



Cambs Home Improvement Agency  
Annual Report 2020 - 2021

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# Introduction

## by our Lead Councillors

As district councils, we faced unprecedented challenges this year. Council staff were redeployed to roles that supported tackling the pandemic – areas like issuing food parcels and providing support and advice to the community.

Our Environmental Health, Housing and Community Teams had to quickly respond to, and implement the national Track and Trace Service working closely with

agencies across Cambridgeshire to ensure our residents were protected as much as possible from the coronavirus.

Cambs Home Improvement Agency played a role in ensuring any urgent adaptations were completed for those being discharged from hospital and in helping to avoid admissions by keeping disabled people safe in their own home.

Many of the Agency's clients are clinically extremely vulnerable resulting in non urgent work being postponed in response to the national lockdown.

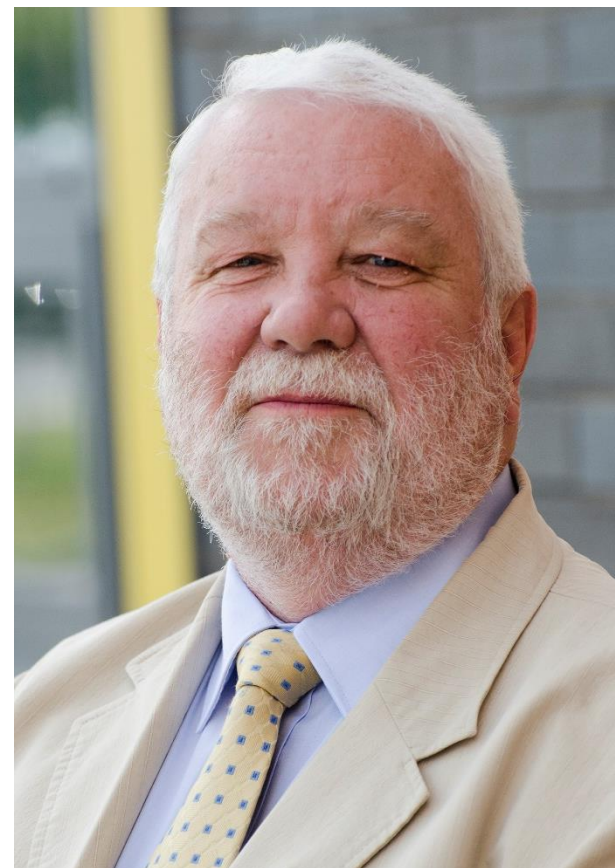
Through this time, raising awareness of Disabled Facilities Grants continues to be a key objective for the three councils and we continue to work collaboratively with the NHS and Social Care to meet this objective.



**Cllr. Mike Todd-Jones**  
Cambridge City  
Council



**Cllr. Ryan Fuller**  
Huntingdonshire  
District Council



**Cllr. John Batchelor**  
South Cambridgeshire  
District Council

Photo Credit – Cllr. Mike Todd-Jones: Anna Smith

# Governance

Since 2012, Cambs HIA's Board continues to be well represented by officers from Cambridge City, Huntingdonshire, South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge County Councils.

## Our Management Board:



**Helen Reed,**  
Housing Strategy  
Manager, **Cambridge  
City Council**



**Finlay Flett,**  
Operational Manager,  
**Huntingdonshire District  
Council**



**Julie Fletcher,**  
Head of Housing  
Strategy,  
**South Cambs District  
Council**



**Lisa Sparks,**  
Commissioner (Adults),  
**Cambridgeshire County  
Council**



**Frances Swann,**  
Manager,  
**Cambs Home  
Improvement Agency**



**Julia Hovells,**  
Principal Accountant,  
**Cambridge City  
Council.**



# About Us

The agency completed £2 million worth of adaptations. This represents a reduction of £1.3m in comparison to previous years which is comparative with other Home Improvement Agencies nationally and is mainly as a result of the national lockdown restrictions which is comparative with other Home Improvement Agencies nationally.

Despite a reduction in demand for Disabled Facilities Grants, Cambs HIA completed £240,000 worth of repairs and energy efficiency work funded by Special Purpose Grants – this includes replacing boilers, roof repairs and remedying problems with damp. This represents an increase of £90,000 on the previous year.

Our team has remained fairly stable with one new employee being inducted and trained remotely into her new role and we have also appointed some new contractors.



## A Message from Our Manager, Frances Swann:

Our focus at the start of lockdown was to ensure the safety and well being of our clients and staff. The national lockdown saw staff using new ways of working and having to prioritise adaptations which were either almost complete or urgent for the client's needs. We not only had to communicate well with our clients to make sure they understood the likelihood of delays, but also ensure the financial stability of our contractors.

Our work is extremely dependent on the flow of referrals from the Occupational Therapists who were redeployed into primary care to address the national pandemic. This resulted in the Agency completing less work this year and completing fewer adaptations.

However, as is highlighted in this report, the national lockdown enabled the much needed space to develop and implement our new IT systems and a new system went live in March 2021.

The team and our contractors adjusted well to a new way of working in a "COVID safe" manner and despite a slight increase in the number of complaints this year, we also saw good levels of customer satisfaction despite the challenges faced by all.

