

Lancaster City Council
Housing Services

Home Improvement Agency (HIA)

ANNUAL REPORT

2021

**LANCASTER
CITY COUNCIL**
Promoting City, Coast & Countryside

**Home
Improvement
Agencies**
Making Homes Warm, Safe & Secure



Improving Homes and Lives



Welcome to our **ANNUAL REPORT** 2021

Welcome to the Lancaster City Council Home Improvement Agency (HIA) Annual Report. This report provides an overview of the work undertaken by the HIA throughout 2021.

The HIA team have continued to go above and beyond in providing person-centred services to enable residents to live independently at home. The HIA experienced many challenges throughout the year, including the continued response to the Covid-19 pandemic and the completion of a restructure with the introduction of new services to enable us to continue to provide vital services for some of our most vulnerable residents.

I am immensely proud of the work and achievements highlighted in this report. The HIA has had an outstanding year and delivered on all its ambitions. I am confident we will continue to serve our residents and build on our success in 2022.

John Helme,

Lancaster Home Improvement Agency Manager

ABOUT US

Home Improvement Agency (HIA) services originated over 30 years ago with a vision to provide responsive, client-centred solutions to home repair, maintenance, and adaptation problems. Most people, despite age or disability, wish to remain living in their own homes for as long as possible. Unfortunately repairs or adaptations can be a complex and stressful experience which is where HIA's can help by offering support with anything from small repairs to major adaptations to a property.

The Lancaster HIA based within the City Council's Housing Services is dedicated to helping vulnerable older and disabled residents live safely and with dignity in their own homes. The agency is formally recognised by Foundations, the Government's body for Home Improvement Agencies and has provided Care & Repair type services throughout the district for over 20 years.

Our aim is to provide a person-centred, value for money service, offering independent advice and assistance to find solutions to housing needs. We can provide quick and flexible responses to local needs, improving resident's health and wellbeing and make a real difference to the lives of vulnerable residents.

OUR CORE SERVICES AT A GLANCE

Advice on Moving Home and Raising funds to works

Our Caseworkers provide advocacy advice and practical support to help residents remain in their own home or to move to more suitable accommodation. The Caseworkers also offer advice and assistance with obtaining finance required to meet any housing needs, increasing benefits, and applying for charitable funding.

Handyperson Services

The Handyperson Service is available to carry out minor work which residents find difficult to find a contractor to undertake and which help them to remain independent in their own home. There is no charge for using the Handyperson service, however clients would need to pay for any materials required.

Help with identifying repairs, providing assistance and dealing with contractors

Our Technical Officers assist residents to identify works required to their property and can provide impartial, qualified technical advice on adapting properties to ensure residents are able to remain in their own home.

Assistance with Disabled Adaptations

The Home Improvement Agency delivers the city council's Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG) programme. These grants provide essential adaptations to vulnerable residents to remain independent in their own home. Grants are available for providing access into and around the home, providing bedroom, bathroom, and kitchen facilities and for making homes safe for disabled occupants. In addition to the delivery of the DFG programme the HIA also has an agreement in place with Lancashire County Council to deliver Minor Adaptations. These include items such as Bannister Rails, Steps and External Rails. The delivery of minor and major adaptations within one service is seen as an example of good practice for adaptation services.

Meet the **TEAM**

John Helme	Home Improvement Agency Manager
Christopher Park	Adaptations Manager
Adele Hinman	HIA Admin Assistant
Jane Lester	HIA Admin Assistant
James Robert-Morrison	Technical Officer
Victoria Taylor-Lewis	Technical Officer
Gemma Mitchell	Retrofit Technical Officer
Claire Chaisty	HIA Senior Caseworker
Annie Gallagher-Storey	HIA Caseworker
Georgina Smith	Adaptations Assessment Officer
Stephen Jackson	Senior Handyperson Technician
Stuart Moneagle	Handyperson Technician
Antony Ireland	Handyperson Technician
Nicky Byrne	Handyperson Technician
Phil Crammond	Handyperson Technician



HIGHLIGHTS 2021

01

2021 commenced with another lockdown. The HIA's response was to pause all non-urgent visits and Handyperson repairs. Throughout the lockdown the HIA continued to deliver essential adaptations, including minor adaptations fitted inhouse by the HIA handypersons and major adaptations through the DFG grant programme. Enhanced safety measures were put in place to protect staff and residents, including detailed risk assessments and adequate PPE safety equipment.

