

Evaluation of existing home improvement services in England: Case study profiles

The Centre for Ageing Better believes that in order to reduce the number of unsafe homes across England, we need improve the local offer in accessing support for people to improve their homes. Whilst there are some examples of great practice in delivering a home improvement service, it is very much a post-code lottery and millions of people are left without adequate support.

We are calling on the UK government to provide local one-stop shops for all aspects of home repairs and adaptations, with support on everything from finding trusted tradespeople and identifying what work needs to be done, to how to finance repairs and improve energy efficiency. We call this a Good Home Hub.

As part of our Good Home Hub programme, we have commissioned an evaluation of eight different home improvement services across England. Each case study area service provides most the elements, if not all, of the elements Ageing Better believe make up a Good Home Hub.

The evaluation of these existing good practice services will provide detailed evidence on what a Good Home Hub looks like practically and how local areas can adopt this model, as well as demonstrating to national and local policy makers the impact of a comprehensive home improvement service (aka a Good Home Hub).

The profiles included in these slides are of the existing home improvement services involved in the evaluation.

Case study 1

Case study 1 is a home improvement service in the North-West of England. It is part of a district council within a two-tier authority and sits within the Health and Housing Directorate. The locality is a mix of urban and rural spaces. 23.5% of housing in the area is considered non-decent, this is significantly higher than the national average of 16.7%.

Funding

Core funding: £2.3 million Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) funding.

Additional funding: £140,000 Warm Homes funding.

Staff

The service spent just over £500,000 on staffing last year and employs the equivalent of 15 full time staff. The breakdown of staff roles is:

- 2 managers
- 5 handy-persons
- 2 administrative staff
- 6 other staff including inhouse occupational therapy

Service provided	No. of people the service helped in 2022/23
Handyperson service	400
Delivery of Disabled Facilities Grant	330
Welfare and benefits advice service	50
Hospital discharge and reablement	77
Energy efficiency service	112

The The Home Improvement Service (HIA) also provides a paid-for adaptations and handypersons service for households who are not eligible for means-tested grant funding.

Impact

“I’ve had a stairlift installed and that has saved my sanity if you like, reduced my depression. [...] When you’re having to rely on people to help you all the time it erodes your confidence, and you no longer feel like the person you were. So that thing of just getting me the stairlift, if they’d given me a million pounds, I wouldn’t have felt any better. The caseworker was like a little ray of sunshine that came into our lives. [...] It’s just the comfort of knowing I know where I am, I know the house and know how to get around it, so it means a lot to stay in this home.”

(Service user, 2024)

Case study 2

Case study 2 is a non-profit home improvement service in the Yorkshire and Humber region of England. They are a contractor for the city council and the region's Integrated Care Board, for whom they deliver DFGs, minor adaptations and repairs, and support people discharged from hospital. The locality is mostly made up of urban spaces. 20.8% of housing in the area is considered non-decent, this is higher than the national average of 16.7%.

Service provision

Case study B currently provides the following services:

- Handyperson service
- Deliver Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs).
- Home repair grants
- Hospital discharge and reablement services
- Minor home energy efficiency improvements

Funding

Core funding: £8.2 million of DFG funding.

Additional funding: £750,000 from local authority contracts and £1.2 million of their own contributions.

Staff

They have a staffing budget of just over £1.1 million per annum and they employ a total of 25 full time equivalent staff. The breakdown of staff roles is:

- 7 managers
- 18 delivery staff

Impact

Case Study 2 report that they helped 955 people access disabled adaptations and DFG's during the 2022-2023 financial year. They offer a collaborative Home Plus Service delivered with Age UK and Groundwork which has supported over 6,000 households in total.

“It’s nice to just pop up and have a shower, the floor’s completely non-slip and any questions I had about anything they answered them so they couldn’t be more helpful really.”

(Service user, 2024)

“Out in the garden they put in handrails. They put in three, not just one down the side, so that saves you from falling. [...] It’s wonderful, it’s freedom. It just gives you freedom to be independent, to get out.”

