

Housing issues and Tourette Syndrome



Unfortunately, some people with Tourette Syndrome have difficulties with their housing situation. Tics can compromise accessibility and safety around the home, cause damage to the property, and neighbours and landlords can show little understanding and compassion towards the person with TS.

We have outlined some potential housing issues that people with TS could face, and how you might look to resolve them.

If you are having problems with your housing situation, your local council should be your first port of call for advice. There is also a list of organisations at the end of this document which may be able to provide you with further advice. If you are finding it difficult to manage at home, you can have an assessment of your needs carried out by the social services department of your council to see what help you may require. This assessment is known as a community care assessment.

Home adaptations

Adaptations to assist with disabilities could include minor alterations to the home e.g. stair rails, grab rails; and the installation of equipment, e.g. stair lift, to extend independent living and accessibility.

Depending on circumstances, you may be eligible for various elements of financial support to assist with home adaptations.

Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG)

A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is a means tested grant available for people living in England, Wales and Northern Ireland.

If you or someone living in your property is disabled you may qualify for a DFG towards the cost of providing adaptations or alterations. These adaptations would enable the disabled person to access essential facilities within the home to allow him/her to continue living there.

Your local authority (or the Northern Ireland Housing Executive if you live in Northern Ireland) should be able to supply you with their policy for housing and disabled adaptations. This will explain what is available from that authority, their eligibility criteria and any conditions that may need to be considered.

You can apply for a DFG application form by contacting your local authority. If you are a council tenant or housing association tenant, your landlord may be able to arrange the work for you without the need for DFG. An OT is also able to apply for a DFG on your behalf.

Housing associations and private landlords

Both housing associations and private landlords are classed as Service Providers and according to Equality law, have a general duty to promote disability equality, by where possible making reasonable adjustments. The duty to make reasonable adjustments aims to make sure that a disabled person can use a service as close as it is reasonably possible to get to the standard usually offered to non-disabled people.

For example, if somebody is living in council housing and the accommodation is affecting their health, it is the council's duty to assess the need for rehousing.

Somebody with TS may find it particularly challenging to live for example, in a high rise building which has physical barriers like staircases that could compromise the mobility of someone with severe motor tics.

Damage to property

If you cause damage to your property as a result of your condition you should contact your landlord or local authority straight away to explain what has happened.

Problems with neighbours

People with loud or offensive vocal tics, and severe physical tics may face difficulty with neighbours as these symptoms can be mistaken for anti-social behaviour. If possible, see if you can organise a time to speak to your neighbour to explain about TS and how the condition affects you. You could ask a friend, family member or support worker to join you.

Tourettes Action has information leaflets about TS which you could pass on to your neighbour.

Citizens Advice provides information and guidance on how to deal with neighbour disputes and anti-social behaviour in housing. See 'organisations and resources' for contact details.

Benefits

If you are struggling to pay the rent you might be eligible for housing benefit and council tax reduction:

Housing Benefit

If you need are on a low income and need financial help to pay part of or all of your rent you may be eligible for housing benefit. You can apply for housing benefit whether you are working or unemployed.

Council Tax Reduction

If you're on low income or benefits you may be entitled to Council Tax Reduction, which will give you money off your Council Tax bill.

Contact your local council for further information on housing benefit and council tax reduction.

Organisations and resources

Only specialist agencies and local councils have the expertise to advise on housing issues. Tourettes Action does not provide this type of specialist service. If you need supporting evidence of your condition in relation to any housing issue, we recommend that you contact your consultant and/or health professionals working with you, who will be in the best position to provide official support on your behalf.

You can find contact details and website of your local council on the government website.

Shelter is a charity that works to alleviate the stress caused by homelessness and bad housing. They provide information, advocacy and free, confidential advice through their helpline and local offices to people with all kinds of housing problems. www.shelter.org.uk

Turn2Us - a charitable service that helps people access available funding through benefits, grants and other types of financial support. www.turn2us.org.uk

Northern Ireland Housing Executive - Northern Ireland's housing authority, offering a range of services to people living in socially rented, privately rented and owner occupied accommodation. www.nihe.gov.uk

Local Authority Welfare Rights Officers - many local authorities and councils employ welfare rights officers (WROs) who can advise and assist in matters relating to social care and benefits.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB) - the Citizens Advice service can offer information on housing issues through free, independent and confidential advice. Contact your local bureau for support. You can search for local branches on the website. www.citizensadvice.org.uk