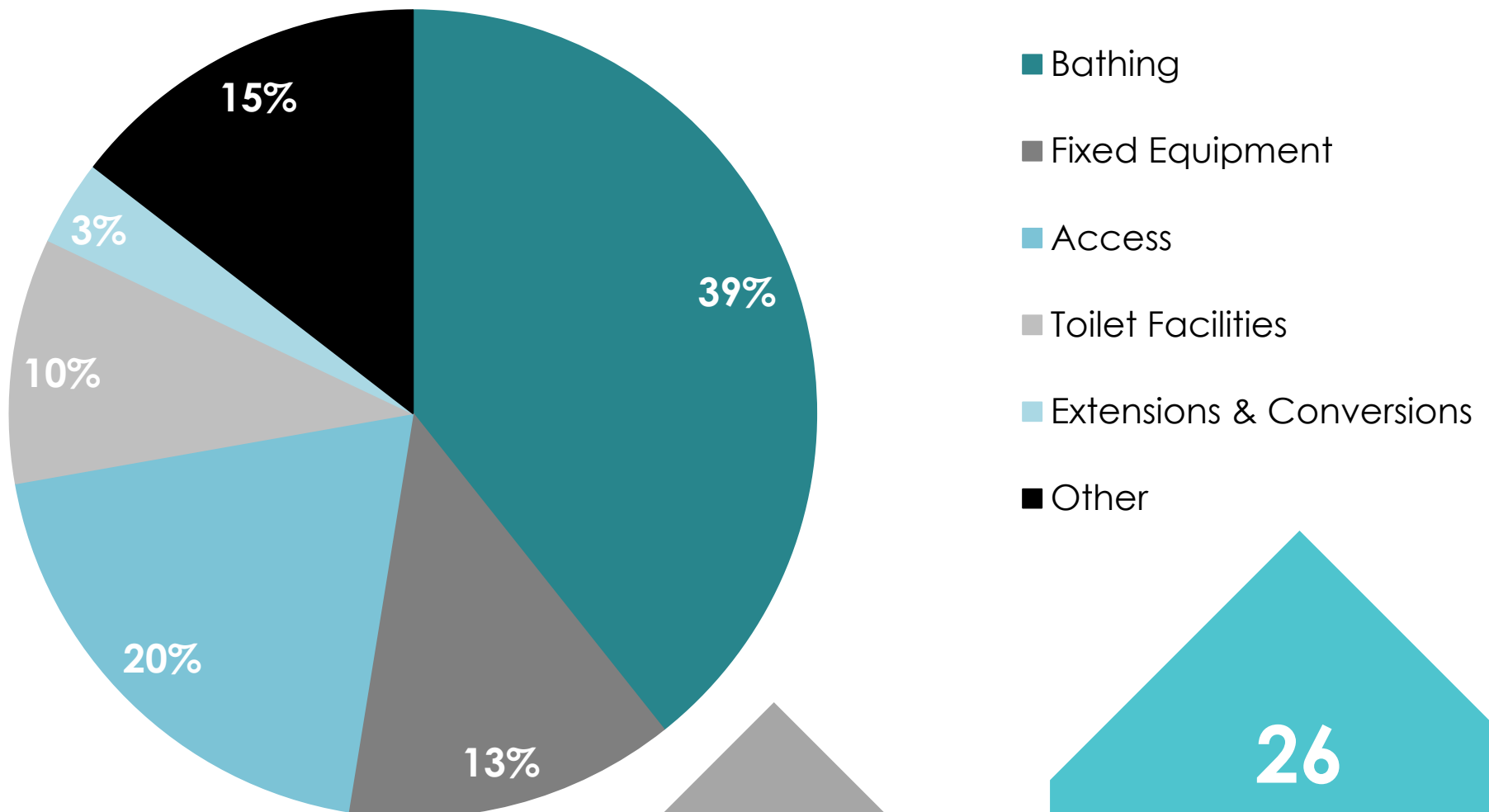


# 2020 – 2021: Highlights

## Completed Works

In 2020/21 we enabled **166** disabled and elderly people to adapt their homes. This represents a reduction on previous years which is attributed to fewer referrals because of the pandemic.

## Types of DFG completed



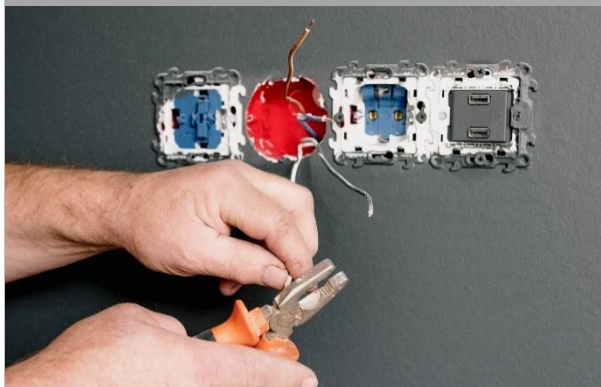
21

Private jobs competed for clients ineligible for a grant



24

Special Purpose Grants completed in Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire



26

Disabled Facilities Grants completed for disabled children across Cambridge City, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire



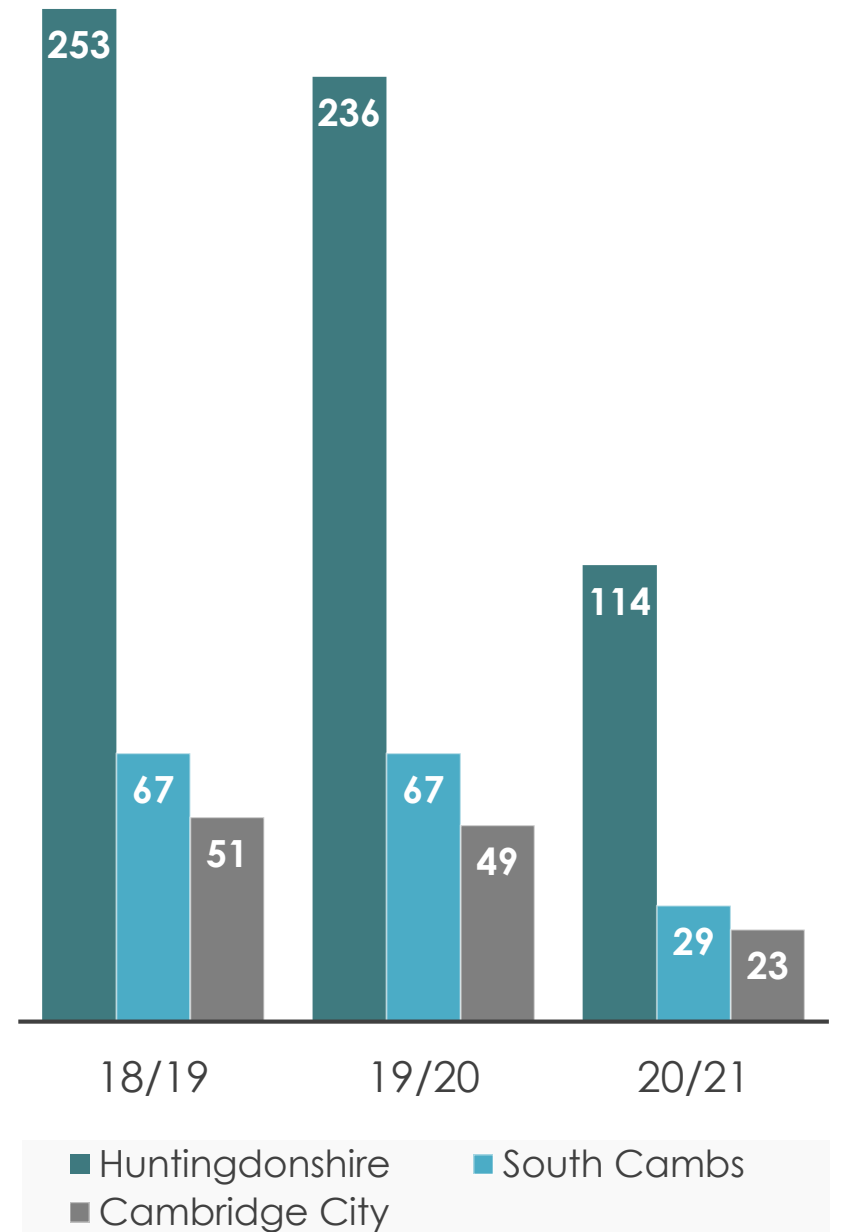


339

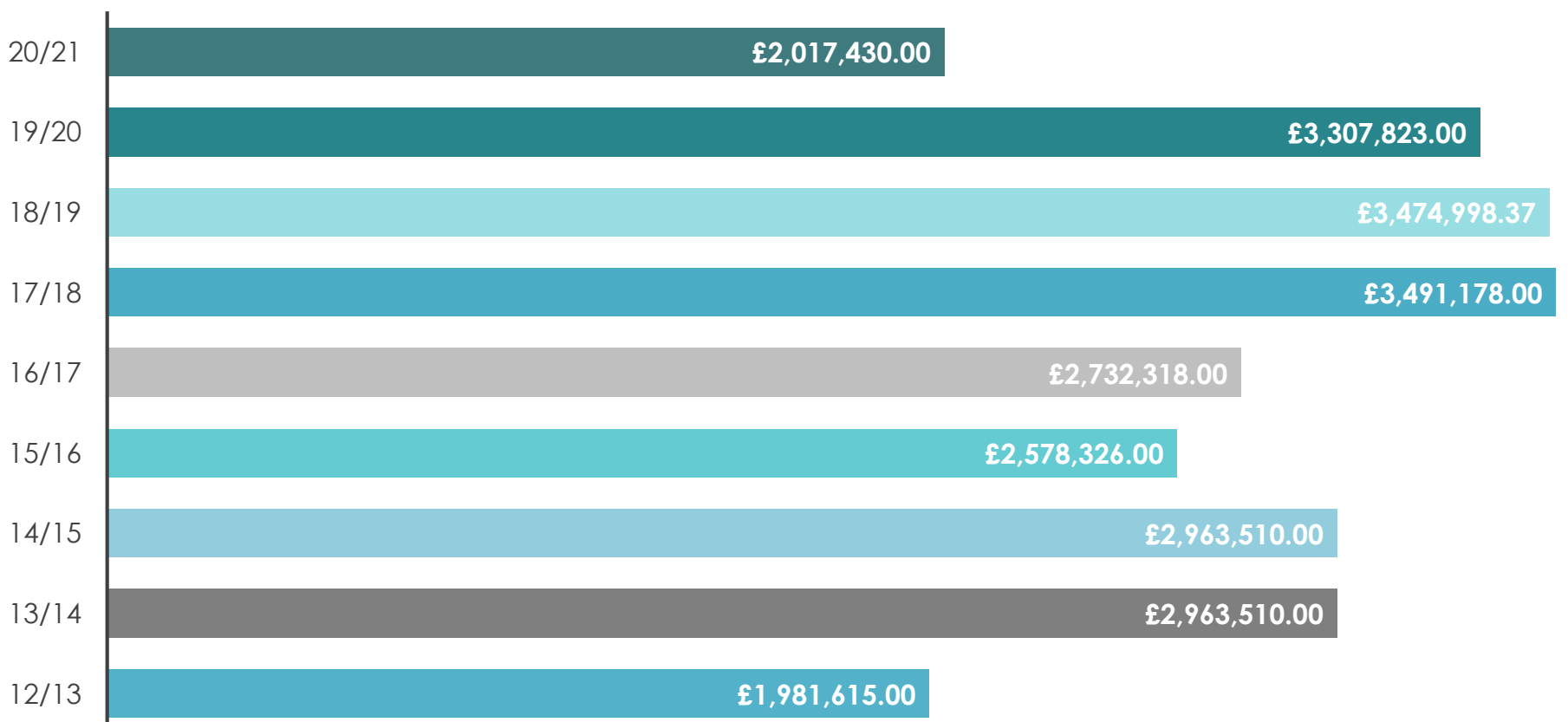
preliminary test of resources completed to check client eligibility