02

HIA staff continued to work remotely with full access to all systems to continue delivering first class services.

03

2021 saw the implementation of a restructure with a number of changes to existing posts within the team and the establishment of new positions to enable the HIA to continue to deliver existing and new services.

04

The HIA secured new funding in 2021 to enable the hospital discharge service to continue helping residents return home safely from hospital and to prevent readmission

05

The HIA successfully delivered the Disabled Facilities Grant programme and commenced work with Foundations to develop a new policy using Regulatory Reform Powers to add greater flexibility to the DFG service.

06

Charged for Services introduced in April 2021 enabling residents to pay for a number of enhanced HIA services.

07

A new DFG Energy Advice Service and Energy Retrofit Service introduced.

OUR INTEGRATED APPROACH TO ADAPTATIONS

The HIA continued to deliver and improve our fully integrated adaptation service. The service incorporates all adaptations, including the DFG programme and minor adaptations within one organisation, providing a one stop type service for all home adaptation related needs. This fully integrated service is prevention based, aiming to assist residents first experiencing difficulties.

All clients are contacted by a 'trusted assessor level 4 qualified Caseworker who can offer a full assessment and proactively identify those in need of other assistance, such as minor adaptations, handyperson services, warm homes work, assistance increasing income/raising funding and assistance undertaking repairs. Our Caseworkers aim to consider the following when assessing a clients need:



Health and general well-being of client.



Ability to manage in existing home.



Finances and receipt of benefits.



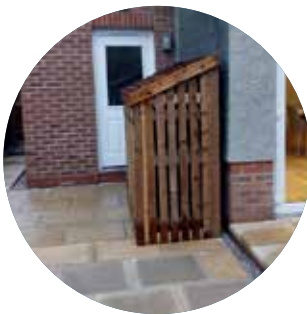
Condition of home, extent of any repairs and suitability for making necessary adaptations.



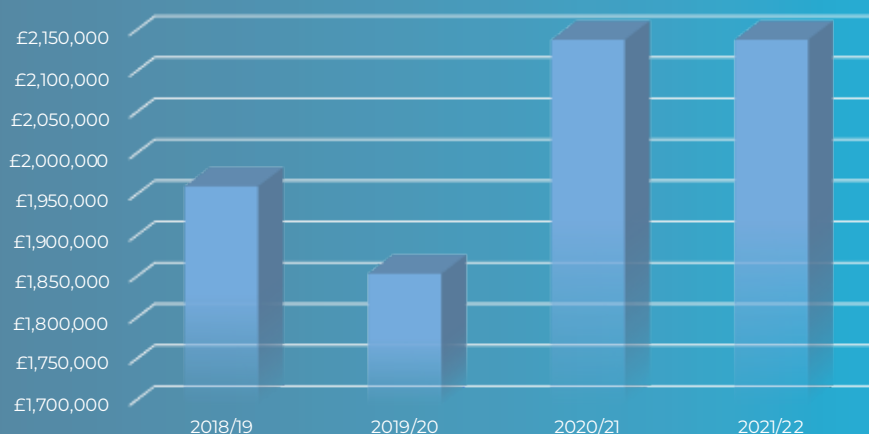
Social support available from friends and family.

DELIVERING THE DISABLED FACILITIES GRANTS PROGRAMME (DFG)

The HIA continued to deliver a first-class DFG programme throughout 2021. DFG's provide funding to help vulnerable residents adapt their homes to enable them to lead more independent lives or be cared for at home. These statutory grants are means tested and delivered in accordance with the Housing Grants, Construction & Regeneration Act 1996. The grant has been in existence for 25 years, however in recent years it has formed part of the Better Care Fund, a pooled health and social care budget with funding distributed by Lancashire County Council. In recognition of the ageing population and the rising need for adaptations, funding for DFG's has increased considerably over recent years.



