



ANNUAL REPORT

CAMBRIDGESHIRE

HOME IMPROVEMENT

AGENCY

2023-24

WWW.CAMBSHIA.ORG



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Introduction

A Word from our Councillors



CLLR. GERRI BIRD
CAMBRIDGE CITY
COUNCIL

As Cambs HIA steps into its 14th year as the first shared council service working across Cambridge City, South Cambridgeshire, and Huntingdonshire, the agency continues to evolve and deliver a wide range of home improvement services across the county. Cambs HIA's commitment to help residents live safely and comfortably in their homes remains highly relevant, especially against the backdrop of the current cost of living challenges affecting our community.



**CLLR. STEPHEN
FERGUSON**
HUNTINGDONSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

This year, the agency deepened its collaborations across a range of organisations. A special push was made to reach a wide and diverse cross-section of services who collectively support people with disabilities, those with long-term health conditions and people on low incomes to contribute towards the health and well being of local residents. Cambs HIA also won the award for Excellence in Design at the National Healthy Housing Awards 2023, recognition for the high standard of work undertaken by the agency.



CLLR. JOHN BATCHELOR
SOUTH CAMBRIDGESHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL

This year, Cambs HIA's work was strongly aligned with district council strategies, enhancing support for sustainability, housing improvements, and energy efficiency to improve community well-being across our area of operation. With its strategic focus and strong emphasis on collaborative work, Cambs HIA is poised to continue making a meaningful difference in the lives of Cambridgeshire residents.



Governance



HELEN REED
HOUSING STRATEGY
MANAGER,
CAMBRIDGE CITY COUNCIL



CLAUDIA DEETH
OPERATIONAL MANAGER
HUNTINGDONSHIRE
DISTRICT COUNCIL



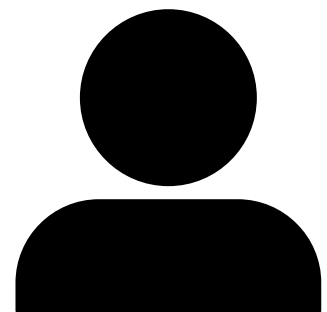
JULIE FLETCHER
SERVICE MANAGER -
HOUSING STRATEGY, SOUTH
CAMBS DISTRICT COUNCIL



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

I have been at Cambs HIA now for almost seven years. During that time the team has significantly improved its performance speeding up the time taken to complete adaptations and continuously improving our service for people with disabilities. We now have a well embedded service for those who fund their own adaptations and we have been able to continue our work as Trusted Assessors whereby members of our team complete simple assessments of a person's needs instead of an Occupational Therapist.



This year has also brought with it some challenges. The maximum amount available for a Disabled Facility Grant (DFG) remains at £30000 and with increasing construction costs, this has presented many challenges.

Earlier this year, I represented Cambridge City Council at a District Council Network event speaking to MPs about the improvements that we, as councils need to see in terms of modernising the means test and in particular, increasing the maximum grant limit.

We have also been more proactive in ensuring that the new DFG Guidance issued in 2022 is reflected in our work and in our refreshed adaptations policy. We also aligned ourselves more closely with the vision, corporate plans and policies of the three councils we work with by documenting our strategies to contribute to the goals envisioned in them.

After a year of extensive collaboration explained in this report, I would like to express my thanks to all the staff, contractors, occupational therapists and other partners 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, Cambs HIA also received the Excellence in Design Award at the National Healthy Housing Awards 2023 in Manchester. It was an honour to be recognised amongst the country's leading HIAs and a tribute to all the team's hard work over the year, particularly our Surveyor Anne who retired this year.



