

Cambs Home Improvement Agency Annual Report 2022 - 2023





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Introduction

A Word from our Councillors



CLLR. GERRI BIRD
CAMBRIDGE CITY
COUNCIL

Last year the Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities published new guidance on the delivery of Disabled Facility Grants. According to the guidance, nationally in 2019/20, 1.9 million households contained one or more people with a long-term health condition, requiring some form of adaptation to their home.

Across our three councils, we share an ambition to give people more choice about their housing and in particular, its suitability for those with special or changing needs.

Housing authorities in England have a statutory duty to provide adaptations to those who qualify for a disabled facilities grant. In the last two years, Cambs HIA has gone beyond that statutory requirement to also support those who are unable, due to ill health, to co-ordinate this essential work for themselves. Cambs HIA also offers a range of other grants as recommended by this new national guidance, including help with serious disrepair, energy efficiency and security improvements to enable those with long-term health conditions and on a low income to remain living in safe and secure homes.

As part of the county-wide Integrated Care Strategy, the district councils are further developing their partnerships with health, social care, and the voluntary sector to forge strong relationships to help reduce health inequalities linked to health and housing. Cambs HIA's role at an early stage delivers huge social value in terms of how aids and adaptations can reduce the need for more costly health and social care interventions and to also support the 77,000 unpaid carers in our county.

This year, Cambs HIA celebrated 10 years as a shared council service, a first in collaboration across our districts. This report reflects on the work we continue to deliver on behalf of our residents.



CLLR. BEN PITT
HUNTINGDONSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



CLLR. JOHN BATCHELOR
SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



Governance



HELEN REED
HOUSING STRATEGY
MANAGER,
CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL



CLAUDIA DEETH
OPERATIONAL MANAGER
HUNTINGDONSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



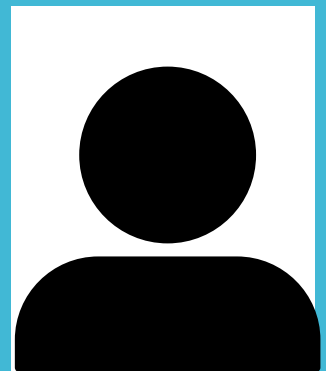
JULIE FLETCHER
SERVICE MANAGER -
HOUSING STRATEGY, SOUTH
CAMBS DISTRICT COUNCIL



LISA SPARKS
COMMISSIONER (ADULTS),
CAMBRIDGESHIRE
COUNTY COUNCIL



FRANCES SWANN
MANAGER,
CAMBS HOME
IMPROVEMENT AGENCY



JULIA HOVELLS
ASSISTANT HEAD OF
FINANCE AND BUSINESS
MANAGER,
CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL

A Message from our Manager

Frances Swann

The start of this year was really challenging due to availability of contractors, contractors reporting difficulties obtaining materials and costs increasing due to rising inflation. As a result, the Agency saw a dip in performance with the time taken to complete works and to obtain landlord consents taking longer. This in turn impacted our Occupational Therapy colleagues who were then holding cases open for longer. However, as the year ended, the contractors had overcome difficulties associated with recruitment and performance also started to improve.



As previously mentioned, increasing inflation had an impact not just on contractors but also on the general population as we saw the rising costs of living impact our residents. Think Communities (a Cambridgeshire County Council service) organised a series of Cost-of-Living events around Cambridgeshire and Cambs HIA was pleased to join about twelve of those events, which are covered in this year's annual report. Due to rising costs, we received lots of enquiries about how our grants could help especially in terms of energy efficiency work which helps reduce household costs.

We were commended for our work on energy efficiency in the category of Council of the Year as part of the Regional Energy Awards which also nicely complimented our tenth-year anniversary celebrations as a shared council service.

We appointed a new temporary Project Officer to promote both Cambs HIA as a service and to raise awareness amongst the public and professionals about the grants available to those on low incomes in Cambridgeshire. More about that in this report.

