

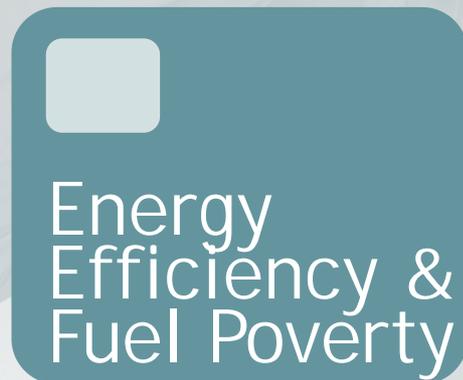
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foundations

THE NATIONAL CO-ORDINATING BODY FOR HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCIES



HIA's Delivering Government Strategies



Energy
Efficiency &
Fuel Poverty

Home Improvement Agencies & their Funding Sources

For the past 15 years, HIAs have received recognition and some funding from central Government in return for providing particular services to older, disabled or vulnerable homeowners and private sector tenants. Some HIAs are independent Industrial and Provident Societies, some are run by Housing Associations or Charities; others are located within Local Authorities.

Traditionally Housing Private Sector Renewal funding has supported these agencies both nationally and locally. This has been in recognition of those HIA functions that related to the improvement of the fabric of the building.

Increasingly it is being recognised that poor housing and poor health are linked and that HIAs are well placed to deliver services that contribute to health and social care objectives.

Locally determined combinations of Supporting People Grant, Housing, Social Services, Health, charitable funds and fees have funded HIAs since April 2003.

Relatively small amounts of additional funding can provide HIAs with the extra resource necessary to provide a more comprehensive service, assisting Local Authorities and Health Services meet Government targets in a cost-effective, client-focused way.

Acknowledgements & Thanks

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Hyndburn Homewise

Care & Repair (Bristol) Ltd

Anchor Staying Put – Oldham (Anchor Trust)

Energy Efficiency Advice Centre – Oldham

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*There are
227 HIAs in
England,
covering 247
Local Authority
areas*

Introduction

This booklet provides evidence that Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) can help Local Authorities meet Government agendas in tackling fuel poverty.

What are Home Improvement Agencies?

Home Improvement Agencies are small, locally based, not-for-profit organisations. They assist older, disabled or vulnerable homeowners or private sector tenants to repair, maintain, or adapt their homes. There are 227 HIAs in England, covering 247 Local Authority areas. In 2002, they helped 35,000 people to remain living independently within their homes by facilitating over £75 million worth of repairs, improvements and adaptations. Many also provide advice and support on benefits, and operate schemes for energy efficiency and warm homes, crime prevention and accident reduction, gardening and decorating.

Recent legislation recognises the case for minimising fuel poverty and maximising energy efficiency at a national level, and has committed Government to a ten-year timescale to eradicate fuel poverty amongst vulnerable households.

The most accepted definition of a fuel poor household is one which needs to spend *'more than 10 per cent of its income on all fuel use and to heat its home to an adequate standard of warmth'* (DTI 2003). This is generally defined as 21°C in the living room and 18°C in the other occupied rooms.

In November 2001, the UK Fuel Strategy was launched focusing primarily on measures to improve energy efficiency and to reduce costs for fuel poor households. One such priority is *'to identify and promote good practice in co-ordination of services, especially in developing one-stop shop schemes'* (National Energy Action 2003). The strategy also stresses the importance of health providers addressing the health impact of fuel poverty.

In addition, Local Authorities must now report on their programmes to tackle fuel poverty within their housing responsibilities under the Energy Conservation Act (2000).

HIAs have already developed excellent low cost and effective energy efficiency schemes. They already have the infrastructure and do not, therefore, need large start up costs, intensive staff recruitment or staff training. They provide a client centred, culturally appropriate service. They are often the perfect existing vehicles to help local bodies deliver on energy efficiency programmes.

The Context

The National Service Framework for Older People (NSF) has set eight standards of care for older people, whether living at home, in residential care or being cared for in hospital. The NSF is part of the Government's agenda to drive up standards and reduce unacceptable variations in Health and Social Care.

