HOME IMPROVEMENT AGENCY

SERVICE SPECIFICATION
FOR THE KENT
HANDYPERSON SERVICES

Version 1 – 16th September 2008
SERVICE SPECIFICATION (SUMMARY)

AIM

To provide a quality service to homeowners and private sector tenants who are older, disabled and/or vulnerable to promote independent living and enable them to remain in their homes in greater comfort, security, safety and warmth.

Services to individual clients:

General Advice - To assess the client’s needs HIA staff will visit, usually in their own home, and offer appropriate information and advice on:

- Problems relating to their property
- Supporting their decision in relation to future housing options
- Signposting to other support services
- Completion of any necessary forms
- Legal and Welfare entitlements

Finance - Clients will also be given information about various financial options including their implications, and practical assistance in raising funds. This will include:

- Availability of grants or loans from statutory bodies
- Releasing equity and accessing loans
- Obtaining independent financial advice
- Accessing charitable funding
- Benefit advice, entitlement & procurement (where appropriate)
- Advice and assistance with Insurance claims (where appropriate)

Technical - Reliable technical advice will be available from the HIA, which will include:

- Home visit and inspection
- Advice on the scale and cost of the necessary works
- Help with choosing a reputable and reliable builder
- Preparation of schedules and plans as necessary, to include statutory Planning Permission and Building Regulations as necessary
- Monitoring the builder’s performance including site visits/inspection during and after building works are completed, to the satisfaction of all parties
- Appropriate contract management and liaison with relevant local authorities on payments.
- Assistance to the visually impaired in accessing reliable installers of lighting adaptions

Additional Services

With the ‘core’ service in place, and with sufficient additional resources, HIAs can also help deliver many other Housing, Health and Social Care targets. For example, HIAs are and could be, involved in:

- Hospital Discharge
- Falls Prevention
- Home Safety Checks
- Fitting Aids & Adaptations
- Home Security
- Carers Support
- Repairs on Prescription
- Energy Efficiency & Fuel Poverty
- Home Maintenance Service
- Advocacy & Support Team
- Handyperson
Handyperson Service Specification

1. Service Principles

1.1 The following Service Principles apply to all activities undertaken by the Agency.

1.1.1 That all Clients should have the greatest possible control over their lives.

1.1.2 That all Clients should be personally involved when plans are made for their home.

1.1.3 That services should be accessible, acceptable and appropriate to all Clients and that these should be provided as speedily as possible.

1.2 It is expected that the Agency is working for the Client and must ensure that it:

1.2.1 Acts as the Client’s agent (except when building contracts are in place) and the role becomes that of a ‘Contract Administrator’ depending on the form of Building Contract employed.

1.2.2 Only acts on the authority and express consent of the Client and where Client instructions are within the law and the remit of the Agency.

1.2.3 Ensures that the Client understands the issues involved in their case.

1.2.4 Only delegates work to another party with the permission of the Client.

1.2.5 Keeps the Client informed at all times of what is happening and what money is being spent.

1.3 The Agency must be run on a not for profit basis.

1.4 The Agency must adhere to the principle of equal access for all Clients.

1.5 Neither the Agency nor its employees will in any circumstances hold itself or themselves out as being the servant or agent of the District Council, KCC Supporting People or the KCC Occupational Therapy & Sensory Disabilities Unit Bureau.

2. Users/Eligibility

2.1 The Agency is funded to help vulnerable and older and/or disabled people living predominantly in the private housing sector or private rented sectors.

2.2 Where necessary and where agreement is reached with fundholders, the HIA service should not necessarily preclude the provision of advice or practical assistance to vulnerable, older and/or disabled people living in other forms of tenure.

2.3 Ancillary services (e.g., Handyperson Services or HomeSafe) may, in addition with the support from Partners, and where appropriate, operate across a range of other tenures and age groups where client need is established. (e.g. Domestic Violence and/or First time burglary)

2.4 The HIA will, with appropriate support, be encouraged to diversify its business activities and client base to ensure an effective service that continues to meet existing and developing strategic and business priorities across the Health, Social Care and Housing arena.

