



Living with Disability

Living with MS: the battle for funding

Disabled Facilities Grant:

We lived at the top of a hill in a lovely house, but it didn't have a downstairs toilet. And we asked the housing people for a move. They suggested this house, because it had a toilet upstairs and down. It was fairly accessible, but as time went on, we realised that I needed adaptations to the house to enable me to continue living my life.

Once we'd decided and agreed what I needed, we then had to put in for a Disabled Facilities Grant. This is a means tested grant, provided by Social Services who decide what level, if any, they can fund. At the time, in the year 2000, the level was up to £20,000.

The application for funding went through fairly smoothly. There was a wait of about 12 months. But when I did get a letter saying that my application for the DFG had gone through, I had been granted the maximum £20,000, and it was left at that. Six months later, nothing had been started. I then rang Social Services and I was told they'd got no funding. And that's when things started to change.

We rang the Head of Social Services in Walsall at four o'clock on a Friday, and I think that it was only doing that, that got the wheels turning quicker. Within a month, the OT had been in to say work would start. And the building work started shortly after.

We were told that the work would take four weeks, and it took eight. In that time I didn't have access to a shower. I didn't have access to a bathroom at all. I didn't have access to the outside world. I couldn't get outside.

Initially there were things that weren't right, because the wash basin they'd put in was a pedestal, and therefore I couldn't get close enough. There were certain small things wrong. But they were all ironed out eventually. By and large, it all worked really well. Within from start to finish say two months. And another month to iron out the problems.

Mostly we were pleased. Because it meant I could get in and out of the house. I could get up to the bedroom. I could get into the shower room. I could have a shower. I don't think there's a way it could have been done any better.

Because David has his own disabilities, it's undoubtedly made it easier for him, in the way that he doesn't have to lift my chair in and out of the house. I can drive in myself. I can get myself upstairs. I can get myself downstairs. I can get into the shower. It's made it easier in a lot of ways for him. But the stresses and strains I think did tell to start with, a few years ago. With the onset of these other problems. But on the whole I would say made it easier for him. And for me too. The alternative, I don't know what the alternative would be. Our housing people offered us one of the bungalows locally. And I said there are two bungalows there, if you can knock them into one, and give me that, I'll have it. But if it's that one as it is, no good. Now we knew that the right thing to do was stay here. And yes, the adaptations have been what we needed.