

Access Grants
funded by Wigan Council

Guidelines

Important Changes for 2008/09

Access Grants now cover between 50% and 75% of eligible costs up to a maximum contribution of **£2,300!**

Introduction to Access Grants

Wigan Council is committed to creating an accessible environment and wishes to encourage the alteration of buildings to enable access for all. The aim is to allow everyone to lead as full a life as possible.

Grants are available primarily to voluntary and community organisations for improvement works to sites or buildings to which members of the public would normally expect to have access throughout the Borough.

The purpose of Access Grants

Independence for those with a disability can often be greatly assisted by minor modifications to buildings or sites. Grant aid can help encourage organisations to undertake access improvements where they lack the capital to fund the works entirely by themselves.

What work is eligible?

Grants will contribute towards the cost of work required to make a site or building more accessible for disabled people. Such adaptations are often beneficial to elderly people and those caring for young children.

These alterations could include:

- Provision of ramps or formation of level approaches to building entrances;
- Widening doorways into and within premises;
- Provision of disabled persons' toilet facilities;
- Construction of parking bays, dropped footpath crossings and ramped footpaths within sites;
- Specialist features benefiting particular groups of disabled people e.g. induction loops to help those who are hard of hearing;
- Other innovative measures.

Works must conform to the latest design standards available from the Access Officer within the Environmental Services Department - Development Division.

Applicants requiring induction loops are advised that in buildings which already have compatible sound systems, grants are only available for the addition of an induction loop to this and any necessary modifications.

No works may be started until the grant is approved in writing and any other statutory consents (such as planning permission and building regulations approval) have been given.

If you are applying for a grant to make a building more accessible, you will usually need a lease with at least 3 years left to run. If you are a tenant of a property, you will need your landlord's permission for any planned alterations.

Works not eligible for Access Grants

Access Grants are not available to fund:

- works outside the Borough boundary;
- 'new build' activities required under the provision of Part M of the Building Regulations. However, grants may be given for works additional to those normally required under the Building Regulations;
- works which have started or have been completed;
- any works or adaptations to domestic properties;
- applications which benefit individual employees at a place of employment. However, if it can be demonstrated that the investment would also benefit members of the public visiting or using the building, then it may be eligible for a grant if these works are not covered by any other grants.

Who is eligible?

Any group or organisation may apply for a grant provided they can demonstrate:

- the site or building is open to public use;
- disabled people are unable to benefit fully from the facilities because of a lack of suitable access; and
- the applicant lacks resources to fund the adaptation without grant assistance.

If, in any financial year, applications for grants exceed funds available, priority will be given to community and voluntary organisations, as explained below. Date of receipt of fully completed application forms will determine the order of decision of community and voluntary proposals.

Priorities for funding

- Grants will be available at the following level and will be targeted in the following way if applications exceed the funds available:

Priority	Category of building or site	Grant level
1	Community/voluntary premises	75%
2	Local authority premises	75%
3	Other statutory authority premises	50%
4	Local independent commercial concerns	50%

- At least 75% of the annual budget will normally be targeted at priority groups 1 and 2.

Funds available

- Access Grants cover between 50% and 75% of eligible costs according to the category of building or site and are up to a maximum contribution of £2,300.
- In addition, a claim of up to 10% of the cost of the access improvements, subject to a maximum of £200, may be made to help cover the cost of relevant design fees. This may only be claimed once per building or site and a separate invoice will be required.
- The Council reserves the right to check any quotations submitted for value for money and request additional quotations if necessary.

How to apply

It is essential that you contact the Access Officer before submitting your application for an Access Grant in order to avoid unnecessary work or expense in preparing applications or plans. The Access Officer will check whether the scheme is suitable and arrange a site visit. Once this has been done, completed forms should be returned to the address at the end. It is advisable to submit your application as soon as you have all the relevant information.

In addition to copies of your latest annual accounts, public liability insurance and rules or constitution you will also need to include:

- a minimum of two fully itemised quotations for carrying out the proposals;
- a separate invoice for design fees if claimed;
- accurate scaled drawings for all proposed internal and external building or ground reshaping works;

Applications may be delayed if all relevant items are not included.

Please refer to the General Guidelines when completing Parts 1 and 2 of the application form.

Part 3 - Section 13 - Wigan Council Access Grants - Proposed Works

The following notes help you to complete this part of the form

- (1) Please describe access improvements to be undertaken. All works must conform to the latest design standards (available from the Access Officer).
- Scaled drawings are required for all construction work. One claim of up to 10% of the cost of the access improvements up to a maximum of £200 may be made per building or site to help cover this cost. A separate invoice is required for this.
- (2) Please give brief details of any other work to be carried out at the same time as the access improvements.
- (3) Grants may be deferred if works are not ready to commence soon after the decision date.
- (4) This section only needs to be completed if a grant for an induction loop is being applied for.

Section 14 The Cost of Access Improvements

- (1a) This figure represents the full price (based on the lower quotation) of an individual access improvement.
- (1b) This section only needs completion if a sum for design fees is being claimed.
- (1c) This figure will depend on the category of building or site (see "Priorities for funding") up to a maximum sum of £2,300.
- (1d) This figure will be 10% of the figure given in (1a) up to a maximum of £200 per building or site, if claimed.
- (1e) This figure is the amount of your contribution.
- (1f) This figure will include the cost of all works undertaken including access improvements.

What happens to my application?

Where the application is for £500 or less you will normally be informed of a decision within 10 working days unless there is important information missing.

- All other applications for Access Grants are reviewed by the Joint Grants Panel who meet monthly until the funding is allocated. Further amendments may be requested after this stage.
- Decisions regarding the application will then be taken by the Director of Environmental Services, in consultation with Wigan Access Committee and the appropriate Cabinet Member. Applicants will normally be notified of this decision in writing within two weeks of the decision.
- If your application is approved, a grant agreement schedule outlining any rules and conditions associated with receiving grant aid will be sent. This should be signed, dated and returned indicating these rules and conditions are understood and accepted.
- The schedule will also contain a condition requiring that you complete the approved grant works within the timescale indicated.
- Details of how the grant will be paid will be contained within this schedule.

Contact details

Completed Access Grant forms should be sent to, or further information and advice may be obtained from:

Kathryn Barker, Access Officer,
Environmental Services Department,
Civic Buildings, New Market Street, Wigan WN1 1RP
email: kathryn.barker@wigan.gov.uk Telephone: 01942 404247

Please ensure that you take a copy of the application for your records before submission

A checklist to help you

Once you have completed your application, please check through and tick the following list to make sure you have included all the relevant documents and information.

We have :

- Enclosed a copy of our constitution or written rules
- Enclosed a copy of our latest annual accounts
- Enclosed a copy of a current Public Liability Insurance certificate
- Provided two itemised quotes or estimates for the works
- Provided a separate invoice for design fees (if claimed)
- Enclosed scaled drawings
- Signed and dated the application form
- Kept a copy of the form for our own records