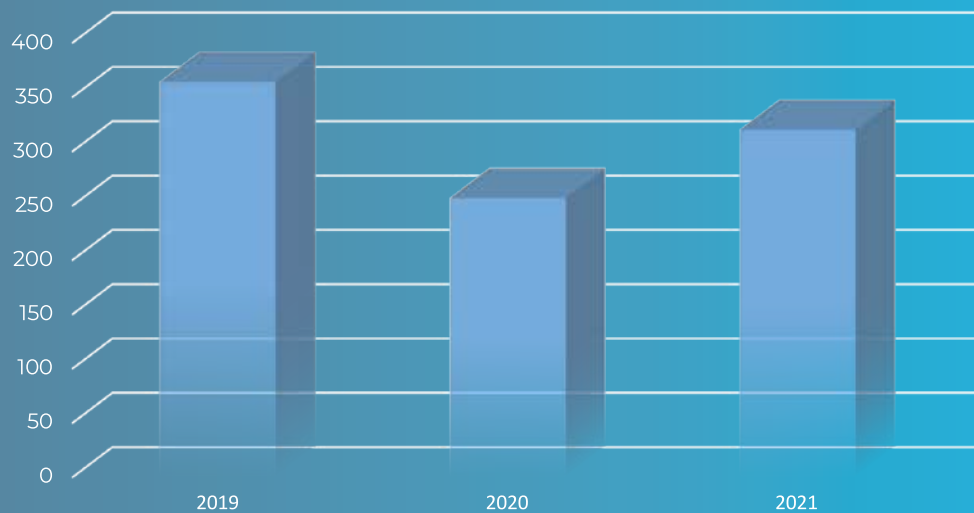
Lancaster's DFG budget allocation through Better Care Fund



The HIA continued to deliver grants without waiting lists throughout 2021. All HIA clients are screened for possible adaptations and assisted through the grants process. Assistance includes completion of the required paperwork, production of schedules and help obtaining quotes to provide a first-class adaptation service for our clients.

Demand for DFG's remained high in 2021. This is a direct result of the integrated adaptation service, with the proactive screening of all clients for adaptations together with promotional work undertaken district wide.

No of Disabled Facilities Grant Cases



The HIA Caseworkers have continued to proactively find clients in need of adaptations. Residents are assisted to procure independent Occupational Therapist reports to speed up the assessment process. Our Caseworkers are trained to Trusted Assessor Level 4, which provides us with the ability to assess non-complex adaptations inhouse.

185

New DFG cases proactively generated by HIA in 2021

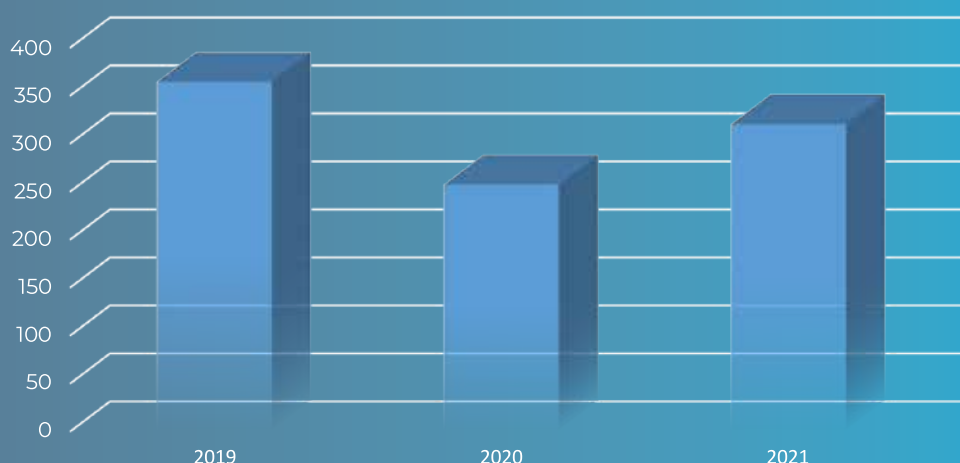
Contractors undertaking adaptation work

The HIA continue to use an online procurement system which avoids the need for residents having to obtain several quotes. This system enables grants to be awarded instantly, based on schedules of rates from local experienced contractors. Grants are awarded, not only on lowest cost, but on the availability of contractors to complete work quickly. The HIA have also continued to complete disabled grant work inhouse wherever possible.