Our thanks as always to all the staff, contractors, Occupational Therapists, and others who support our work.



About Us

Cambs HIA is a not-for-profit organisation funded and supported by local and central government. We provide advice, support and assistance to older people, people with disabilities and vulnerable people who own and live in their own property, or those in privately rented or housing association accommodation. We help



people repair, improve, maintain or adapt their homes to meet their changing needs. The purpose of the service is to help people to remain independent, warm, safe and secure in their own homes.

This year the agency completed £3.25m worth of adaptations, the highest since 2019-20, returning to a pre-pandemic volume of work.

Cambs HIA also invested £230,063 worth of discretionary funding on Special Purpose Grants, which includes repairs, top up grants and relocation assistance. We also undertake many diverse adaptations to meet the specific needs associated with different disabilities.

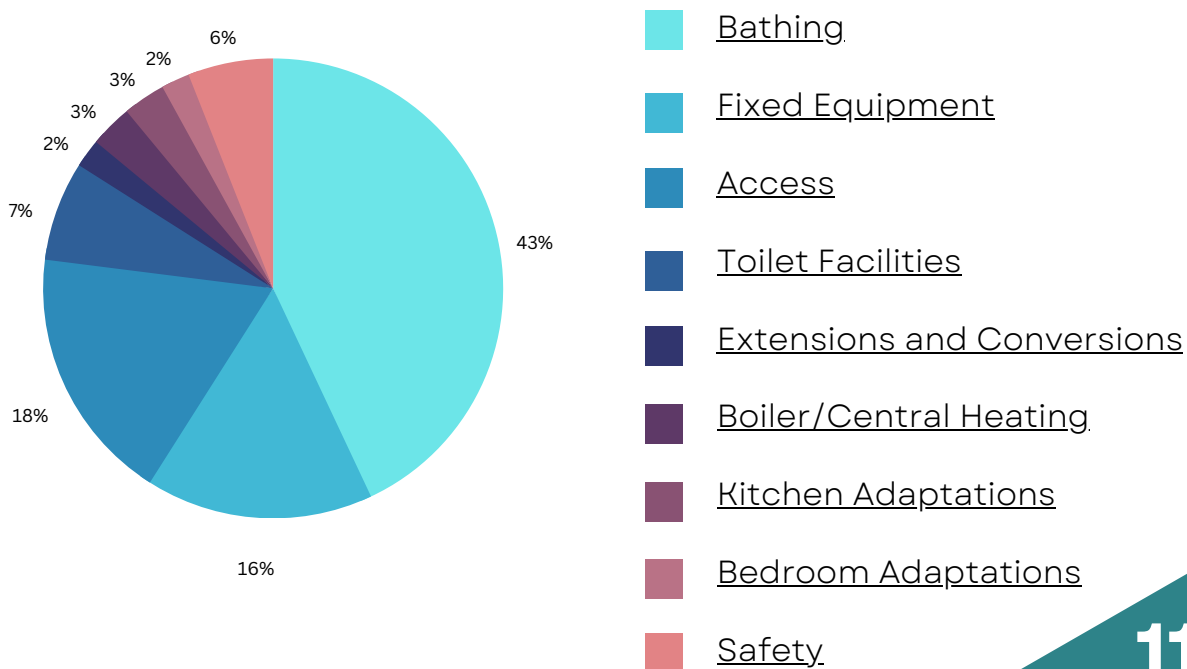


2022 - 2023 Highlights

Completed Works

In 2022/23 we enabled 462 people with long term health conditions to adapt their homes.