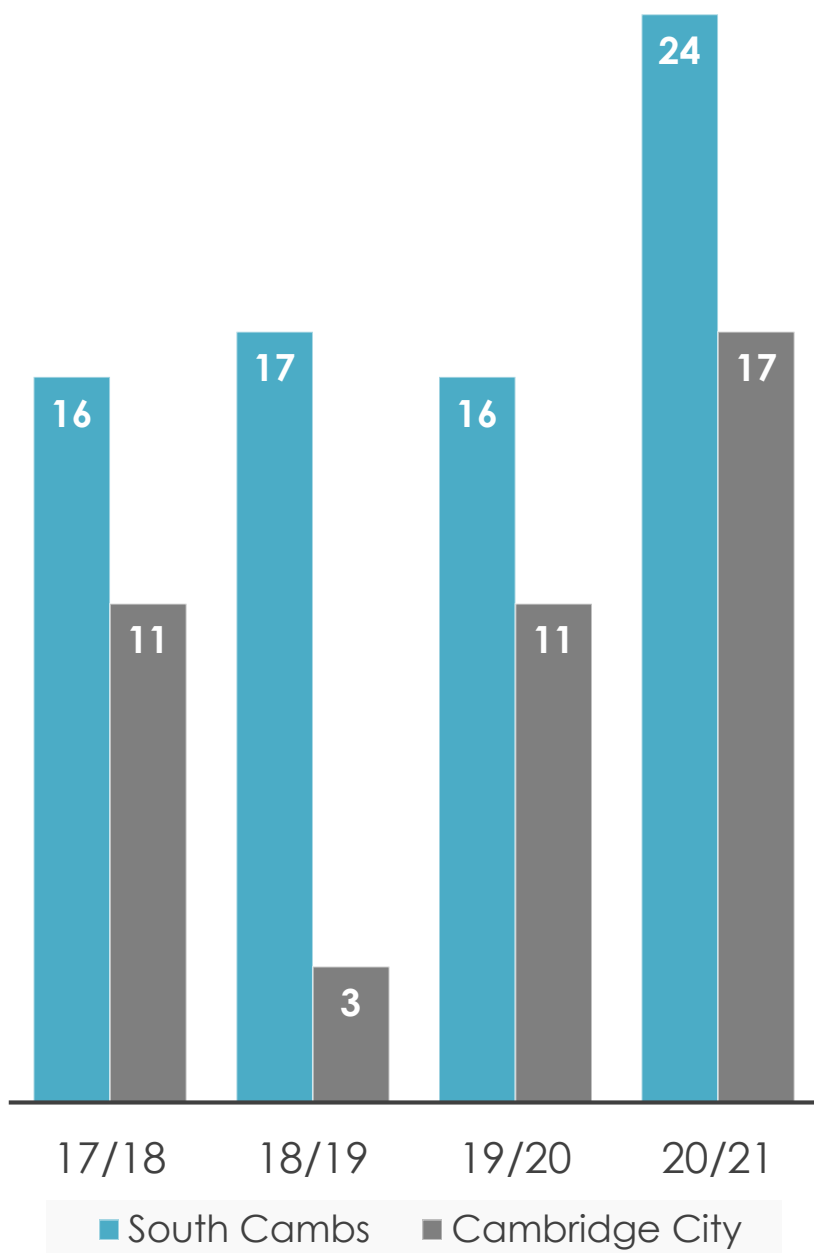
## No. of Disabled Facilities Grants Completed