£35,232.10

Value of DFG work completed inhouse in 2021

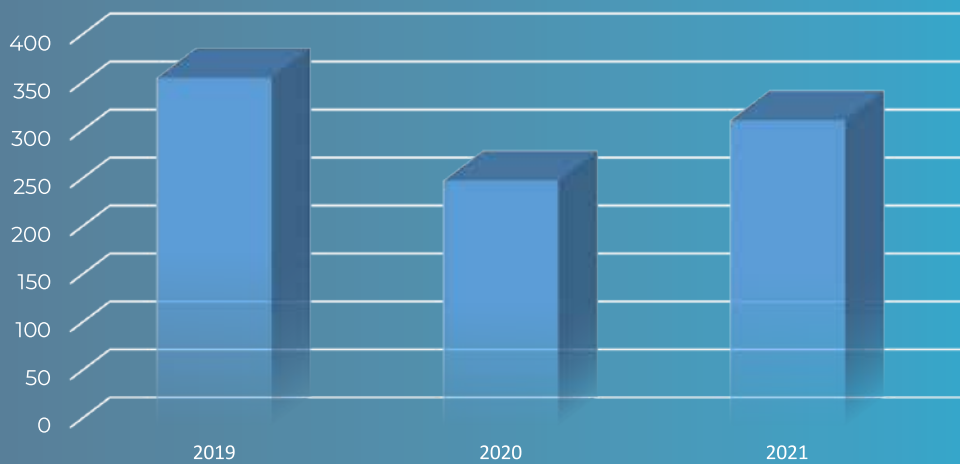
No of Disabled Facilities Grants Approved



312

Grant approved in 2021

No of Disabled Facilities Grants Completed

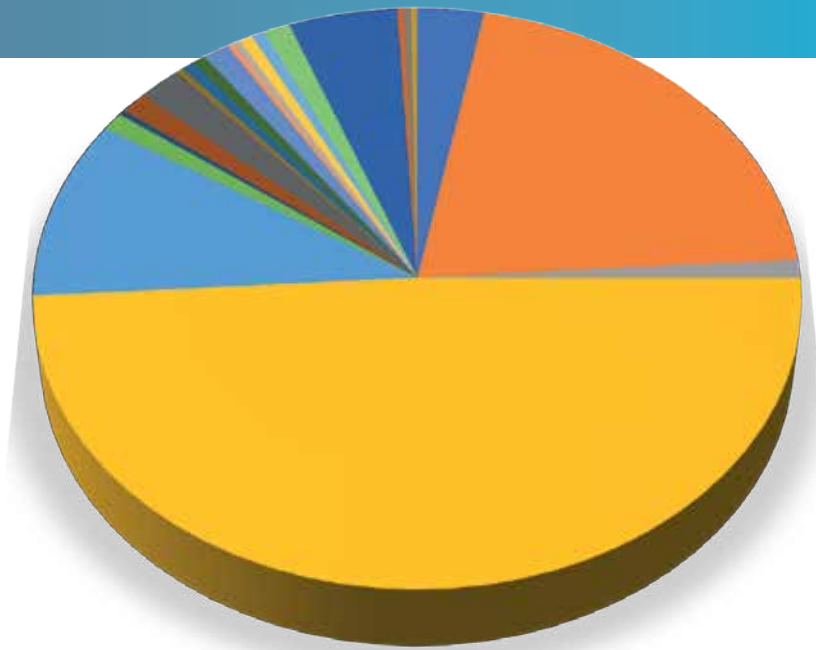


188

Average No of completed DFG's per Local Authority nationally

320

Grants completed in Lancaster in 2021



DFG by type

- | | | |
|------------------------|------------------------------|-------------------------|
| ■ Hoists | ■ Step lifts | ■ Door Widening |
| ■ Stairlifts | ■ Cavity Wall Insulation | ■ Downstairs Toilets |
| ■ Kitchens adapted | ■ Door Entry Systems | ■ Wash Dry Toilets |
| ■ Bathroom adaptations | ■ Full Heating systems | ■ Windows and Doors |
| ■ Access to properties | ■ Specialist Baths | ■ Roof Repairs |
| ■ Through Floor Lifts | ■ Electrical Repairs | ■ Underfloor Insulation |
| ■ Heating upgrades | ■ Access to Living rooms | |
| ■ Replacement Boilers | ■ Safety padding to bedrooms | |