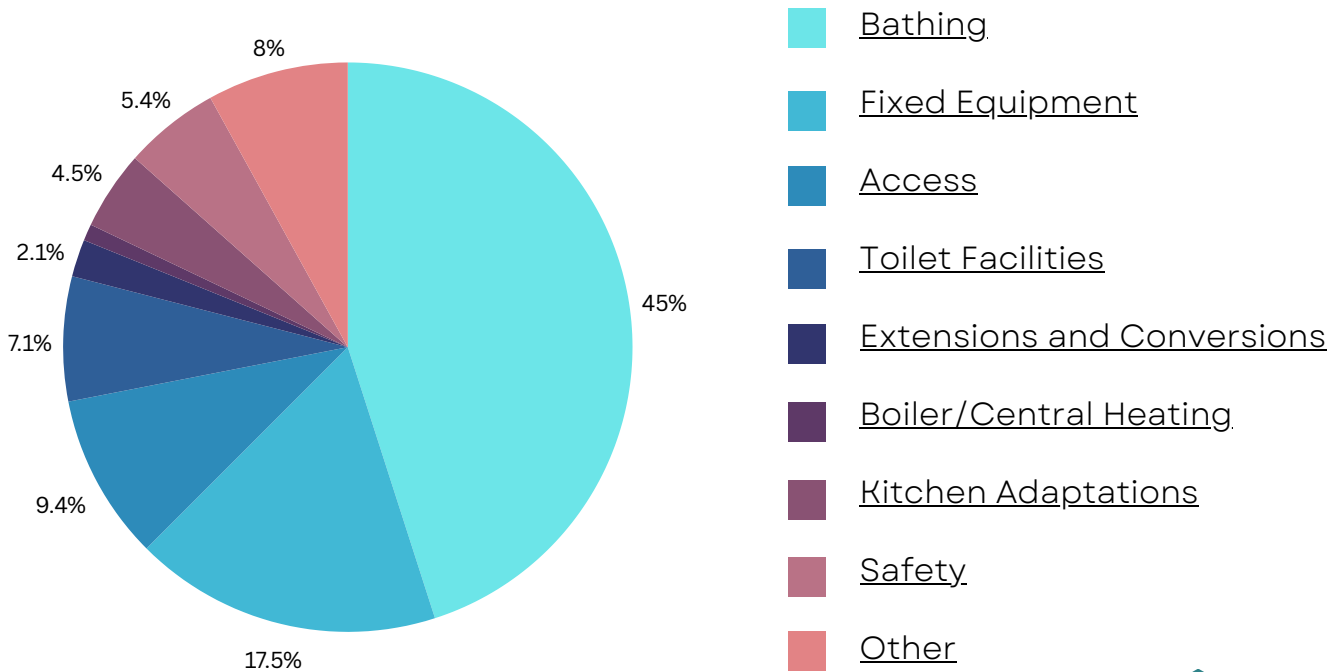


2023 - 2024 Highlights

Completed Works

In 2023-24 we enabled 284 people with long term health conditions to adapt their homes.