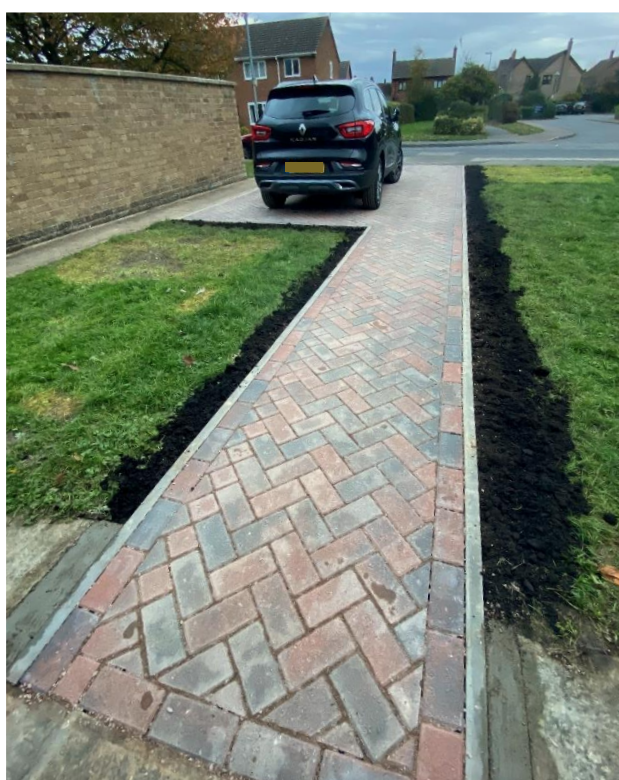
## DFG Spend



## Special Purpose Grants Completed



Cambs HIA saw an increase in the number of general enquiries in 2020/21



DFG driveway for a disabled client in Huntingdonshire

## Onward referrals

We made **33** onward referrals last year to help people:



**Get housing advice**



**Claim benefits they are entitled to**



**Request fire safety checks**



**Improve their home security**



**Install a Community Alarm**



# Customer Satisfaction

We monitor our performance carefully to ensure we are meeting the needs and expectations of our clients

We are pleased that customer satisfaction has remained high. We have experienced a small increase in the number of complaints mainly focussed on delays and the conduct of our contractors.

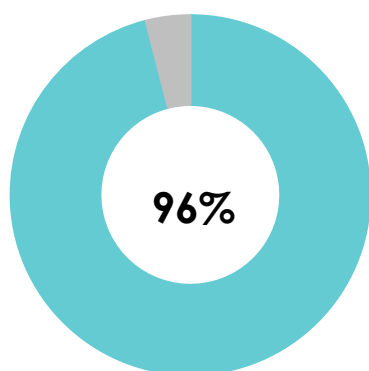
We take complaints very seriously and took the decision not to extend existing contracts and attract new contractors to improve quality and increase competitiveness. Addressing complaints about delays with work has been difficult as we had to follow the government's guidance on working in other people's homes.

There have also been some lovely compliments and a sense of gratefulness to staff for continuing to work throughout the lockdowns.

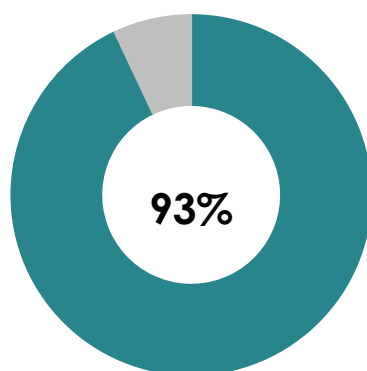


## Satisfaction Stats

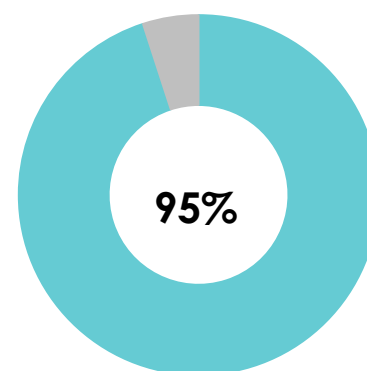
After each job is completed, each district is asked to report on feedback regarding the quality of work, our service and how well we have met our clients needs.



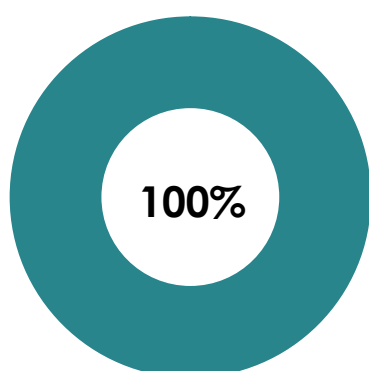
Rated the Cambs HIA'S advice as good or excellent



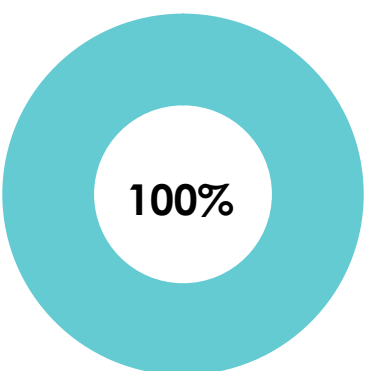
Said that work met expectations



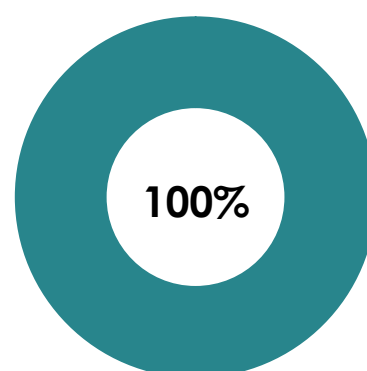
Felt that work represented value for money



