

The missing link: helping older people with small home repairs and adaptations

Paying for small home repairs, getting help with adaptations, finding a trustworthy builder... these are real worries for a growing number of older people.

So how can affordable, practical housing help be made available to older people wherever they live?



Handyperson services can help...





Small things matter

There are now more low income, vulnerable home owners than poor tenants.⁽¹⁾

A growing number of home owners retire on a relatively low pension. They have to meet the cost of maintaining their home for 25 years or more on dwindling savings, so the problems of property disrepair may grow.

Handyperson services can help...

Independence, adaptations and home safety

Fast, affordable help with adaptations can play a critical role in enabling older people to stay independent. Home safety measures can help to reduce falls – a major cause of death and injury to older people – whilst better home security can give older people peace of mind.

Handyperson services can help...

Help is at hand

By offering low cost handyperson services many voluntary organisations are doing their best to meet the growing need amongst

lower income older people for practical housing help.

Age Concern, Help the Aged and Home Improvement Agencies in particular are major service providers.

But many local services struggle to meet the need...



How could things improve?

Handyperson services can have a large impact on an older person's life for a very small cost. They give reassurance that there is someone to turn to in a crisis, prevent property deterioration and can directly affect demands on health and social care services.

But they are no-one's main responsibility. They fall between the gaps in health, social care and housing provision – everyone's friend but no-one's baby. This results in short term, piecemeal provision.

So what needs to happen...

“ Friendly, excellent service helping us to keep the house in good condition. Been here 44 years, would not want to be forced to move.”

Handyvan Service User

Case Study

Mrs M is 75 and cares for her husband who, due to multiple strokes, has severe mobility limitations. He is diabetic and suffers with vascular dementia and has had many falls around the home. Mrs M has a heart problem, a spine condition and is due to have a hip replacement.

Before retirement Mr M was a builder and his wife had a lot of trouble getting him to accept people coming into their home to carry out repairs. Help from the Broadening Choices for Older People's handyperson service in Birmingham was the first help that he had accepted. They have completed many jobs, from changing light bulbs to installing a shower. Mrs M said that having the service available "had taken away a great deal of worry".

Extract from Small things matter; the key role of handyperson services publ. Care & Repair England

Prevention: Better than Crisis

- Handyperson services should become part of the mainstream, available to older people wherever they live.
- Because they affect older people's needs for health services, social care and housing they should be jointly commissioned by PCTs, NHS Trusts, Social Services, Supporting People and Local Housing Authorities.
- *Financial support and strategic guidance from central government (similar to the highly successful initiative operating in Wales) is essential to drive forward a change of emphasis towards joint, preventative services focussed on the priorities of older people themselves.*



"...[using] the handyperson service is not... seen as 'weakness' or as 'the first step on the road to dependence' but rather as a strategy to maintain independence."

⁽¹⁾ Communities and Local Government (2007) English House Conditions Survey 2005 Annual Report, London: CLG

Brannelly et al, 2005, University of Birmingham

What do 'handyperson services' do?

A very wide range of work including; small home repairs (eg. to doors, windows, plumbing...), odd jobs (eg. curtain rails, shelves, light bulbs), minor adaptations (eg. hand rails, special taps, ramps), home safety checks, security (locks, chains, spy holes), telecare installations, energy saving measures...

What older people said about handyperson services

...helpful ...kind ...polite ...friendly ...courteous ...tidy
...pleasant ...clean ...reliable ...informative ...reassuring...



*“ I feel safe
when I use the
handyperson
service. ”*

For More Information Contact:

Age Concern England www.ace.org.uk Tel: 020 8765 7200

Care & Repair England www.careandrepair-england.org.uk Tel: 0115 950 6500

Foundations www.foundations.uk.com Tel: 01457 891909

Help the Aged www.helptheaged.org.uk Tel: 0207 278 1114

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