

Moving to Another Home and EMS Housing Modifications Process

Choosing another home

Choosing a suitable home to rent or buy gives people the opportunity to consider the design layouts and features that will meet their needs now and, in the future, and can minimise the need for costly retrofitting of disability modifications in the future. It is useful to discuss the likely progress of the person's disability with a General Practitioner or Health Professional to understand their likely needs in the future.

Occupational therapists have knowledge and experience of accessibility and universal design features, such as level entry into homes, circulating spaces, and easy to use bathrooms and kitchens.

Where a disabled person is considering purchasing a new home or moving to a rental property, it is recommended they consult an occupational therapist for advice before they confirm their decision.

When choosing to move to another home the person and their family or whānau should, as far as practical and reasonable, look for a house that is already suitable or requires only minor modifications.

Recommended accessible design features to consider include:

- flat section with drive on access and
- level entry/minimal steps into the home and
- main rooms (bedroom, bathroom and main living areas) on ground level and
- sufficient circulating space throughout the home.

➔ Whaikaha – Ministry of Disabled People will not consider funding towards modifications to a newly purchased or rented home where the person has knowingly chosen a property unsuited to their disability related needs.

For example, where a person who uses a wheelchair or walking frame (or is likely to need to use one in the future) chooses to move into a property which is multi-level, funding will not be available towards the purchase and installation of a lift to transport the person between levels of the home.

Features to look at when considering the suitability of a home

➔ Access into the home from where a car is parked

- Consider the access from where the car is parked to the main entrance. The path should be no steeper than 1:12 gradient, and the surface should be level and safe.
- Many homes do not have level entry. Where level access is required for a person using (or likely to use) a wheelchair or a walking frame, the entrance should have a maximum of 3-4 steps with the land around the steps fairly level or the ground sloping towards the steps. This type of property may be modifiable with a 7-8 metre ramp or a 1m vertical rise platform lift.

Homes that have more than 4 steps and/or where the ground slopes away from the steps would likely not be considered suitable and easily modifiable to achieve level access. EMS funding would not be available to modify this type of property where the person uses (or is likely to use) a wheelchair or walking frame for mobility.

➔ Access within the home

- Consider a home that has all the main rooms on the ground level. Homes that have split levels (including between an internal garage and the home) or are multi-storied would likely not be considered suitable and easily modifiable to achieve level access. EMS funding to modify this type of home would not be available where the person uses (or is likely to use) a wheelchair or walking

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Solutions for better living

- ➔ Hallways / circulating space throughout the home
 - Consider the width of the hallway and ease of turning into the main rooms where a person needs to use (or is likely to use) a wheelchair or walking frame for mobility. Often hallways are load bearing walls which could require a building consent to modify and therefore, are not considered easily modifiable. EMS funding would not be available towards modifying hallways.
 - Consider sufficient space for the equipment the person needs (or is likely to need) to use, for example wheelchair, mobile shower commode or hoist.
 - Consider the ease of turning into doorways and circulating space within the main rooms of the home. EMS funding can be considered for 810, 860 or 910mm door widening with a hinged or surface mounted sliding doors. EMS funding for cavity sliders can only be considered where there is insufficient room for a surface mounted sliding door.
 - EMS funding would not be available to complete major remodeling of a home or creating additional rooms.
- ➔ Bathrooms
 - Many homes do not have a level access/entry shower (also known as wet area shower). Consider the suitability of the bathroom to accommodate a 1200mm x 1200mm level access shower (or larger if the person needs to lie down to shower), along with sufficient space for circulating in a wheelchair or walking frame. EMS funding can be considered towards creating a level access shower.
 - Many homes require removal of a wall between a bathroom and adjacent room such as a toilet to allow space for a level access shower, and EMS funding can be considered towards these modifications.
- ➔ Kitchens
 - Consider kitchens with space to move and turn, with appliances, storage and sink within reach. EMS funding may be available for kitchen modifications such as a lowered bench and sink, and access to appliances and storage where the person lives alone or is alone for much of the day.
 - EMS funding is not available to complete major kitchen remodeling.

Process for consideration of EMS funding towards modifications to the new home

- ➔ An EMS Assessor will need to complete an assessment and follow the EMS funding processes for consideration of EMS funding towards housing modifications.
- ➔ The EMS Assessor will consider the suitability of home chosen in relation to the person's disability related needs now (and likely needs in the future), and the resultant scope of modifications required to meet the person's needs.

Where the person has had modifications funded previously and the request is for the same type of modification Repeat Funding can only be considered where there are Genuine and Exceptional circumstances as per the EMS Housing Modification Manual Section 7. The decision about repeat funding is made by the Ministry of Health EMS Review Panel.

- ➔ Refer to the **ACCESSABLE** Information Sheet on New Builds or Renovations.