(Service user, 2024)

Case study 3

Case study 3 is a home improvement service in the South-East of England. It is based within a district authority and is part of the city council. The locality is largely urban. 12.7% of housing in the area is considered non-decent, this is below the national average of 16.7%.

Service provision

Case study 3 provides the following services:

- Deliver Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)
- Grant assisted home repairs e.g. weatherproofing
- Healthy Homes Assessment / Home Safety Check
- Handyperson service
- Trusted contractors to carry out home improvements
- Hospital discharge and reablement services
- Energy efficiency improvements and boiler servicing
- Welfare and benefits advice
- Information and advice on how to fund home repairs
- Providing loans to low-income owners
- Small grants e.g. dementia or assistive technology

Funding

Core funding: £1.4 million DFG funding.

Additional funding: £45,000 of other local authority funding and £28,000 Warm Home funding.

Staff

The service employs the equivalent of 9 full time staff. The breakdown of staff roles including:

- 3 delivery staff,
- Handyperson team of 2
- 4 other staff members including management and administrative roles

Impact

Case Study 3 helped 656 people with home improvements in the 2023/2024 financial year.

“Before, my children and I would be piling things on top of us before we went to bed. But now the house is warm enough that I can even just use a sheet to cover myself. [...] This new shower is level, I can just walk, sit, finish, just walk which is the best thing they did.”

(Service user, 2024)

Case study 4

Case study 4 is a home improvement service in the North-East of England. It is part of a local authority and sits within the Adult Social Care directorate. The locality is a unitary authority and a predominantly urban area. 15.3% of dwellings are considered 'non-decent' as of 2019 which is below the national average of 16.7%.

Funding

Core funding: £2.2 million of DFG funding.

Additional funding: £400,000 from other local authority funding and £200,000 contribution from their own funds.

Staff

The service has a staffing budget of £500,000 per annum and employ the equivalent of 22 full time staff. The breakdown of staff roles is:

- 4 managers
- 9 delivery staff
- 7 handypersons
- 6 administrative staff

Service provision

Service provided	No. of people the service helped in 2022/23
Handyperson and home repair service	2,400
Delivery of Disabled Facilities Grants	262
Energy efficiency service	241
Hospital discharge and reablement service	183
Information and advice on how to fund home repairs	146
Support to find trusted contractors	30

Impact

“[They] helped me get my life back. I was ashamed to have anyone in the property.”

(Service user, 2024)

“Like I say I didn’t realise [all the services] were combined like this and it certainly does make a difference once you’re assessed and everything, it goes on from there. Everyone knows what each other is doing basically. As I say it’s really really good. I wouldn’t hesitate if I needed anything to just ring them.”

(Service user, 2024)

Case study 5

Case Study 5 is an independent charity in the North-West of England and is funded through the city council but provides some services that span across local authority boundaries into neighbouring boroughs. The locality is largely made up of urban spaces. 19.2% of homes are non-decent, this is higher than the national average of 16.7%.

Funding

Core funding: £600,000 of DFG funding.

Additional funding: £500,000 from other local authority funding and £400,000 from Health Service funding.

Staff

The service has a staffing budget of £750,000 per annum and employ the equivalent of 30 full time equivalent staff. The breakdown of staff roles is:

- 7 managers
- 23 delivery staff
- 5.3 handypersons
- 5.8 administrative staff

Service provision

Service provided	No. of people the service helped in 2022/23
Hospital discharge and reablement services	11,956
Handyperson service	6,702
Healthy Homes Assessment / Homes Safety Check	1,919
Welfare and benefits service	1335
Information and advice on how to fund home repairs	1044
Help to find trusted contractors	862
Grants to make home improvements (in additions to Disabled Facilities Grant)	414
Energy efficiency service	254
Delivery of Disabled Facilities Grant	164
Loans to low-income home owners	23
Small grants for dementia care	19

Impact

“[The service provides] people you can turn to really. I think it’s when you don’t have control, when you don’t know what to do. It helps having that extra somebody to rely on.”

(Service user, 2024)

Case study 6

Case study 6 is a home improvement service in the South-West of England. It is part of the unitary local authority and sits within the Housing Directorate. The locality is an urban area with significant rural parts. Ranging across its districts 13.8%-20.7% of dwellings are considered 'non-decent'. This range incorporates the English average of 16.7%

Funding

Core funding: £5.4 million of DFG funding.