2.5 Redefining service priorities will only happen through liaison between the Agency and its funding partners.

3. Service to be Provided by the Agency
3.1 Personal Support and Advice

3.1.1 The Agency will carry out a detailed assessment of a Client’s needs, and assist the Client(s) to compile a list of desired outcomes from the Services.

3.1.2 The Agency will give Clients full information on the options available to them to adapt and repair their home and on the implications of carrying out such work. The Agency will inform the Client of their legal entitlements. It will respect the Client’s own wishes and will take into account the needs of carers or relatives.

3.1.3 The Agency will provide advice on alternative housing options where appropriate or requested.

3.1.4 The Agency will provide advice on energy efficiency and fuel poverty.

3.1.5 The Agency will provide advice on fire safety and personal security in the home.

3.1.6 The Agency will provide advice on lighting requirements for the visually impaired

3.1.7 The Agency will provide advice on the completion of works using Charitable Funding where appropriate and accessible.

3.1.8 The Agency will work to ensure that Clients are receiving all Welfare and Disability Benefits to which they are entitled.

3.1.9 The Agency will support Clients who wish to commission building works on a private and self-funded basis.

3.1.10 The Agency will contact providers of associated care and support services where appropriate and required by the Client to ensure satisfactory service outcome.

3.1.11 Within six months of the completion of works, the Agency will review the outcomes achieved and take appropriate action where any desired outcomes remain unfulfilled.

3.2 Accessing Financial Help for Clients

3.2.1 The Agency will provide welfare benefits assessment and advice. It will provide practical assistance in obtaining funds from community care grants, savings, trusts, charities, loans, insurance, home equity and Local Authority grants (e.g., Disabled Facilities Grants, Home Improvement Grants) as appropriate.

3.2.2 The Agency will directly liaise on the Client’s behalf with the relevant bodies in order to ensure that the Client receives the benefits, grants etc to which they are entitled.

3.3 Technical Support and Advice

3.3.1 The Agency will provide the Client with the options available to adapt or repair their home. It will advise on the scale, cost and length of time of the work and any waiting list being used.

3.3.2 The Agency will provide detailed specifications for the work and provide schedules and, where necessary, drawings. It will obtain all necessary approvals and consents, including the written agreement of the Client, prior to the commencement of any work.

3.3.3 The Agency will assist the Client to choose contractors by obtaining quotations through the Agency’s approved procedures. It will ensure proper evaluation of quotations and ensure adequate contracts and documentation is in place before any building works is permitted to proceed.

3.3.4 The Agency, where appropriate, will arrange and hold meetings with the contractor on site before the works commence and ensure regular on-going inspections while work is underway.
3.3.5 The Agency will ensure that work is carried out in accordance with good building practice and will provide the Client with advice on maintenance and guarantees after the completion of the works.

3.3.6 The Agency will have a system to maintain a list of approved contractors. This must ensure that the contractors have adequate insurance, financial viability and a health and safety policy and, be able to evidence good quality work and management practices.

3.3.7 The Agency will have a system to ensure the performance of approved contractors offers value for money and that quality workmanship is achieved and maintained.

3.3.8 The Agency will ensure that the Approved Contractors List is governed by monitoring arrangements that set clear standards for performance, quality and procedures. Contractors should make available to the Agency all relevant Certificates, References, Insurance and Procedures as requested.

3.4 Handyperson Service

3.4.1 Where appropriate and where funding permits, the Agency will provide a full-time Handyperson service to vulnerable, disabled and older homeowners. The service will operate to provide a responsive minor repairs, home improvements and minor adaptations service.

3.4.2 Clients using the Handyperson service should be predominantly from the private sector (Homeowners) or Private Tenants who are older, vulnerable and/or disabled.

3.4.3 Where appropriate and where agreement is reached with fundholders, the Handyperson service should not necessarily preclude the provision of advice or practical assistance to vulnerable, older and/or disabled people living in other forms of tenure.

3.4.4 The kind of services offered should include small repairs, security, plumbing or carpentry work or the fitting of minor adaptations. Where funding permits, other services maybe made available.

3.4.5 Referrals mechanism for the Handyperson Service will be supported by direct referrals from the public and referrals made from statutory and voluntary organisations.