£4,761.48

Average completed grant excluding fees

£2.06m

Total value of completed DFG work in 2021

£34,436.55

Total amount of financial contributions made by residents towards their grants in 2021



685

In 2021 the HIA completed 658 Minor Adaptation orders.

71

Prescription based aids and equipment cases completed in 2021.

MAKING HOMES SAFER WITH MINOR ADAPTATIONS

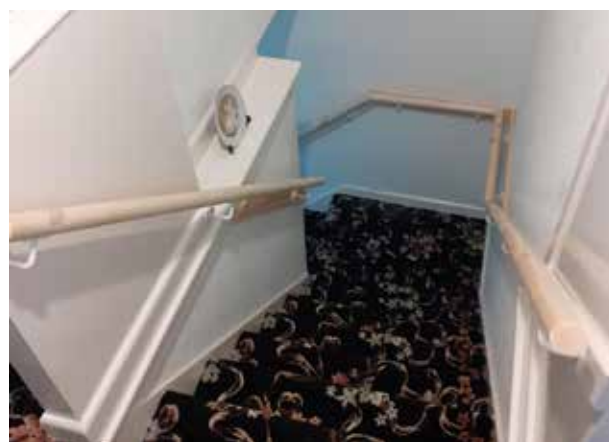
The HIA continued to undertake minor adaptations on behalf of Lancashire County Council throughout 2021. Typical adaptations include installation of Stair Rails, External Rails, and Steps. All minor adaptations are completed in-house by the HIA's own Handyperson service. The HIA aims to complete all minor adaptations within 7 – 10 days from receipt of order.

Minor Adaptations progressed as normal throughout the lockdown with additional PPE precautions and enhanced risk assessments adopted to protect HIA staff and residents.

All clients referred for minor adaptations received a follow up call/visit from one of the HIA's trusted assessor qualified

Caseworker to check if they had need for any other HIA services. In many cases this results in several additional services being provided to.

Throughout 2021 the HIA continued to act as a Retailer under the county councils Prescription service. This enables aids and equipment prescriptions issued by health professionals to be redeemed through the HIA.



The Handyperson Service

HELP GETTING THE SMALL JOBS DONE



The HIA's Handyperson Service carries out minor work, which residents find difficult to find a contractor to undertake and which help them to remain independent in their own home. There is no charge for using the Handyperson service, however clients are required to pay for any materials required. The Handypersons can complete up to two hours work at a property on each visit.

To access the Handyperson Service residents must not be in paid employment and be over sixty-five or disabled. The scheme is available to all tenants, providing the work required is not the responsibility of the landlord.

The service was suspended at the start of 2021 due to the lockdown. However, the service resumed in April 2021 and the service operated as normal for the remainder of the year.