Additional funding: £11.9 million of Warm Homes funding, £400,000 contribution from the organisational reserves and small pots of other local authority funding.

Staff

The service has a staffing budget of £950,000 per annum and employ the equivalent of 22 full time staff. The breakdown of staff roles is:

- 4 managers
- 15 delivery staff
- 3 administrative staff

Service provision

Service provided	No. of people the service helped in 2022/23
Energy efficiency service	4120
Healthy homes assessment / Homes safety check	850
Handyperson service	300
Delivery of disabled facilities grant	240
Help to find trusted contractors	150
Loans to low-income homeowners	90
Welfare and benefits advice service	804
Hospital discharge and reablement	60
Grants to make home improvements (in addition to Disabled Facilities Grant)	40
Small grants for dementia care	20

Impact

“But just to see it ... And to hear from the carer is that that you know how excited that that they were to move [into their adapted home]. That makes the job worthwhile. You know, I think that’s why we do it.”

(Employee, 2024)

Case study 7

Case study 7 is a home improvement service in the East of England. It is part of the city council and sits within the Community and Housing Directorate. The locality is predominantly urban. 16.7% of housing in the area is considered non-decent, this is the same as the national average.

Service provision

Case study 7 currently provides the following services:

- Delivers Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)
- Healthy Homes Assessment / Home Safety Check
- Home Repair Grants
- Hospital discharge and re-ablement services
- Making homes warmer / more energy efficient
- Welfare and benefits advice
- Providing loans to low-income home owners
- Small grants, e.g. dementia or assistive technology
- Social prescribing hub

Funding

Core funding: £2.2 million of DFG funding

Additional funding: £2.4 million contribution from its own reserve finances.

Staff

Case Study 7 spent just under £680,000 on staffing costs in 2023/24 and have 17.1 full time equivalent staff. The breakdown of staff roles is:

- 3 managers
- 12.1 delivery staff
- 2 administrative staff

Impact

They supported 450 people with home improvement services last year.

“It is something that’s essential for them to carry on living in their family homes, and have fulfilling lives. That’s kind of what you want, is someone to have a fulfilled life.”

(Employee, 2024)

Case study 8

Case Study 8 is an independent home improvement service with charitable status operating in the South-West of England. The service works across three local authorities: Local Authority 1, a unitary authority; Local Authority 2, a unitary authority; and Local Authority 3, a county authority within a two-tier structure. Consequently, Case Study H works across a geography with a mix of urban and rural spaces, including one large city in Authority 1, one mid-sized city in Authority 2, and several small historic towns across Authority 3.

The proportion of non-decent housing is slightly lower than the England average of 16.7% in Authority 1 (16.2%) and Authority 2 (15.8%), but slightly higher in Authority 3 (17.3%).

Service provision

Case Study 8 currently provides the following services:

- Handy person services for people of retirement age or people with a disability
- Disabled adaptations / Disabled Facilities Grants (DFGs)
- Lists of trusted contractors to carry out home improvements
- Hospital discharge and reablement services
- Winter Warmth Service – energy efficiency improvements and retrofit assessments
- Hoarding support e.g. property clearances, ongoing group support
- Support moving home e.g. identifying suitable properties
- Lists of trusted contractors to carry out home improvements

Funding

In Local Authority 1 the core funding is worth over £1,200,000, with the contract funded by the authority's DFG allocation. Case Study 8 generates over £200,000 from other funding sources to provide services in Local Authority 1, with around a third of this figure being works households have paid for independently.

Impact

Case Study 8 supported 450 people with home improvement services last year.

“I think it’s given my husband confidence to try and move around more and do things for himself. [...] Having the grabrail in that toilet, it’s a very small area but he can grab it as he goes in and I think it’s made him more independent.”

(Service user, 2024)

Staff

Case Study 8 has 50 full time equivalent staff. Staff roles include a Customer Services team, operational case workers and technical officers for each authority, handypersons, and central services (e.g. finance, human resources).