



7 National Housing Strategy for an Ageing Society – Home Improvement Agencies

The National Strategy on Housing for an Ageing Society, *Lifetime Homes, Lifetime Neighbourhoods*, is a cross-government strategy published jointly by Communities and Local Government (CLG), Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Department of Health (DH).

Role of Home Improvement Agencies

The strategy recognises that Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) offer a valuable and comprehensive level of support to vulnerable and older people in helping them to continue living independently in their own homes. Their primary focus is the repair or adaptation of a client's home, and in support of this objective they may provide a range of services depending on local needs and circumstances.

There has been significant growth in recent years of handyman services provided by HIAs. However, a number of challenges still remain in the delivery of these services, namely:

- HIA coverage has grown significantly from 54% of all local authorities in 1999 to in excess of 90% in 2008. This still leaves gaps in provision across certain local authorities
- Some handyman schemes are restricted to homes in poor repair or specific client groups
- Funding for schemes is often spread between multiple voluntary organisations, reducing co-ordination and coverage on the ground, and
- Limited resources and underdeveloped referral routes mean that many older people at risk are not being reached.

The strategy identifies what needs to happen now:

- The development of a new rapid repairs and adaptations scheme, expanding coverage of handyman services across the country from 2009, and
- Support for this enhanced service from funding of £13million in 2009/10 and £18million in 2010/11.

There will be a bidding process for these funds, details of which were announced in November 2008 (see below):

- A comprehensive analysis of how HIAs can help to improve housing-related services for older people:
 - This will be undertaken through the 'Future HIA Project'. Foundations, the national body for HIA's, has been commissioned to identify a range of HIA models to support local area needs. An overview report on the project was published in Autumn 2008 and shares good practice with service commissioners <http://www-foundations.uk.com/default.aspx?id=574>
- Further funds will be made available via regional assemblies to improve homes in the private and social sectors. In particular, the Warm Front scheme will be used to ensure that older people can have energy efficient homes and stay warm in winter months, and
- Further funding for three years has been provided to Foundations to support future developments in the HIA sector and help to enhance the links between good homes and improved health and wellbeing.

This is in addition to investment in Decent Homes. The English House Condition survey shows improvements in the housing conditions of older households.

New money for handyman services

CLG announced a Minor Repair and Adaptation grant allocation to local authorities for 2009/10 and 2010/2011. A letter to all authorities on

12th Nov 2008 set out the amount each LA will receive. Additionally expressions of interest are invited for a more limited distribution of grant allocations for 2009/10 and 2010/11 for an Enhanced Services Programme such as energy efficiency or hospital discharge work for approximately 10-20 Local Authorities. For more information visit the *Supporting People* website: <http://www.spkweb.org.uk/subjects/repairs%20and%20adaptations%20handyperson%20funding%202009%20-%202011/Repairs%20and%20Adaptations%20Handyperson%20Funding%202009%20-%202011%20Letter%20to%20Chief%20Executive%20and%20Expressions%20of%20I.htm>

What you can be thinking about now

Local commissioners and providers should be thinking about how to develop new services where none currently exist, how to expand existing services in order to offer a comprehensive range of provision and make explicit links with the local health and well-being agenda, specifically intermediate care services, links with telecare and new technology and reablement services.

It will be important for adaptations to have an increased priority at regional level – regional housing and planning agendas will need to include adaptations and set a strategic vision for their future.

HIAs have a lot to offer health and social care commissioners including:

Delivery supporting Local Area Agreements:

- Transformation of local services in line with key Department of Health agendas of prevention and intervention, greater coordination and integration of services and the transformation of social care as set out in *Putting People First*, the 2007 blueprint agreed between central and local government and the NHS;

- Helping to join up local housing, health and social care services.

Other useful Housing LIN publications:

Healthy homes, healthier lives DVD
<http://networks.csip.org.uk/IndependentLivingChoices/Housing/Topics/type/resource/?cid=3989>

Assistive technology in extra care housing (factsheet No.5)
<http://networks.csip.org.uk/IndependentLivingChoices/Housing/Topics/browse/HousingExtraCare/ExtraCareProvision/SupportServices/?parent=990&child=1968>

Useful links to other relevant organisations:

Communities and Local Government:
www.communities.gov.uk

Foundations: <http://www.foundations.uk.com>

Care and Repair England: www.careandrepair-england.org.uk/handyperson/index.htm

Supporting People: <http://www.spkweb.org.uk>

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