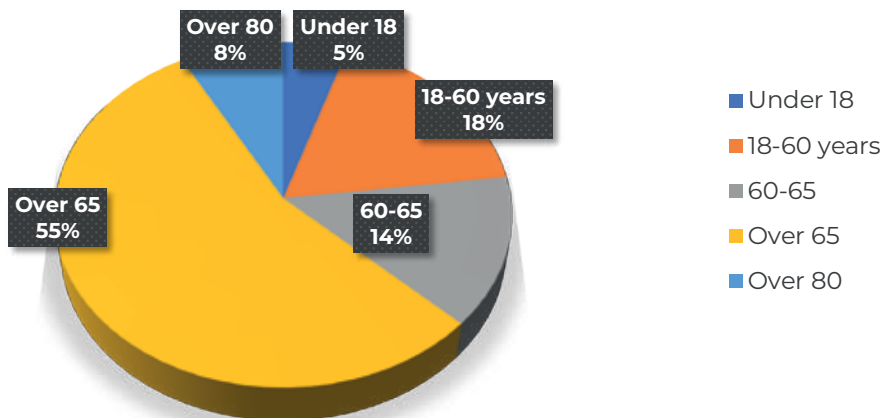
400

Handyperson jobs were completed in residents' homes in 2021

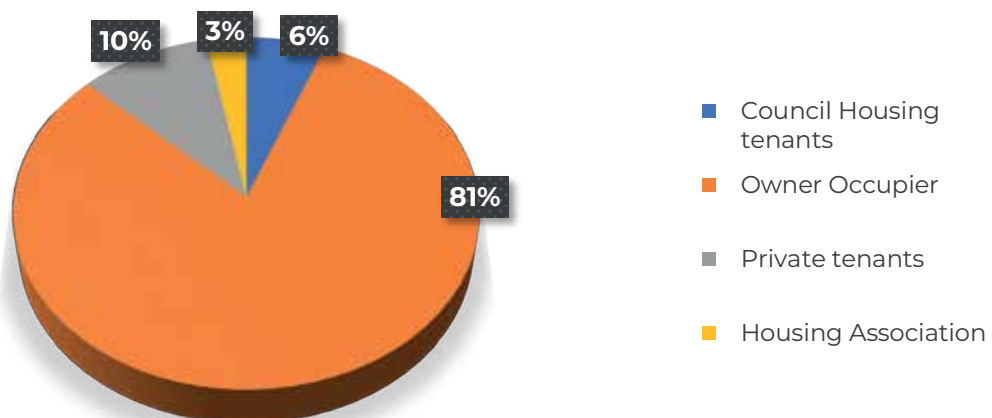
Some of the Handyperson jobs completed in 2021

- Repairs to garden fence and gate
- Refitted kitchen unit door and drawers
- Curtain rail installed
- Re-bedded loose paving flags
- Wardrobe hinges repaired
- Secured carpet
- Replaced light bulbs
- Secured loose banister rail
- Pictures and mirror hung
- Replaced broken front letter box
- Check smoke alarms
- Cleaned out gutters on bungalow
- Supply and fit Co2 detector
- New lamp shade fitted
- New garden washing line
- Remove castors from bed
- Toilet seat fitted
- Draught excluder to front door
- Replacement of shower flexi hose and shower head
- Bathroom cabinet fixed to the wall

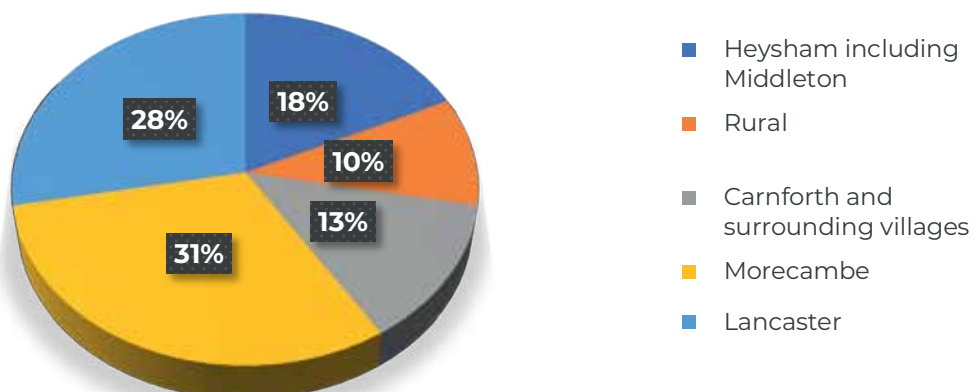
General Handyperson and Minor Adaptations work completed by age



General Handyperson and Minor Adaptations work completed by Tenure



General Handyperson and Minor Adaptations work completed by Area



Introduction of new Charged FOR HIA SERVICES

In 2021 the city council approved the introduction of charging for limited new services in the HIA. As a result, the Handypersons can now offer residents written quotes for work and take payment for work using mobile card terminals. The Handypersons also complete a range of DFG grant work inhouse. Typical work completed included small ramps, steps, and rails. This approach avoids the need to refer cases back to the county council for minor adaptations.