The aim of Standard Eight is to extend the healthy life expectancy of older people. A key intervention stated in the framework is:

"Wider initiatives involving a multi-sectoral approach to promoting health, independence and well-being in old age: exercise services, healthy eating, Keep Warm, Keep Well campaign, Home Energy Efficiency Scheme."

The 1996 English House Condition Survey states that at the very minimum 4.3 million households in England live in fuel poverty.

The 1998 Acheson Report, commissioned by the Department of Health, showed that much of the variation in the nation's health was linked to material deprivation, and specifically recommended:

"Policies to improve insulation and heating systems in new and existing buildings in order to reduce the prevalence of fuel poverty".

The UK Fuel Poverty Strategy (2001) states the main causes of fuel poverty in the UK are a:

". . . Combination of poor energy efficiency in homes and low incomes. Fuel poverty damages people's quality of life and imposes wider costs on the community. The most direct effects are in relation to the health of people living in cold homes. Although these risks apply to all people, older people, children and those who are disabled or have a long-term illness, are especially vulnerable."

Cold, damp homes, which are inadequately heated, have repeatedly been linked to ill health and early deaths amongst the most vulnerable people in society. Cold and damp cause and exacerbate a number of medical conditions including hypothermia, cardiovascular disease, respiratory illnesses – such as bronchitis – and childhood asthma. Elderly people and young children are known to be particularly at risk.

Pressure on health services through the winter are estimated to cost the NHS £1 billion per annum for treating cold related illness.

(Wilkinson et al 1996)

The Context (continued)

From December to March, year-on-year, there are between 20,000 and 50,000 excess deaths in England, compared with the rest of the year and cold housing is one of the factors responsible.

In November 2001 new findings were published on the impact of housing conditions on excess winter deaths. The Cold Comfort report resulting from research, grant aided by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation, concluded that:

- During the winter months (December to March) there was a 23 per cent excess of deaths from heart attacks and strokes compared with non-winter months
- The rise in deaths was greatest in older people, but there was some rise at all ages. There was little variation within socio-economic groups
- The magnitude of the winter excess was greater in people living in poorly heated dwellings
- The percentage rise was greater in those dwellings with low energy-efficiency ratings and those predicted to have low indoor temperatures during cold periods
- The gradient risk increased with age of property
- Substantial public health benefits can be expected from measures that improve the thermal efficiency of dwellings and affordability of heating them

The main determinants of low indoor temperatures are:

- Age of property
- Absence of/dissatisfaction with the heating system
- Cost of heating the dwelling
- Low household income
- Household size

Consequences of fuel poverty include poor health, debts to fuel companies, deterioration of housing and excess winter deaths (Centre for Sustainable Energy 2003).

How Can HIAs Help?

Local Authority Environmental Health Officers and colleagues in other services working in partnership with Primary Care Trusts (PCT), GPs and HIAs have the major task of ensuring that assistance reaches the most vulnerable people living in the community.

HIAs are ideally placed to help tackle fuel poverty and improve energy efficiency. Their role places them in direct contact with groups that suffer most from fuel poverty. These include older people, particularly those living on their own, and disabled people. HIAs have the skills and knowledge to identify a variety of ways to improve the living conditions of their vulnerable clients, including additional, or more efficient heating systems and better insulation. All HIAs employ technical staff with the appropriate skills to carry out energy ratings and provide the appropriate energy efficiency advice.

Whilst HIAs as individual organisations can make an impact upon fuel poverty, they are at their most effective when working in partnership with Local Authorities and other organisations to deliver fuel poverty strategies. Specific examples where this is happening are included below.

Newark and Sherwood District Council in Nottinghamshire

have achieved Beacon Status for 'Tackling Fuel Poverty'.

Their in-house agency, Newark & Sherwood HIA, operates within the district, playing a major role delivering energy efficiency measures in a Council Housing Strategy with a budget of £16.4m, which started in 1988 and is expected to run until 2008. This project aims not only to eliminate fuel poverty, but also to remove the risk of fuel poverty from the whole housing stock. The HIA played a major part by identifying "at risk" homes and managing the delivery of energy saving measures into those homes. The project as a whole has:

- Increased the number of homes capable of delivering affordable energy from 6% to 92.6%
- Increased the SAP ratings from 23% to 63%
- Reduced energy usage in homes (required to heat to an adequate standard) from 94 GJ to 68 GJ

Newark & Sherwood HIA is an in-house agency

How Can HIAs Help? (continued)

Health Through Warmth

is an npower initiative involving partners from the National Health Service, National Energy Action, Social Services, Local Authority Housing and the Orbit Housing Associations' Care and Repair Agencies. The HTW initiative provides training to key workers in the community to enable them to identify people whose health is suffering due to cold and damp living conditions. This £10m project operates across 20 PCT areas.