Types of DFG completed



29

Private job enquiries for clients ineligible for a grant



47

Special Purpose Grants completed in Cambridge City & South Cambs



113

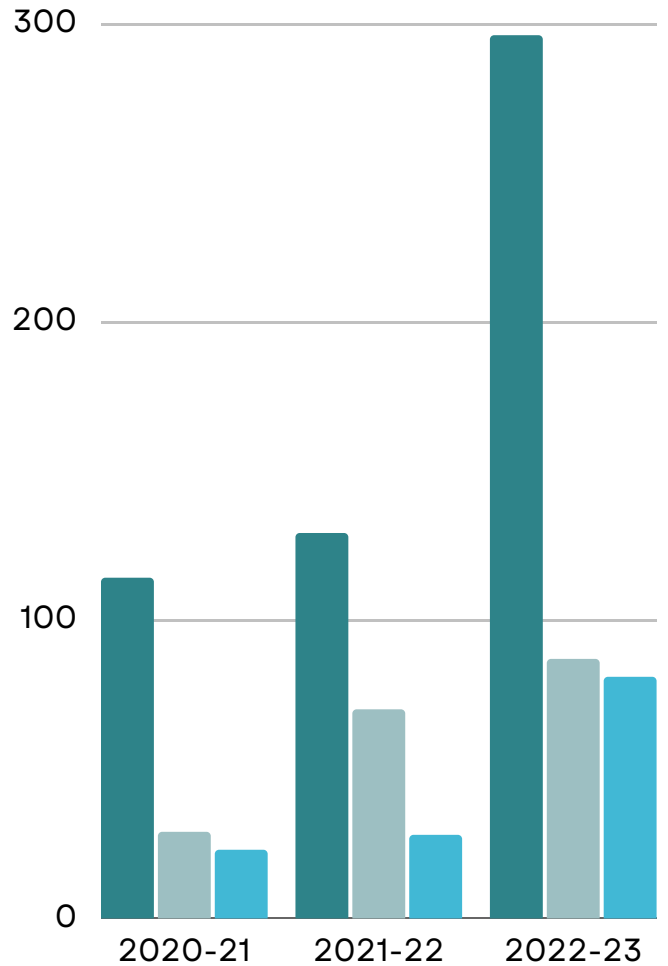
Disabled Facilities Grants completed for children with disabilities across Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire and Huntingdonshire.





474 Preliminary Tests of Resources completed to check client eligibility

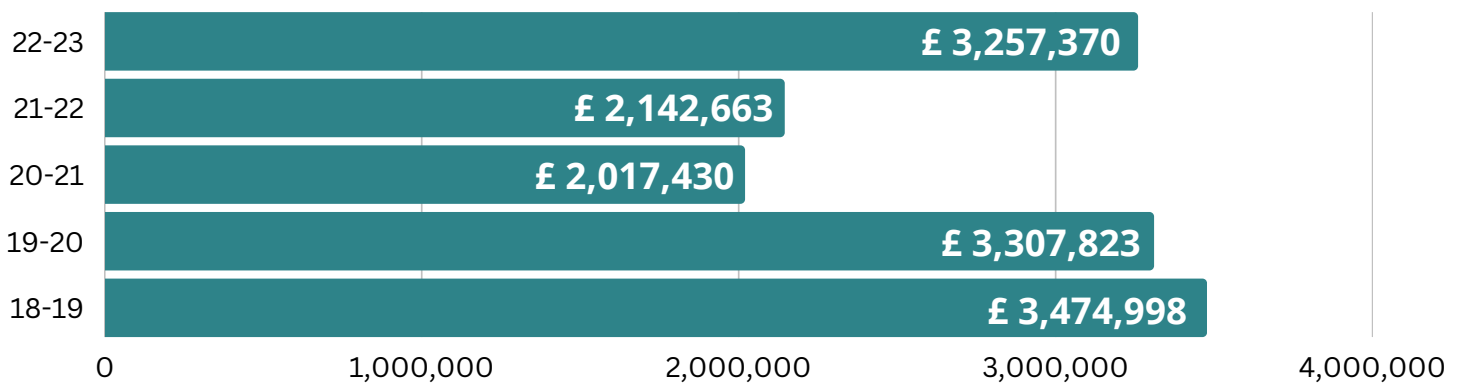
- Huntingdonshire
- South Cambs
- Cambridge City



