



Foundations

DFG Case Study #6

Nottingham City Council

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About Foundations

Foundations is the National Body for Home Improvement Agencies and Handyperson Services in England as appointed by the Department of Communities and Local Government.

Foundations' remit is to:



Engage with providers and commissioners to monitor the sector and enhance the quality and reach of home improvement agency services



Arrange events and training



Develop tools and resources



News and publicity

For more information visit: www.foundations.org.uk

About Home Improvement Agencies

Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs), sometimes known as Care & Repair or Staying Put schemes, help vulnerable people maintain independence in their own homes. Their services include:

- visiting clients at home or providing detailed telephone advice;
- setting out housing options to help clients decide what type of housing is best suited to their changing needs;
- checking entitlement to any financial help, including grants and charitable funding;
- project management, drawing up plans, getting estimates and liaising with others involved in any building work/adaptations needed, such as council grants officers and occupational therapists;
- provision of handyperson services, to carry out small jobs around the home, help with gardening, or coming home from hospital; and
- helping to make homes more energy-efficient.

A searchable directory of accredited HIAs and handyperson services is available at: www.findmyhia.org.uk



About Nottingham City Council

Nottingham is a medium sized city based in the East Midlands with a population of 318,900. It has an award winning public transport system and supports 2 league football teams and hosts many Test matches at Trent Bridge.

Health and disability

Life expectancy rates are below the national average and in the 2105 indices of deprivation Nottingham ranks the 8th most deprived out of 326 Local Authority districts in England and over one third of the Lower Super Output areas in Nottingham City CCG area appear in the most deprived 10% nationally for the health deprivation and disability indicator. 18.2 % of people have a long term activity limiting illness or disability and 16.76 of pensioners receive attendance allowance.

Levels of gross disposable income average £11,757 as opposed to the English average of £17,559 meaning that less disposable income equates to the likelihood of falling into fuel poverty with the consequent health risks and damage to well being .



How it works

Nottingham's in-house home improvement agency has delivered cross-tenure adaptations for disabled people for nearly 25 years. Delivering over 1000 adaptations annually for owner occupiers, private tenants, RSL tenants and council house tenants has enabled the Adaptations & Renewal Agency to build a team of experienced officers who understand that success depends on working closely with the disabled citizen, the occupational therapist and the contractor.



Efficient ways of working

The Agency incorporates a preventative adaptations (PAD) handyperson service for minor adaptations to anyone aged 60 or over. This aims to increase independence at home, minimise falls and facilitate timely discharge from hospital, and increase the self-confidence of older people to remain at home. Requests for assistance can come from any source, and no professional assessment is required. The service is jointly funded by the City Council and NHS.

The Agency includes two Occupational Therapy staff seconded from the mainstream community OT service. They work very closely with lettings officers in Housing Associations and the city's ALMO to ensure that previously adapted properties are advertised and re-let appropriately – in the past there were many horror stories of the ALMO letting expensively adapted properties to tenants with no need for those facilities, or even of recently installed vertical lifts (costing up to £10,000) being put into a skip! Such incidents are minimised now with the OT staff assessing the suitability of properties matched to disabled tenants within a target time of 2 working days and so provide timely and accurate guidance for lettings officers. By combining their OT skills and their knowledge of housing and adaptations they are able to ensure that the most suitable tenant is rehoused into the most suitable property, which maximises the use of adapted stock and reduces the need for further adaptations.

In addition, a further OT attached to the Agency has been working with the ALMO's Decent Homes programme to ensure that any bathroom or kitchen upgrades are designed to meet the needs of disabled tenants. This has benefited the tenant, the ALMO and the Council, and successfully avoided the embarrassment of the Agency having to remove a newly installed bathroom in order to provide a level access shower.

The strong working relationship with Occupational Therapy has paid dividends with close co-operation on policy, procedures and practices e.g. a Major Adaptations Panel made up of OT and Adaptations managers considers the best outcome for all complex cases. This promotes the client-centred approach that results in the best solution for the disabled citizen, enhances shared learning, and minimises wasted effort and sub-optimal outcomes. Whilst current joint working effectively provides the citizen with a 'one stop shop' service, there is an ambition within both services to integrate further in line with the current best practice advice.



Best practice in short

Co-location of Occupational Therapists ensuring previously adapted properties are re-let to disabled tenants. This saves scarce DFG resources and speeds up the time taken for appropriate relocation of disabled people to suitable properties.

Preventative adaptations. The agency offers this service to anyone over 60 with a disability without a means test accepting referrals from any source. Minor adaptations are carried out without delay preventing accidents and reducing demand for acute services.

Having the Occupational Therapists skills and adaptations experience in one team has enabled the Agency to provide a consultation service for organisations planning new build or major refurbishment programmes. By scrutinising their plans, the Agency can advise on some relatively minor modifications that can potentially save thousands of pounds if an occupier becomes disabled in the future. For example, the positioning of a toilet just a few inches away from a wall can facilitate the use of a toilet frame in the future without having to move the toilet. Adjusting the position of doorways in a hallway at design stage can obviate the need for costly works later to accommodate a wheelchair user.



Foundations

THE NATIONAL BODY FOR HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY
AND HANDYPERSON SERVICES

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