



foundations

THE NATIONAL CO-ORDINATING BODY
FOR HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCIES

Home Improvement Agencies – Delivering Government Strategies across Health, Housing & Social Care

Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) are small, locally based not-for-profit organisations. They help homeowners and private sector tenants who are older, disabled or on low income to repair, maintain or adapt their homes. Many of these people are unsure where to turn for help. They are concerned about letting people into their homes and worried about employing 'cowboy' builders.



What do HIAs do?

HIAs help people to remain in their own home, safe, secure warm and independent.

They offer professional advice, organise and oversee repairs and adaptations and they help identify available finance. They are key contributors to national and local strategies in housing, health, social care and community safety. They work with local authority housing and grant officers, occupational therapists, health workers, social services and many others.

Examples of HIAs working to deliver Government Strategies:

The unique service that HIAs offer is cross cutting, addressing housing, health, social care and community safety issues to enable people to remain in their own homes. Also many agencies have developed specific schemes and projects in addition to their core service provision.



Hospital Discharge

The Government is keen to reduce the time that many people (mainly elderly) have to remain in hospital, by speeding up the process for installing equipment or adaptations at home. They have introduced legislation through the 'Community Care Delayed Discharges Act 2003' to ensure that local authorities address this costly problem. HIAs create quick response 'repair and adaptation' schemes that offer a range of short-term solutions that allow a patient to return home safely, as well as arranging for any permanent adaptations to be carried out. These schemes cost relatively small amounts compared to the costs of keeping a person in hospital.

Accident and Falls Prevention

Government policy is directed at maintaining older people's health and independence by preventing unnecessary ill health. HIAs make people's home's safe places to live by doing repairs and adaptations that help prevent falls. Often these works are very small such as fitting a handrail or securing a loose carpet yet can prevent serious injury or admission to hospital. With a relatively small amount of extra funding, HIAs can offer a full falls prevention and home safety service, often utilising their handyman service for effective delivery of these schemes.

Delivering Adaptations

When assisting with the delivery of adaptations, HIAs are the single point of contact for the client, simplifying the process for them, and being their link to other professionals.

They arrange small adaptations such as fitting a grab rail or larger scale work such as the installation of a stair lift or improved building access. They also assist with applications for a Disabled Facilities Grant where appropriate.

Energy Efficiency and Fuel Poverty

The Government is committed to a ten-year timescale to eradicate fuel poverty amongst vulnerable households, and local authorities must now report on their local energy efficiency programmes under the Energy Conservation Act (2000). HIAs are in direct contact with groups that are hard to reach, and suffer most with fuel poverty, such as older and disabled people in the private sector, living on their own. They have the expertise to improve the living conditions of their clients, including additional or more efficient heating systems and better insulation.

A series of 5 booklets that examine HIAs Delivering Government Strategies are available free of charge from Foundations. Topics include Hospital Discharge, Falls and Accident Prevention, Energy Efficiency, Delivering Adaptations, and Handyperson Services.

Crime and Safety

HIAs help Government to reduce crime and the fear of crime in various cost effective and client focused ways. The core work undertaken by HIAs in helping vulnerable homeowners to repair and maintain their homes contributes greatly to the crime-reduction agenda, as criminals are known to target people living in poorly maintained housing. Gardening schemes co-ordinated by some agencies also address this issue. Many HIA services are specifically aimed at reducing burglary of property. HIA Handyperson schemes are fundamental to the delivery of 'target-hardening' measures such as fitting extra door and window locks, door chains, external lighting, alarms and other security features. HIA staff are often in a unique position to promote better awareness of security and safety issues with vulnerable homeowners as part of their initial client assessment process, as well as playing an active role in national awareness campaigns such as the Home Office 'Stop – Chain – Check' campaign.

Who is Foundations?

Foundations is the national co-ordinating body for Home Improvement Agencies. We have been appointed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to:

- Develop and expand HIA services
- Provide advice, training and support to HIA staff, managing organisations and sponsoring authorities
- Monitor the activity and performance of HIAs
- Represent the sector in discussions with Government and other Stakeholders

For more information about Home Improvement Agencies, please see the Foundations web site

www.foundations.uk.com, or call our Head Office on 01457 891909

For more information about services available see Foundations Information Card 1 – 'Home Improvement Agencies, the Key to Independent Living'



BLEAKLOW HOUSE
HOWARD TOWN MILL
GLOSSOP SK13 8HT
Telephone: 01457 891909
Facsimile: 01457 869361
email: foundations@cel.co.uk
website: www.foundations.uk.com