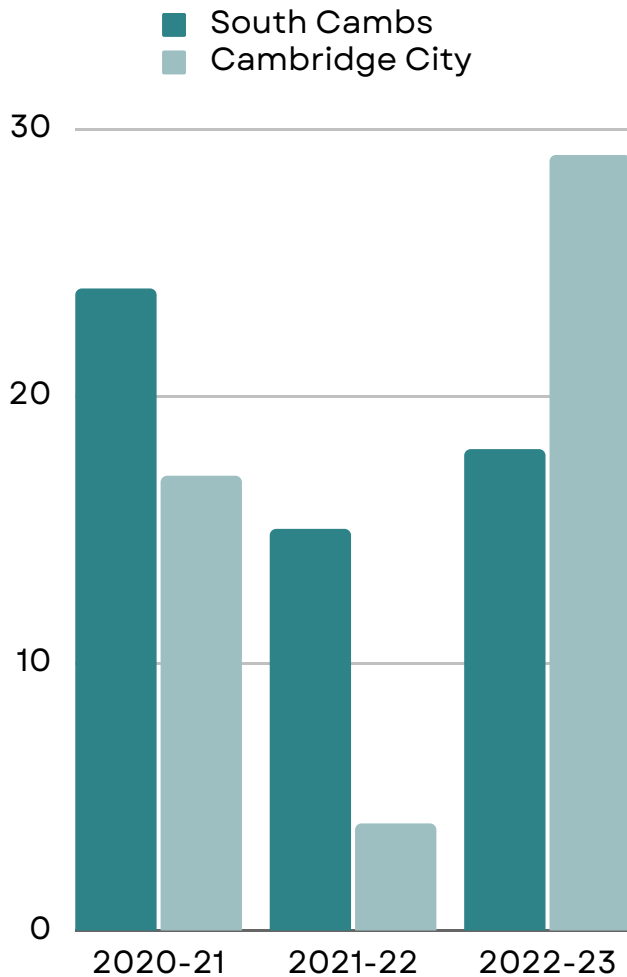
No. of DFGs Completed

*Numbers are lower for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire due to disabled adaptations for council homes being delivered separately by the councils' housing management service.

DFG Spend



Special Purpose Grants Completed








We saw an increase in the number of general enquiries in 2022-23.

Onward Referrals



We made 129 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 Community Alarms

Cost of Living Events

Think Communities, part of Cambridgeshire County Council, organised a series of events in collaboration with the district councils to offer the public advice about services which could help them manage rising costs of living and more broadly, share knowledge about local community services.

The events, held in locations around Cambridge, included services such as Cambs HIA, Cambridge Water Company, Cambridge Citizens Advice Bureau, district council teams, Peterborough Environment City Trust, Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Against Scams Partnership, the Red Hen Project amongst others, who all came together to make sure residents were aware how their organisations could help.

As a service committed to help tackle health inequalities in housing and in offering early interventions which promote wellbeing, Cambs HIA was honoured to be part of this community-facing work.

Our work on energy efficiency helps residents save energy and reduce energy costs. These resonate strongly with the goals of the **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Strategy** to create an environment for people to be as healthy as possible, to reduce poverty through better housing, and promote early intervention and prevention measures to improve mental health and wellbeing. Adaptations also reduce slips and falls within the home and prevent pressures on unpaid carers, another group highlighted in the strategy.