East Staffordshire Care & Repair and Stafford Care & Repair play a key role in this partnership. All the referrals made by key workers are sent to the Care and Repair teams to facilitate the required measures. The qualified HIA staff provide extensive energy efficiency advice and, as appropriate, arrange for cavity or loft insulation, draft protection and energy efficient heating appliances. This work is paid for through Warm Front grants or from the HWT crisis fund provided by npower. In some cases the HIA has been able to access Local Authority grants, including Home Repair Assistance (HRA) and Disabled Facility Grants (DFGs), to do the work for the client.

CASE STUDY

A key worker from a local voluntary group, trained under the HTW scheme, identified that Mrs A's health, (she suffers from Multiple Sclerosis and is wheelchair bound), would benefit from improved heating measures. Mrs A was referred to East Staffordshire Care and Repair who tested her two fires for smoke and arranged for the installation of an additional heater. They also arranged for improved insulation to be provided through Warm Front. The HIA was also able to arrange roof repairs for Mrs A through a HRA grant and to provide advice that led to an additional £20 per week in her benefits.

East Staffordshire Care & Repair and Stafford Care & Repair are both managed by Orbit.

How Can HIAs Help? (continued)

CASE STUDY

Mrs B is 83 and suffers from angina and fluid on the lungs. When her boiler stopped working, her social worker, who had received the HTW training, contacted Stafford Care & Repair for help. Although eligible for a Warm Front grant, the time scale for the replacement boiler would have been too lengthy. The HIA was, however, able to draw on the npower crisis fund to pay for the new boiler. The agency subsequently applied for a Warm Front grant to provide additional insulation and draught proofing.



How Can HIAs Help? (continued)

Hyndburn Homewise

run the Keeping Warm and Safe Scheme in partnership with other Local Authorities, the Citizens Advice Bureau, Welfare Rights and the Health Authority. The scheme aims to provide affordable warmth, improved heating and insulation for home owners on low incomes. The outcomes they seek are to improve the health of the residents of Accrington, and environmental benefits resulting from environmental efficiency. The partnership approach also enables the HIA to improve home safety and reduce the likelihood of crime.

The scheme accesses energy efficiency measures through Warm Front grants where available. Other energy efficiency grants are also used for free insulation and other energy saving measures.

Over £100,000 of funding has been received for the Keeping Warm and Safe project from Neighbourhood Renewal Funding (NRF) money, over a three-year period. The service includes a full-time project worker and an administrator.

In the first year 169 referrals were made by Homewise to Warm Front and 466 to the Energy Efficiency Advice Centre. Subsequent jobs resulting from surveys included lead pipe replacement, fire safety checks, and crime prevention checks. Households were also assisted to claim benefits of which they were previously unaware, resulting in 43 new awards totalling £71,237.92 p.a. On the whole, targets set for assisting clients were exceeded, proving the real need in the area for this service.

What the clients say about the Homewise Service

"Excellent service as always from Hyndburn Homewise. Thank you for all the efforts on our behalf"

"The man that did the work was very good, conscientious and polite"

"Thank you Homewise for your valued services"

"Such service is a rarity these days"

"We were pleased to take advantage of this excellent scheme"

"I am grateful for the excellent job done"

Hyndburn Homewise is an independent HIA

How Can HIAs Help? (continued)

Care & Repair (Bristol) Ltd

is one of the largest, and most active in the country, operating across the multi-cultural city of Bristol. They provide help for hundreds of vulnerable homeowners each year, much of this help resulting in healthier, warmer homes.

