

GUIDANCE FOR HEALTHCARE PROFESSIONALS
INCLUDING **OCCUPATIONAL THERAPISTS**

Justifying an assisted bath to maximise client Occupational Performance during a Disabled Facilities Grant application



This brief guide will help support
recommendations for an assisted bath
versus an accessible wetroom to better
meet client needs

PROFESSIONAL

Justifying an assisted bath to maximise client Occupational Performance during a Disabled Facilities Grant application



Key facts

- The DFG is part of the Housing, Grants and Reconstruction Act 1996 and its amendments
- DFG funding is part of the Better Care Fund
- The OT's role is usually to assess whether an adaptation is 'necessary and appropriate'
- The DFG legislation states that a bath or shower (or both), can be grant funded
- The DFG is a mandatory grant
- Bathing can be key to Occupational Performance and can be clinically reasoned as necessary and appropriate for clients

1. The definition

A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFGs) is a grant provided by a Local Authority to help meet the cost of adapting a property for the needs of a disabled person. This is funded via the NHS Better Care Fund.

2. What is the Better Care Fund?

The Better Care Fund (BCF) has been set up by Central Government to provide financial support for councils and NHS organisations to jointly plan and deliver local services. DFG funding is within the BCF although it is important to note that local authorities will remain legally obliged to consider and fund DFGs.

3. What does the Legislation say?

Understanding the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) legislation is critical to being able to support your client so that they receive the right assisted bath in a timely way.

The DFG sits within the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996. Its definition can be found in **Chapter 53, Part 1, 24. 3 (a)**: "...that the relevant works are necessary and appropriate to meet the needs of the disabled occupant."

The Housing Authority determines the above by consulting the Social Services Occupational Therapist.

The specific part of the legislation, which pertains to bathing is **Section 23: Disabled facilities grants: purposes for which grant must or may be given** – "(f) Facilitating access by the disabled occupant to, or providing for the disabled occupant, a room in which there is a bath or shower (or both), or facilitating the use by the disabled occupant of such a facility;"

It is important to note that it is the Social Services Authority who decides upon what is 'necessary and appropriate', not the Housing Authority. It is the OT's clinical reasoning regarding the client's needs that is paramount. The Housing Authorities role is to state if the work is 'reasonable and practicable'.

It is also important to look at the options and to see which washing environment, bath or shower, will best meets the client's needs around functional independence.



Informative Abacus client case studies are available at:

www.abacushhealthcare.co.uk/case-studies

4. Evidence and Clinical reasoning

The OT will in conjunction with their client and career if appropriate, assess their needs, within the context of the task, the environment and their individual abilities. From this assessment they will determine the clinically reasoning for a bath if that is the appropriate solution.

If a bath will meet the clients needs and clear clinical reasoning can be stated then they have meet the 'necessary and appropriate' statement as set out in the legislation.

When assessing a client for bathing an OT needs to have an in-depth understanding of its benefits and how the client's physical and mental health maybe improved by accessing and using such a facility.

If the Housing Authority refuses a grant application, other options for provision are the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 for Children and The Care Act 2014.

5. What does Mandatory mean?

The DFG is a mandatory grant, which means the Local Authority is required by law to provide the funding for the adaptations if they are assessed as being necessary and appropriate and are deemed reasonable and practicable by the Housing Department.

6. Tips on Occupational Performance and clinical reasoning for a bath

Bathing can have a significant impact on the following Occupations and is therefore necessary and appropriate:

Improves sleep

Sleep is seen as a Occupational Performance. According to the American Association of Occupational Therapy it is: *'essential for well being and critical for maintaining homeostasis and participating in activities of daily living'**

A bath before bedtime relaxes the muscles helping to induce sleep. In addition transferring from a warm bath to cooler sheets encourages the production of melatonin which also encourages sleep. This is particularly useful for clients who have poor sleep patterns, those that find it difficult to begin sleeping and clients who have significant pain.

Therefore the functional benefits are –

- it enables other activities of daily living to be carried out
- potentially reduces risk e.g. client falls

Provides a supportive play environment for children

It is essential that a child can play and learn – a bath often provides a warm, stimulating and relaxing environment to support this

essential activity of daily living. It can also be used to support and develop –

- independent living skills
- gross and fine motor hand function
- neurological improvements
- social interaction with siblings
- bonds with care givers

Play is deemed to be so important to optimal child development that it has been recognised by the United Nations High Commission for Human Rights as a right of every child.**

Reduces stress

Bathing can be an effective part of a treatment process for people with high levels of anxiety and stress. It works by causing vasodilation – the widening of blood vessels. This is achieved by relaxation of the muscular vessel walls and reducing blood pressure. Therefore the functional benefits are –

- it enables other activities of daily living to be carried out e.g. work or social
- reduces community exclusion

cont. overleaf



Protects against infection and reduces depression

Managing personal hygiene is important to prevent the onset and spread of infectious diseases. This can be clearly evidenced in history as increased bathing has reduced the spread of Diarrhoea, Cholera and Typhoid. Looking and smelling your best on a daily basis is also important. To feel unclean has a huge effect on your mental well being and can lead to depression and loss of occupations.

Reduces pain to enable other occupations

Immersion in warm water stimulates the release of endorphins, these are naturally occurring neurotransmitters released from

the pituitary gland in the brain that reduce pain and improve mood. Therefore having a bath can have a positive affect on a client's functional performance enabling them to carry out chosen occupations.

Increases range of movement

Bathing in warm water raises your body temperature, causing your blood vessels to dilate and increase circulation. This results in less swelling and pain and can improve mobility. The soothing sensation and buoyancy of warm water makes it a safe and ideal environment for relieving pain or stiffness. This enables the bather to carry out a range of movement activities in a supportive environment which will improve functional ability.*

Reduces moving and handling

The Manual Handling Operations Regulations 1992 (as amended) state it is the care giver's duty to: 'avoid, assess and reduce manual handling.' The installation of an appropriate bath with or without hoisting can reduce the amount of bending and stretching a carer/family member carries out.**

Enables the use of prescribed ointments

Enabling a client to bathe in their prescribed ointments can potentially have an impact on their daily Occupational Performance. By reducing itching, cracked/crusty or flaky skin and associated pain, improved movement for a client is possible.

Part of a treatment program

A warm bath can be used as part of a treatment program to reduce the affects of pain prior to purposeful activities, e.g. socialising, cooking, gardening or a round of golf. By also aiding sleep prior to these occasions fatigue is reduced so that events are more regular and rewarding.

Watch our website videos for further information on:

- Children's Right To Play As An Occupation
- Using Legislation to Support Assisted Bathing
- The Clinical Reasoning Behind Assistive Bath Recommendation



Presented by Kate Sheehan, OT

www.abacushealthcare.co.uk/news

* <http://tinyurl.com/zqy95oa>

** <http://tinyurl.com/nvdsrly> (as far back as 1989)

† <http://tinyurl.com/j3qnqcg>

†† <http://tinyurl.com/hdj8dad>



Informative Abacus client case studies are available at:

www.abacushealthcare.co.uk/case-studies

To arrange a free home bathing demonstration:

0800 988 6360

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