

Yorkshire Housing – Social housing home improvement agency

Good practice themes

- 1. Support for self-funders**
- 2. Falls prevention service**

Context

Yorkshire Housing is a large social housing provider formed in 2008 following a series of mergers. It operates across twenty local authority areas in the Yorkshire region.

The Yorkshire Housing structure includes charitable home improvement agencies (HIAs) that provide support for vulnerable people in the owner occupier and private rented sectors. The agencies provide help with home adaptations, repairs and housing related support services.

Helping vulnerable people who are not tenants is becoming less common in the social housing sector, particularly following social rent cuts. Yorkshire Housing's commitment to wider social value is reflected in the continued support for local HIA and handyperson services.

HIA services at Yorkshire Housing must be self-funding but there is autonomy for additional, related services to be developed to reflect emerging issues and local priorities.

HIA services are commissioned by a number of local authorities in Yorkshire Housing's area. These currently include Barnsley, Hambleton, North Yorkshire (apart from Ryedale and Scarborough), Rotherham, Sheffield, Stockton on Tees, Swale and York. The scope of provision varies significantly, ranging from small scale, minor adaptations delivery and Winter Warmth campaigns to a full HIA service for major adaptations. As the scope and content of individual contracts with local authorities varies over time there has been a need to create a flexible workforce and develop services that can be at least part supported by external funding or self-funding routes.

1. Support for self-funders

Yorkshire Housing HIAs recognise that there is a need to support clients, especially older and disabled people, who have needs that cannot be fully met by the statutory DFG funded adaptations programme or through local authority commissioned housing services.

This may be as a result of individuals not meeting eligibility criteria or because they require adaptation works outside the scope of statutory provision. This became the catalyst for establishing the HandyTec service aimed at core clients who, for whatever reason, required works to their homes that they would pay for from their own resources.

The HandyTec service was established in 2014 and provides minor adaptations through Level 4 Trusted Assessor accredited staff. They undertake a wide variety of handyperson type small jobs, such as flat pack furniture assembly, installing curtain rails, security measures etc., through to a full agency service for major adaptations.

The number of enquiries and completed works has increased year on year. This trend is attributable to word of mouth recommendations rather than a lot of advertising.

The HIA is keen to employ field-based staff with an age profile that reflects that of the service users, who are predominantly older people. In addition the agency employs a woman to undertake minor adaptations and other small scale interventions to address the concerns of some single older women who are sometimes reluctant to allow male contractors into their home.

2. Falls prevention

The HIA developed a pilot scheme in 2015 to help to reduce fall-related injuries by installing prevention adaptations in the homes of older people before they suffered any injuries. This was done in partnership with the Vale of York clinical commissioning group to address hospital readmission and delayed transfer of care aims

HIA staff worked with General Practitioners and community nurses, attending medical discharge team meetings and going into hospitals and other health settings to promote home modifications that prevent falls.

The scheme relied on both community and hospital-based health practitioners making referrals to the agency for individuals they consider to be at risk of falling. Delivering the falls prevention measures has also resulted in identification of older people whose homes have then benefited from additional adaptation and repair services offered by the HIA.

Key outcomes of the pilot were to reduce re-admissions to hospitals in a 90 day period, improve the confidence of older and disabled people (and their carers) so they could to remain independent and safe in their homes and to reduce social isolation. Initial analysis of outcomes was positive so it was extended for a further two years. More than 360 people at risk of falls and hospital admission were directly assisted over the duration of the scheme.

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