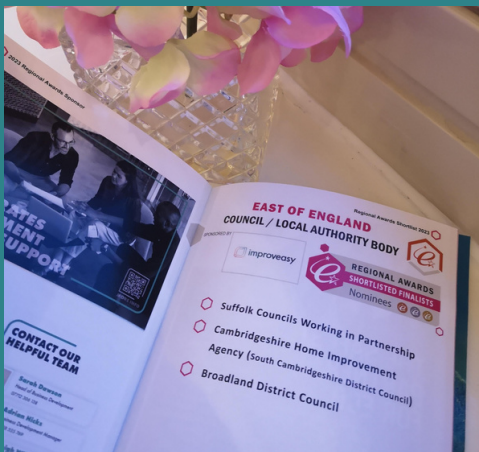
Energy Efficiency

With rising costs of living affecting people county wide this past year, Cambs HIA focused efforts on helping people keep their energy bills low and enabling them to live comfortably at home. This year we installed more than 30 boilers in people's homes, replacing old and inefficient boilers with more energy efficient ones. Where required, we have also renewed or topped-up loft insulation, usually as part of a re-roof. The door and window replacements undertaken are also more energy efficient than the ones replaced. Additionally, replacing a bath with



an accessible shower reduces both water consumption and energy required for heating, while also making it far safer for users. In addition to this, we worked with organisations working directly on energy efficiency and reducing energy consumption, conveying useful advice to people and signposting to relevant organisations for additional support.

Cambs HIA was pleased to be Commended in the category of Local Authority Body of the Year Award as part of the East of England Regional Energy Efficiency Awards 2023. Champion Heating and Plumbing, one of Cambs HIA's contractors, also received a Highly Commended award in the category Boiler or Heating Installer of the Year.



Strategic Collaborations

This year our team focused efforts on our outreach activities to increase the visibility and reach of our grants, particularly amongst diverse and hard to reach communities.

The team made contact with new partners and strengthened relationships with several other agencies working in Cambridgeshire. These included council teams, statutory bodies, voluntary groups and citizen groups. There was a concerted effort to engage with them, make their teams more aware of our agency's work, attend events

organised by them, interact with their target groups directly and thus reach a large number of diverse residents across the county. Collaborating with these different teams and organisations has helped increase both the inward as well as the onward referrals at the agency.

Targeted leaflet drops were undertaken by the team in high priority areas and engaging content and collaboration with partners saw a sharp increase in social media engagement. All these efforts have helped us make more people aware of grants offered through the local councils and the agency's work.

The strategic collaborations for outreach align well with the **Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Strategy** which advocates for new, effective and sustainable ways of working together to make it easier for people to access different types of support. With greater knowledge of each other's work, we can improve awareness of where and how people can access help and information to prevent problems from escalating.



Ten Years of Cambs HIA



Cambs HIA has reached its 10th anniversary as the first shared service. In these years, the service has completed 9872 recorded enquiries, 3676 grants completed across all areas and invested £25.7m on adaptations for disabled people. Operating across Cambridge City, Huntingdonshire and South Cambridgeshire, the service has completed 1256 bathrooms renovations, 325 step, stair and through floor lift installations, widened 300 doorways, installed 150 specialist WC's, 141 ceiling hoists and completed 103 extension/garage conversions as well as many other adaptations. In addition, the service manages a number of discretionary grants each year completing repairs and improving the efficiency of owner occupier low income households - the Agency has installed about 144 boilers, completed 33 new roofs and other works including new windows & doors, cavity wall insulation and damp proofing works.

The team won 'Team of the Year' awards from South Cambs and Cambridge City Council in 2019 and 2020 and continues to look for opportunities for growth which have seen it trialling new income generating projects this year.

10 Years At a Glance

-  **Completed Adaptations worth £25.7 m**
-  **3676 projects completed**
-  **1256 Bathroom Renovations**
-  **300 widened doorways**
-  **150 specialist WCs**
-  **144 boilers installed**

Customer Satisfaction

During 2022-23, we wanted to refocus on how we communicate with our customers. We decided that besides reviewing ongoing post completion customer satisfaction surveys, we would also ask key stakeholders some specific questions about our customer standard and what we could improve. The results are shown below:

- 83% of customers agreed with our customer standard.
- Others suggested improvements to on-site management and communication with customers during works.
- Our customers told us that they received good customer care from Cambs HIA staff.