Types of DFG completed



14

Private jobs completed for clients ineligible for a grant



33

Special Purpose Grants completed in Cambridge City & South Cambs



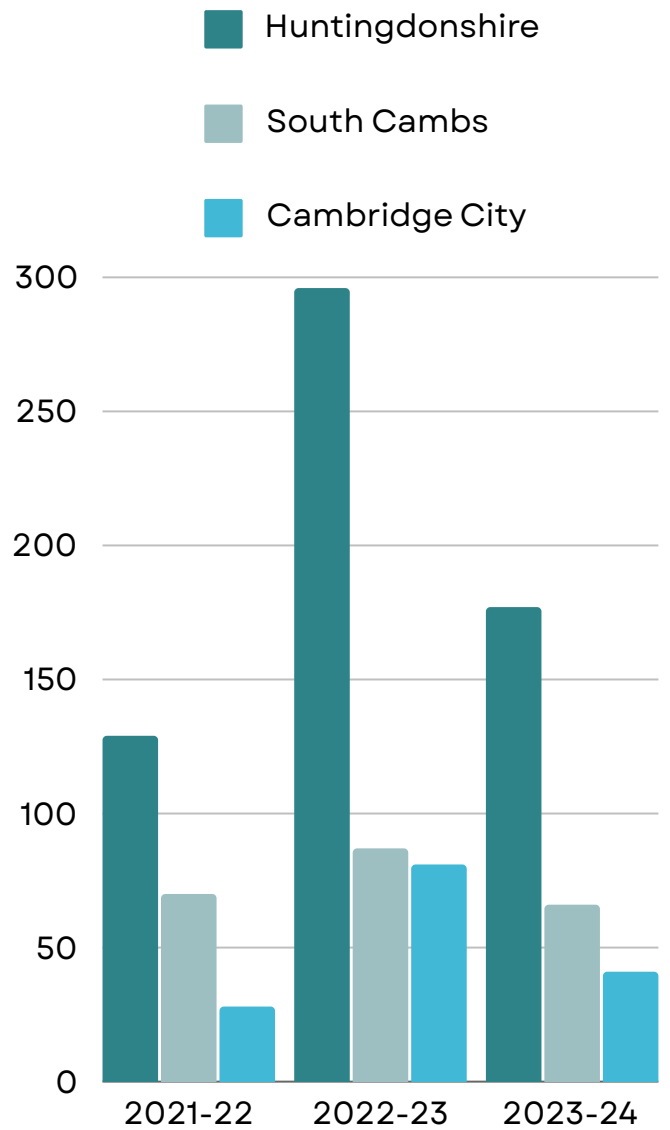
40

Disabled Facilities Grants completed for children with disabilities





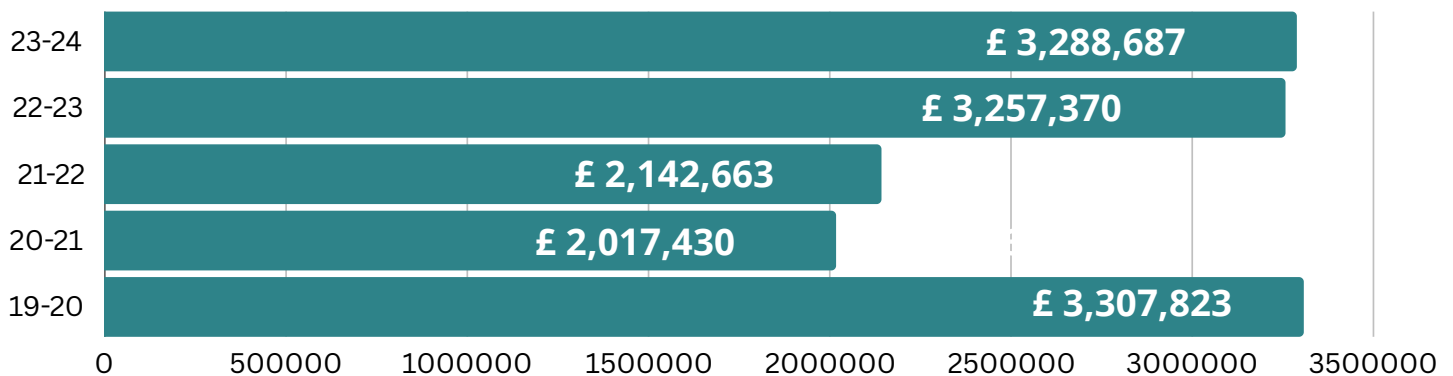
526 Preliminary Tests of Resources completed to check client eligibility



No. of DFGs Completed

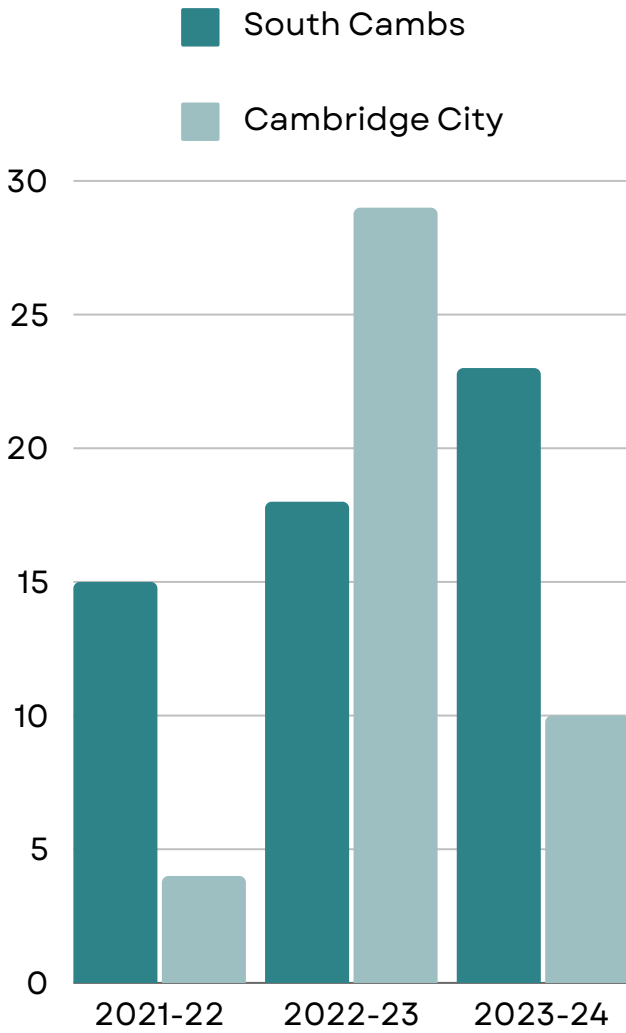
*Numbers are lower for Cambridge City and South Cambridgeshire due to disabled adaptations for council homes being delivered separately by the councils' housing management service.

