served grant levels can be increased to 90% in case of hardship subject to a financial assessment.

Strathearn and Kinross Care and Repair is managed by Hillcrest Housing Association and their office is based in Crieff.

Highland and Eastern Perthshire is managed by Hillcrest Housing Association and their office is based in Blairgowrie.

Grants applied for include improvement, repair and disabled adaptations grant

Strathearn and Kinross Care and Repair

Contact: Morag McNicoll
Care and Repair Officer
30 West High Street
Crieff
PH7 3BS
01764 655895

Highland and Eastern Care and Repair

Contact: Adam Drummond
Care and Repair Manager
31 Leslie Street
Blairgowrie
PH12 6AH
01250 874478