Told us that work has helped their health/ wellbeing



Felt that work increased their independence



Were satisfied overall with our service



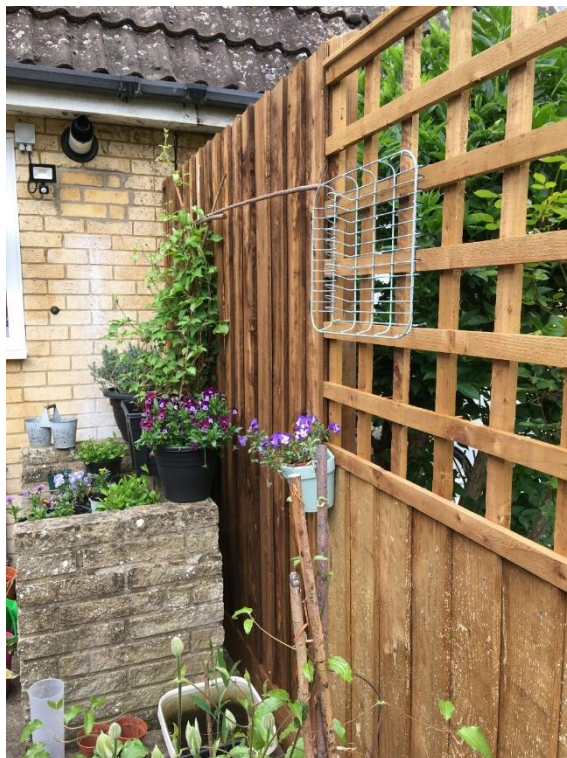
# Safer Streets Project

This year we collaborated with Cambridge City Council and Cambridgeshire Constabulary on a project aimed at reducing domestic burglary and supporting vulnerable people to improve the security of their homes. Although take up of the free improvements by non council housing residents was not as high as we would have liked, we were able to install a new fence for one resident and replace the windows and front door for another.

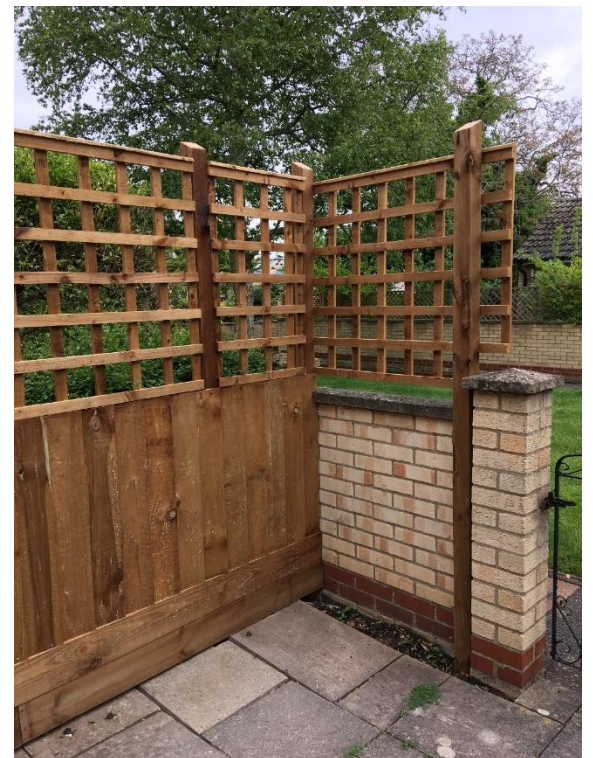
As improving home safety is one of the priorities in our Adaptations Policy, Cambs HIA is keen to look at how we could continue this work in 2021/22 for elderly and disabled people through the use of our Special Purposes Grants.



Before

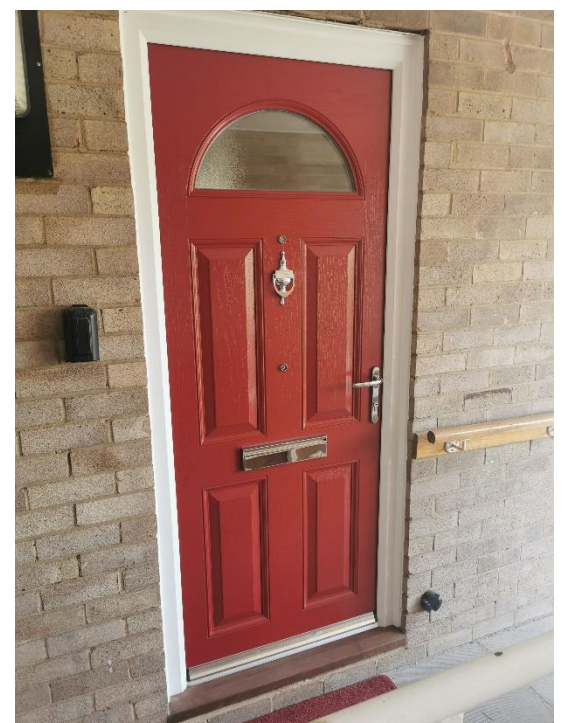


After



## Grants for Fire Safety Doors

**Leaseholders** usually have an obligation under their lease to pay for the repair and replacement of items in their home which are not covered by the landlord. We are working with Cambridge City Council to promote the take up of grants to help fund the replacement of external doors in flatted blocks to ensure they meet fire safety and security standards.