67



**Charged for
jobs completed
in 2021**

77



**Inhouse DFG
jobs completed
in 2021**

£13,781.49

**Amount raised
from Charged
for work in 2021**

Responding to the CLIMATE CHANGE EMERGENCY

New Energy Retrofit Service

In 2021 the HIA introduced a new Energy Retrofit service. This service helps vulnerable residents to make improvements to the energy efficiency of their homes whilst disabled adaptations are being completed. The HIA recruited and trained a new Retrofit Technical Officer to become a trained Domestic Energy Assessor and a trained PAS Energy Assessor. This new Officer carries out free energy assessments in grant applicants' homes to identify energy improvements that can be made alongside the disabled grant work. The service helps the disabled resident to secure funding, obtain quotes and undertake the work. The works can include new heating systems, new windows/doors, and various forms of home insulation.

28



**Residents were assisted
through the HIA Energy
Retrofit Service in 2021**

DFG Energy Redress Service

In 2021 the HIA also secured funding through the energy redress scheme. Under this service the HIA Caseworkers provide DFG applicants with free energy advice and minor energy improvements, which are undertaken by the HIA's Handypersons. The advice service also triggers the referrals across to the new Retrofit Service.

70



**Residents provided
with Energy Advice
through the Energy
Redress Service in
2021.**

20



**Homes improved with
energy efficiency
measures through the
Handyperson service
in 2021.**



Helping Patients return home **SAFELY FROM HOSPITAL**

At the outset of the Pandemic the HIA set up and funded a temporary hospital discharge service. The service successfully completed a wide range of jobs, enabling NHS staff to make direct referrals and for patients to be discharged on an urgent basis.

In 2021 the City Council provided funding to enable the discharge service to continue and to appoint an additional two Handypersons Technicians. This has provided the HIA with the capacity to respond quickly to urgent discharge jobs.

Protecting Residents with the **‘SANCTUARY’ SERVICE**

The HIA has continued to deliver the Sanctuary’ service, assessing and completing low level security works to the homes of ‘at risk’ clients suffering Anti-Social Behaviour and Domestic Violence. This service is delivered with funding from the council’s Homelessness service.

All sanctuary referrals are followed by a visit from a Caseworker to the client’s property. The Caseworker undertakes a property inspection to determine the extent of any works required taking into account the client’s concern. This is followed by a referral to the HIA Handyperson to complete the required works. The HIA aim to complete all Sanctuary work within three working days. The HIA stock a wide range of security goods ready to install free of charge for Sanctuary clients. Typical security measures provided under the service include, increased door/window security, provision of external security lighting and cameras.

CASE STUDIES

CASE STUDY 1

The HIA received an OT referral requesting the replacement of a suspended footpath providing access for the disabled client which was at risk of collapse. The works were completed inhouse over two days using DFG monies. The HIA consulted with all neighbours who had access below and also funded the client's temporary accommodation whilst the work was completed. One of the Handypersons even looked after the client's dog whilst they were away.



CASE STUDY 2

A client was referred to the HIA by a local mobility shop. The client had put down a deposit for a stairlift but was struggling to cover the cost of the equipment. The HIA Caseworker helped the client apply for additional benefits and referred them to an Independent OT who confirmed a stairlift was necessary. The HIA helped the client apply for a DFG and a stairlift installed within 2 weeks from initial referral. The client also referred to the Handyperson service for small repairs.

CASE STUDY 3

HIA received request for a Handyperson visit. The Handyperson noticed that the client had a very small bathroom and following a discussion the client disclosed they had suffered several recent falls. The Handyperson referred the client to a Caseworker for further assistance. The Caseworker obtained an OT report confirming a wet room was necessary and helped the client to complete an application for a DFG. The Caseworker also helped the client obtain additional benefits, obtain funding to replace a defective wall heater and referred the client for Assisted Bin Collection.



National Recognition of the **LANCASTER HIA SERVICE**

In December 2020 the HIA was awarded the National Housing Award for Innovation in Services, based on our integrated adaptation service. The judges released the following statement.