DFG Spend





Special Purpose Grants Completed



1174
General enquiries received by Cambs HIA in 2023-24

Onward Referrals



We made 30 onward referrals last year to help people:

- Get housing advice.
- Charitable Funding
- Falls Prevention Assessment
- Bobby Scheme
- Install Community Alarms



Strategic Development

This year at Cambs HIA, we have made significant strides in documenting and refining our strategic approaches across multiple dimensions of our service delivery. By aligning our operations with the broader goals set by our council partners—Cambridge City Council, Huntingdonshire District Council, and South Cambridgeshire District Council—we've defined a clear path forward in terms of Environmental Sustainability, Communications and Outreach, and Equality, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging (EDIB).



Our Communications and Outreach Strategy defines a multipronged approach to reaching a wide cross section of residents, especially those to whom our work is most relevant. The strategy focuses on establishing robust collaborations across a diverse range of organisations, creating a strong presence on social media and building capacity within the agency. By aligning our efforts with the objectives of the Cambridgeshire and Peterborough Integrated Care Strategy, the strategy aims to not only broadening our reach but to deepen our impact within the communities we serve.

In our Environmental Strategy, we tackled the dual challenge of delivering our environmental goals while balancing this with financial capacity. By setting



strategic priorities, the document facilitates a team-wide awareness about sustainability, encouraging environmentally conscious decision-making. This approach aligns our mission to improve housing with broader regional and national environmental objectives, paving the way to balance higher initial costs for long-term sustainable benefits.



Our Equality, Diversity, Inclusion and Belonging Strategy is designed to help us reach diverse communities more effectively. This document lays down approaches and best practices towards eliminating discrimination and embracing diversity in all aspects of our operations. We've made concerted efforts to ensure our services are accessible to all, fostering a sense of belonging and representation.

These strategies help the agency document our current practices and identify opportunities to enhance our services further. They reflect our ongoing commitment to align our day-to-day operations with our strategic aspirations, ensuring that despite competing pressures, we remain focused on delivering high-quality, inclusive, and sustainable services. Our strategies equip Cambs HIA to meet the evolving needs of our community, ensuring that every step we take is towards a more inclusive, sustainable, and well-connected Cambridgeshire.





Collaborative Outreach

This year we continued to build on our collaborative approach, forging new partnerships and reinforcing old ones with an array of council teams, charities and community-based groups. Through these collaborations, our goal has been to reach out to a more diverse cross section of the Cambridgeshire population and engage with harder to reach communities.

Throughout the year, we have not only continued to make our presence felt at churches, care facilities, warm hubs, libraries and food banks like every year, but have also seized every

opportunity to work with hard-to-reach communities, diverse ethnic groups and other minority groups by aligning with organisations operating under similar humanitarian themes. Our collaboration with the Cambridge Ethnic Communities Forum and Cambridge Central Mosque has opened doors to culturally rich and diverse groups, allowing us to reach the communities they serve. Through these interactions, we also engaged with the Tzu Chi Foundation UK, which further broadened our collaborative landscape.

Our connection with local residents associations has brought us closer to the communities we serve, giving us a chance to meet with them face to face. Amongst our targeted initiatives, we made a special effort to reach out to the traveller community and the Gypsy Roma Community, along with residents of local trailer parks. These efforts are part of our commitment to reach all societal segments, recognising the unique challenges and needs faced by these groups.

This year's achievements in community engagement are a testament to our belief that collaboration is the cornerstone of effective outreach. By showing





up, listening, and responding to the community's needs, we have not only shared valuable information about our services but have also built lasting trust and cooperation that transcend the usual client-service provider dynamic.