# New IT System

Cambs HIA has been working in partnership with Environmental Health across the 3 District Councils to design and implement a new Information Technology (IT) software package called Tascomi. Tascomi which, was acquired by IDOX in 2019 is a national company specialising in cloud based Public Protection software. Cambs HIA staff have learned how to design IT workflows to ensure the new system is lean and maximises “E working” opportunities, providing a better all round cloud based IT solution. The system went live on 16th March 2021. Manager, Frances Swann praised the work of Senior Caseworker, Justin Hicks who worked tirelessly to learn new skills and ensure the system replicated the needs of the service.



## Working through the Pandemic

The terms “furlough, social distancing and hands -face –space” have become second nature to us now.

However, at the start of the pandemic, Cambs HIA had to interpret the governments guidance to ensure staff and contractors were working safely. Contractors were asked to provide detailed risk assessments about the steps they would take to help control infection and we wrote to all of our clients to inform them.

Caseworker, Tracey Hine (below) also produced a short video to help explain to our clients the steps we were taking to keep them safe.



**One of the Agency Caseworkers created an informative video, explaining to clients what they could expect from visiting staff**

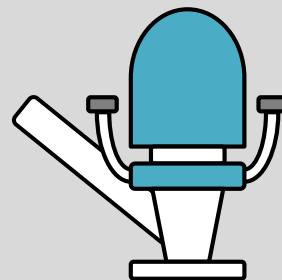
# Statement of Financial Activities

	31 March 2019	31 March 2020	31 March 2021
<b>Income</b>			
HIA Fees	(438,622)	(383,594)	(244,035)
External Funding (Cambridgeshire County Council, etc.)	(127,490)	(177,990)	(225,990)
Other Income (including landlord & client contributions, & fees from private works)	(42,603)	(40,245)	(31,491)
<b>Total Incoming Resources</b>	<b>(608,715)</b>	<b>(601,829)</b>	<b>(501,516)</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Cost of generating funds	506,700	554,327	494,300
<b>Total Resources Expended</b>	<b>506,700</b>	<b>554,327</b>	<b>494,300</b>
<b>Net Incoming/outgoing resources before recognised gains and losses</b>	<b>(102,015)</b>	<b>(47,502)</b>	<b>(7,216)</b>
<b>Trading (Surplus) /Deficit b/f</b>	<b>(177,339)</b>	<b>(279,354)</b>	<b>(326,856)</b>
<b>Trading (Surplus) /Deficit c/f</b>	<b>(279,354)</b>	<b>(326,856)</b>	<b>(334,072)</b>

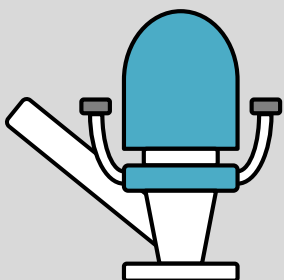
## Last Year We...



...successfully transitioned  
to working from home  
overnight



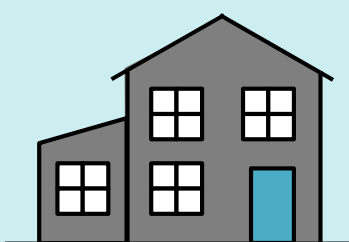
...continued to process  
grants and adapt peoples  
homes safely



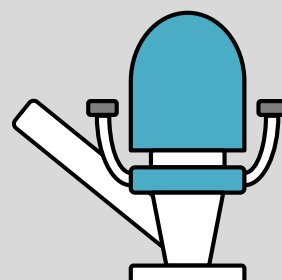
...assisted contractors on  
complying with COVID  
safety



...entered new  
collaborations with  
Cambridge City Council  
and the Police



...attended Building Control  
refresher sessions to upskill  
staff



...Implemented a new IT  
system

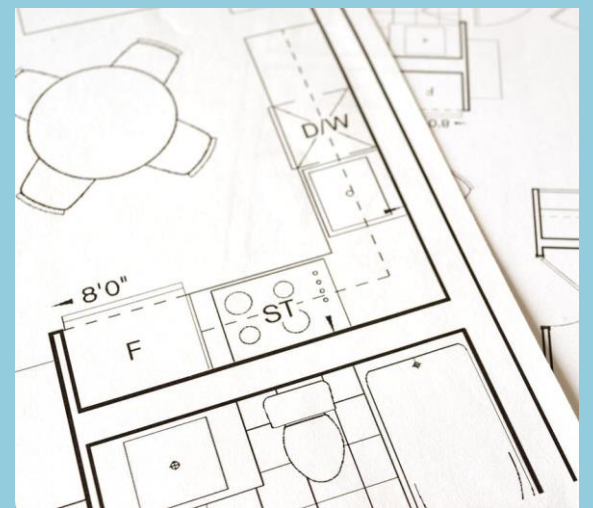


# Local Economic Contribution



## £2 Million

Spent in homes across  
Cambridge City,  
Huntingdonshire and South  
Cambridgeshire