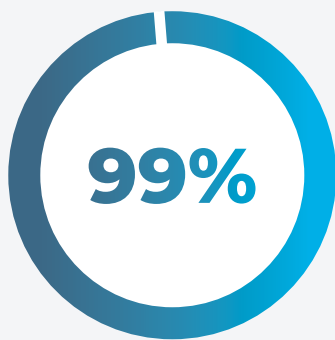
'Lancaster HIA is an in-house agency which contributes to the strategic priorities of a range of local partners. It has shortened delivery times of DFGs . It has started providing energy advice, provides supports to self-funders through charged for services and uses local contractors to support the local economy and provides a hospital discharge service to address bed-blocking.

The HIA has integrated the delivery of major adaptations, minor adaptations and aids and equipment into one team, placing the client at the centre of the adaptation process. Despite cuts to discretionary services throughout the county the HIA has continued to increase services which further integrate with the DFG programme.'

In 2021 Lancaster City Council also won 'Council of the Year' at the Northwest energy efficiency awards. This was for the work to support residents with energy efficiency which included the work being undertaken by the HIA's new DFG Retrofit Officer based within the HIA.

FEEDBACK FROM OUR CLIENTS

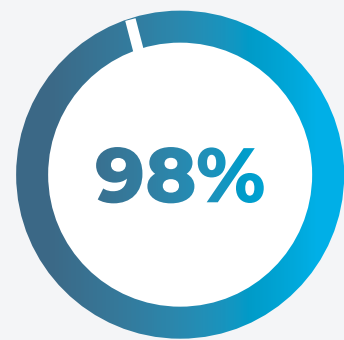
HIA clients are provided a satisfaction questionnaire on completion of the service. In 2021 the HIA achieved the following levels of customer service.



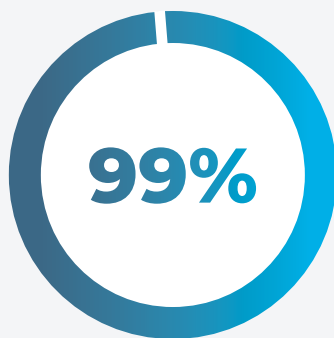
Of clients were satisfied with the HIA's DFG Service.



Of clients were satisfied with all other services provided by the HIA.



Of clients agreed the HIA service had increased their independence, improved their quality of life, health, or confidence.



Of clients were satisfied with the quality of the work completed by the HIA Handyperson Service.



Of clients would use the HIA service again and recommend the service to others.

HIA CUSTOMER SATISFACTION COMMENTS

“

High praise for the
Handyperson who helped
fit shelves he was helpful
respectful and did a great
job

”

“

Delighted
with the work that has
been done its
beautiful

”

“

Very satisfied and
pleased with the work
(bathroom and, stairlift).
Nice job, thank you.

”

“

Thank you
to the team for their
professionalism
and care

”

“

Workmanship is first class
handyperson was courteous in every
way and a pleasure to have met him

”

“

Thank you to the
handyperson who was
very kind good mannered
and efficient and cheery

”

“

Love the shower, a big
thank you.

”

“

The contractors were
excellent, professional,
and very polite.

”

“

Service was excellent.
The gentleman doing the
work was polite and very
kind.

”

“

Cannot thank
enough for help. Made
life so much better, Will
always be
grateful.

”

“

Very satisfied with
standard of work,
attitude of staff,
everything.
Thank you.

”

“

Very impressed
by the prompt attention
and service. Delighted
with the
bathroom.

”

“

Staff who assessed the situation
were professional, kind and knew
their job Stair lift has made a huge,
difference

”

“

Your service team are
amazing and really do a
professional, job.

”

“

Made unbelievable
difference for the better.
Thanks all, involved.

”

“

Thank you, has nobody
to help since husband
died and no family, so
appreciates the service

”

“

Rails are
fantastic, Workmen, were
great. No
problems.

”

“

We are totally satisfied
and grateful for your assistance,
especially pleased with handrails
which enable me to go out, & about.
Such kindness and consideration
from everyone thanks

”

How to contact the Home Improvement Agency

By telephone: 01524 582257

Email: hiaenquiries@lancaster.gov.uk

www.Lancaster.gov.uk/homeimprovement