CASE STUDIES

Mrs C has poor mobility and lives in a home heated by a dangerous two bar electric fire in the lounge and a paraffin heater in the kitchen. She had no heating upstairs, no lagging on the immersion tank and the roof had no insulation. Care & Repair Bristol accessed a HRA grant funding for night storage heaters downstairs and convector heaters with timers upstairs. A new immersion heater tank was fitted with a timer to run on Economy 7. They also arranged for a Warm Front grant for loft insulation and draught proofing. The benefit check undertaken by the caseworker also ensured that Mrs C was able to claim Attendance Allowance and Income Support.

Ms G is 38 years old. She lives alone and has a progressive disabling illness, which means that she is housebound. She is on Income Support and Disability Living Allowance.

Ms G's only form of heating is a Calor gas heater in her living room. This is causing serious condensation in her home. Care & Repair Bristol assisted the client to apply for an HRA to provide central heating and thereby reduce condensation.

Mr and Mrs P are a couple in their mid 70's who contacted Care & Repair Bristol as they were concerned about the condition of their roof.

The HIA Caseworker during the routine assessment found that there was only one fixed gas fire in the house. Other areas of the house were heated with portable Calor gas heaters, which, they felt, were aggravating Mr P's chronic asthma. Mould was also widespread on the walls.

The couple were receiving Income Support, so a referral to Warm Front was made and central heating was installed. Two months after the installation, the caseworker visited to give advice on setting the time clock and thermostats to gain the most efficient use of the system.

Mr P has since found that his breathing has improved and that the mould problem in the house is abating.

The Office of Gas & Electricity Markets (OFGEM) recognises that for many customers on low incomes, advice and help with installing measures to improve energy efficiency can make a big difference to keeping warm and reducing their heating bills.

How Can HIAs Help? (continued)

Mr P is a 74 year old man who has chronic respiratory disease. He lives alone and is in receipt of Income Support and Attendance Allowance. Mr P's only source of heating is a twenty year old gas fire in his living room.

His respiratory condition is exacerbated by cold conditions in his home. Care & Repair Bristol obtained emergency HRA funding to replace his living room gas fire and applied for a further HRA grant to install night storage heating.

Care & Repair (Bristol) Ltd is an independent agency.

Energy Efficiency Advice Centre (EEAC) – Oldham

is located in the offices of Anchor Staying Put – Oldham, a HIA run by Anchor Trust.

Market Research into the effectiveness of energy advice centres throughout the North West Region of England discovered that 3 out of 5 clients took some form of action after being advised by the EACs. This included installing energy saving measures or purchasing new, more energy-efficient appliances. Calculated on a formula that included all clients receiving advice (including those who took no action), the average saving the EEAC made for a client in 2000/2001 was £28 per year.

Energy Efficiency Action Centre Survey (2001)



Conclusion

The unique service that HIAs offer is cross-cutting, addressing housing, health and social care issues to enable people to remain in their own homes. So even before they work on energy efficiency schemes, they are, by the very nature of their work, helping to tackle this issue and that of fuel poverty

- HIAs have already built up cross-cutting services and relationships with Local Authorities and other partners in addressing fuel poverty and energy efficiency issues
- HIAs help to deliver results that contribute to Government's commitment to eradicate fuel poverty among vulnerable households and to reduce fuel costs for poor households

The evidence shows that HIAs not only contribute to assisting with energy efficiency targets, they also put into practice the steps necessary to enable older, vulnerable people to remain at home in safety and with dignity.

HIAs are able to help their clients to access unclaimed benefits, care packages and other services that help them to remain at home.

The National Service Framework focuses on:

- Rooting out age discrimination
- Providing person-centred care
- Promoting older people's health and independence
- Fitting services around need

For relatively little extra funding, all of these targets can be met more effectively by Local Authorities and health providers, using HIAs to help deliver services.

The Final Word

“ . . . Your advice and help has been invaluable for which please accept my hearty thanks. Without your advice I wouldn't have been able to access the help I needed . . . You are doing the job wonderfully well. Please carry on the good work.”

Mr S, client of Hyndburn Homewise.

Who is Foundations?

Foundations is the National Co-ordinating Body for Home Improvement Agencies in England.

We are appointed by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister to:

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

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This booklet forms part of the 'Evidence Project' series.

Other titles available include:

Falls and Accidents Prevention, Delivering Adaptations, Handypersons Services, Hospital Discharge.



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