This strategic expansion of our outreach efforts is rooted in our mission to ensure that no resident is left behind, regardless of their circumstances or backgrounds. With each partnership and each event, we are one step closer to creating a Cambridgeshire that is accessible and equitable for all its residents. As we continue to navigate the challenges and opportunities ahead, we are encouraged by the connections we have made and are eager to foster even more in the coming year.





Fundraising Success



One of the standout achievements of this past year has been the fundraising efforts led by Laura Clarke, a dedicated, long-serving member of our team. At Cambs HIA, we explore every possible funding option to support our clients. These funds help us bridge the gap when the maximum £30,000 Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is insufficient to cover all necessary adaptations, particularly for cases requiring extensive or specialised equipment.

This year, Laura successfully raised £25,000 from a generous landlord for essential home adaptations for a child in need, an additional £10,000 from a charitable organisation, and several smaller donations from various sources. It's often difficult to secure additional funding and in some cases work cannot progress, but when the fund can be secured, we can cover the full scope of recommended adaptations, ensuring that no client is left without the necessary support.

Laura's efforts have helped us significantly enhance the quality of life for many of our clients. The funds raised have enabled us to provide essential home adaptations in cases where work could otherwise not have been completed, helping vulnerable residents to live more independently, safely and comfortably in their own homes.

It's a real challenge but our goal is to continue building on this year's success, seeking new partnerships and exploring additional funding opportunities. With our dedicated team members and the generosity of donors, we are confident in our ability to positively impact the lives of even more residents in need.



Customer Satisfaction

This year, we saw a slight increase in the complaints received by the agency some of which was associated with contractors and issues with a supplier who went into administration. In turn, this created some difficulties with delays.

In order to address these challenges, we held an event to attract more contractors to work with us and this year Cambs HIA onboarded three new contractors to work on our projects, easing pressure and helping us deliver high-quality work for residents.



“My mum can now get out via a wheelchair and enjoy the outside world, fresh air and sun.

Very quick and professionally installed!”



“Really appreciate the assistance that has been given to me. Being able to shower independently, easy access to toilet and handbasin, and shower floor easier to maintain and keep clean!”



“I want to convey my deepest appreciation for the outstanding work done on my windows. The transformation is truly remarkable, and I am immensely grateful for the effort. I have a warm home now without any cold air from windows and doors. The positive impact on my daily life has been uplifting.



Customer Satisfaction





Statement of Financial Activities

(Operating costs of Cambs Home Improvement Agency)

	31-Mar 2022	31-Mar 2023	31-Mar 2024
HIA Fees	(301,051)	(413,617)	(403,965)
External Funding (Cambridgeshire County Council, etc.)	(265,990)	(226,000)	(125,990)
Other Income (including landlord & client contributions, & fees from private works)	(54,754)	(47,690)	(155,739)
Total Income	(621,795)	(687,307)	(685,694)
Expenditure			
Cost of generating funds	508,364	604,612	834,549
Total Expenditure	508,364	604,612	834,549
Net Income/expenditure before recognised gains and losses	(113, 431)	(82,695)	148,855
Trading (Surplus) /Deficit b/f	(335,232)	(448,663)	(531,357)
Trading (Surplus) /Deficit c/f	(448,663)	(531,358)	(382,502)

Although this year shows a deficit of £148855, much of this was planned and included funding two extra short term additional employees and a capital cost for which we are seeking legal compensation for.

Last Year We...



Completed 336 grants for

- 197 housing association tenants
- 118 owner occupiers
- 17 private rented tenants
- 3 leaseholders
- 1 council tenant (funded by the housing service)



Our Goals for 2024-25

Our goals for this year are closely aligned with the values of the three councils that we work with.



Collaborative

- Work with landlords to overcome delays associated with landlord consent.
- Ensure our work aligns with the priorities identified by the Integrated Care Board.
- Work with the County Council to identify solutions for high cost DFG cases.
- Work with neighbouring councils to deliver an updated Adaptations Policy.



Compassionate

- Increase opportunities for self funders to improve and adapt their homes.
- To make our service more accessible to those from diverse sections of our community.



Accountable

- Make the new customer tracking portal available to clients and Occupational Therapists.
- Use of team of Trusted Assessors to help improve the customer's journey and support our OT colleagues.
- Continue to appoint new contractors and to build greater social value into our contracts.



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



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.



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Social Media



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@CambridgeshireHIA



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LinkedIn

Cambs Home
Improvement Agency