The Occupational Therapists also told us:

- Staff had good technical knowledge and most agreed the process was reasonably fast with quick responses to referrals.
- Communication was recognised as both a strength and an area of improvement with OT's telling us they wanted more updates on the progress of cases.



"The quality of the work that has been done in my house is of a very high standard and it was done with a professional attitude. My life has changed quite a lot, it's much better, a lot safer for me and I feel more confident."

Comments from our clients...

I was unable to afford a new boiler and mine was completely broken. I can't thank you enough.

It has made my quality of life a lot better. No more struggling!

Being able to have a proper shower, knowing that I have everything I need to do it, it feels so wonderful!



Customer Satisfaction



Statement of Financial Activities

(Operating costs of Cambs Home Improvement Agency)

	31-Mar 2021	31-Mar 2022	31-Mar 2023
HIA Fees	(244,035)	(301,051)	(413,617)
External Funding (Cambridgeshire County Council, etc.)	(225,990)	(265,990)	(226,000)
Other Income (including landlord & client contributions, & fees from private works)	(31,491)	(54,754)	(47,690)
Total Income	(501,516)	(621,795)	(687,307)
Expenditure			
Cost of generating funds	493,140	508,364	604,612
Total Expenditure	494,300	508,364	604,612
Net Income/expenditure before recognised gains and losses	(8,376)	(113,431)	(82,695)
Trading (Surplus) /Deficit b/f	(326,856)	(335,232)	(448,663)
Trading (Surplus) /Deficit c/f	(335,232)	(448,663)	(531,358)

Any monies carried forward from previous years helps us to continue to improve and innovate our service.

Last Year We...



...installed 31 new
boilers



...installed new
doors and windows
in 24 homes



...fitted 14 new
kitchens for people
with disabilities and
older people



...made contact with
more than 40 other
organisations, agencies,
and council teams.

Our Goals for 2023-24



Improve performance by...

- Talking to Housing Associations about how we can improve the landlord consent pathway.
- Working in greater collaboration to identify solutions for high cost cases.

Improve customer service by...

- Implementing a new online portal to enable customers and Occupational Therapists to track the progress of their case.
- Updating the Adaptations Policy.



Increase awareness and take-up of grants in Cambridge City by...

- Scoping a new project aimed at reducing home hazards creating age friendly homes.
- Implementing a comprehensive social media strategy to increase awareness of grants



Promote wellbeing by...

- Working more closely with those engaged in the avoidance of falls, discharge planning and the provision of safe and secure housing



With Thanks To...



Approved Contractors

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

3C Building Control

who check and sign off work as being compliant with building regulations.



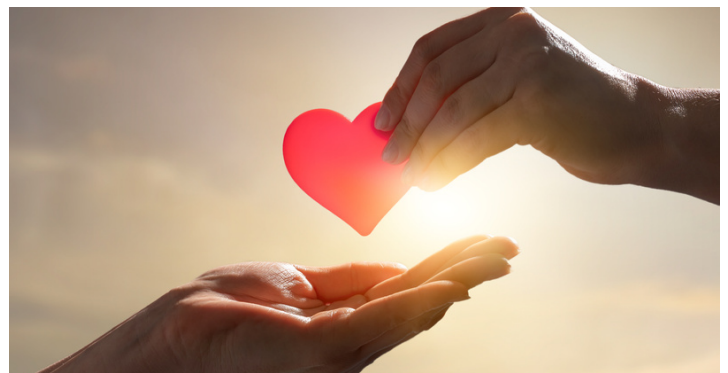
Occupational Therapists

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



Local Authority Grants Officers and Private Sector Housing Teams

who approve all of the grant requests submitted by the agency by our customers



Charitable Organisations

who help us by providing additional funding where the cost is above the £30,000 grant limit, for complex work including extensions and conversions.

Tell Us What You Think

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.



01954 713330, 01954 713347



hia@cambshia.org



www.cambshia.org

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