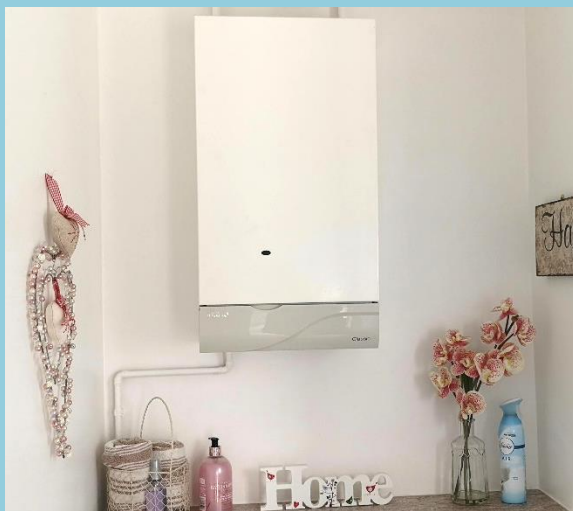
## 10

People provided with  
kitchen adaptations  
allowing them access to  
prepare and cook food



## £12 Million

Worth of tender  
opportunities approved for  
works contracts



## 102

Adaptations completed for  
clients living in Social  
Housing, costing over  
£865,000



## 9

Helped to tackle fuel  
poverty by installing new  
boilers and insulation

Cambs Home Improvement Agency @CambsHIA · 20 Feb  
We're very grateful to have received these lovely cards from some of our  
happy clients in @huntsdc and @SouthCambs

"#Thankyou 🙏 for all your #time, #effort, #patience, #understanding and  
#care. It is very much #appreciated..."

#DisabledFacilitiesGrant #DisabledAdaptation #Thanks 🙏



We regularly post on social  
media to promote the  
service and to raise  
awareness of disability

# With Thanks to...



## Approved Contractors

who are trusted and experienced in this field to complete building works on the client's behalf.

## Occupational Therapists

who assess people's need for adaptations and determine how those needs can be addressed within the relevant legislation.



## Local Authority Grants Officers & Private Sector Housing Teams

in each of the three districts to check and approve mandatory and discretionary grants for qualifying people.

## Charitable Organisations

who help us by providing additional funding where the cost will be above the £30,000 grant limit.

Usually needed for complex work including extensions and conversions.



# Our Aims for 2021-2022

## Improve Performance by:

- Closely monitor the performance of new contractors
- Introduce one new service Level Agreement aimed at speeding up the landlord consent process

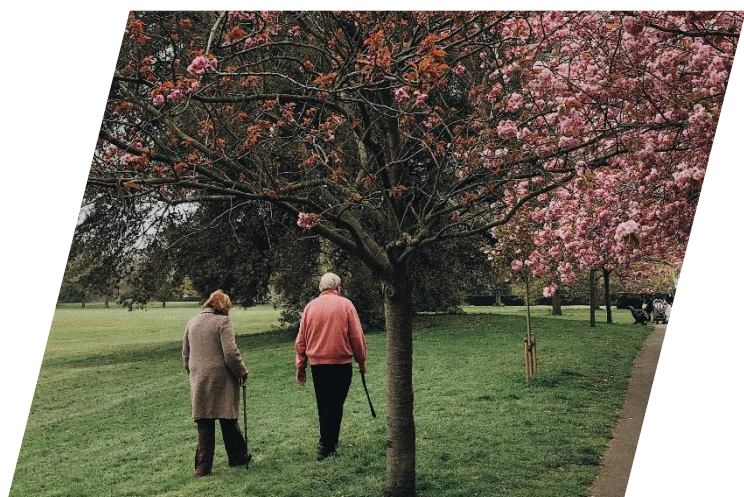
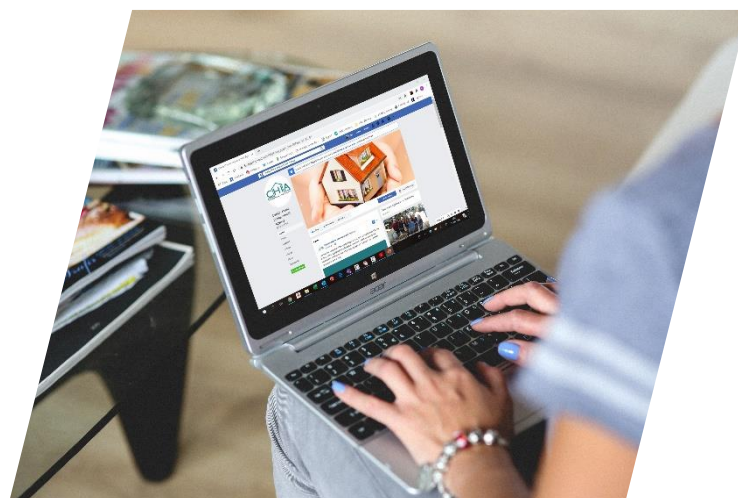


## Improving Customer Service:

- Continue to develop the new IT system and develop the customer portal
- Publishing new Customer Service Standards
- Increase take up of non grant funded adaptations/develop self funded market

## Increase Awareness and take up of Grants in Cambridge City by:

- Targeted work on promoting DFG's in Cambridge City
- More focussed campaigns targeting health inequalities



## Promote Well Being by:

- Provide targeted grants that improve Housing Health and Safety Assessment outcomes
- Continue targeting grants to help reduce fuel poverty



# Tell Us What You Think

## Your Feedback

We welcome your comments about our Annual Report and how you think it could be improved.

We also welcome your views about the work of Cambs HIA, now and in the future.

## Contact Information

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