3.4.6 At the HIA’s discretion, Clients will be charged an hourly rate. The rate should be affordable and well below the usual market rate. At the HIA’s discretion, the Client will be asked to meet the cost of materials. Where a case for financial hardship is proven because of this charge or the cost of materials, the costs should be met by other sources identified by the Agency.

3.5 Effective Management Practices

3.5.1 The Agency will ensure that its services are accessible to all vulnerable, elderly or disabled people in the community and that a programme of effective promotion and publicity is implemented and maintained.

3.5.2 The Agency must inform its Clients of its purpose and how to obtain information on its policies and procedures. It must inform the Client of the contractual relationship between the Agency and the Client and how the contractual arrangement may be terminated.

3.5.3 The Agency must publish a Business Plan which is regularly reviewed.

3.5.4 The Agency will maintain records (electronic or otherwise) of all contracts with or on behalf of Clients. Copies of all correspondence and documents will be kept for a minimum of six years.
3.5.5 The Agency will attend regular meetings with Council Officers and representatives of the KCC Occupational Therapy & Sensory Disabilities Unit Bureau to discuss Clients and Services.

3.5.6 The HIA provider will be expected to demonstrate and show a commitment to the principles of Continuous Improvement and Best Value throughout the period of the contract. This will be demonstrated primarily through the Quality Assessment Framework (QAF) and regular Service Reviews.

3.6 Promotion of Services

3.6.1 The Agency will contribute to the Local Strategic Partnerships, KCC Supporting People, Community Safety, KCC Occupational Therapy & Sensory Disabilities Unit, Housing, Health and Social Care practice and policy and attend all relevant meetings.

3.6.2 The Agency will hold regular promotional exercises for associated health, housing and social care professionals working in the Districts. Promotional literature (e.g., leaflets, video etc) should be supported by a clearly written marketing strategy that aims to promote the service to the most vulnerable residents living within the designated Districts.

3.6.3 The Agency will have a Marketing Strategy that works to promote the work of the Agency to the general public and continues to raise awareness and promotes the services that are available.

4 Organisational Requirements

4.1 Equal Opportunities

4.1.1 The Agency will have a policy to comply with its statutory obligations under

- The Sex Discrimination Act 1975
- The Race Relations Act 1976
- The Race Relations Amendment Act 2000
- The Disability Discrimination Act 1995

4.1.2 Accordingly, the Agency will not treat one group of people or individual less favourably than another because of their colour, race, religion, nationality, gender or any disability in relation to decisions to recruit, train or promote employees or in the provision of the Services.

4.1.3 The Agency will have a strategy to ensure that the needs of Black and Minority Ethnic (BME) Clients and communities are given appropriate consideration. Information on the Services provided by the Agency should be readily available to local communities and translated into relevant languages upon request. Information on the Services provided by the Agency should be available in Braille, large print and on audiotape upon request.

4.2 Confidentiality

4.2.1 The Agency will ensure that it maintains the integrity and confidentiality of all personal information held or known in respect of its past or present Clients. The Agency will disclose such information to the Partners on request for the purpose of monitoring, evaluation, audit, inspection, crime prevention and prosecution and in accordance with relevant Data Protection and Freedom of Information legislation.

4.3 Complaints
4.3.1 The Agency will operate a Complaints Procedure acceptable to the Parties and promote the procedure appropriately to all Clients. The Procedure will allow for advocacy on behalf of Clients and will provide for independent participants in any appeals stage. The Agency will also co-operate with any investigation under the Partners’ Complaints Procedure.

4.3.2 The Agency will record the volume and nature of complaints received, how complaints were investigated and report on the outcomes of investigations. This to be produced to the Partners quarterly at the Advisory Group Meeting.

4.4 Quality Assessment

4.4.1 The Agency will, as a priority, have in place or be working towards the achievement of the Foundations Home Improvement Agency Quality Mark.

4.4.2 The Agency will permit the Partners to have access to and inspect the quality of the Services provided in accordance with the terms of this agreement, including such evidence as may reasonably be requested.

4.5 Access to Services

4.5.1 An operational base (the Office) for the Agency will be suitably located to provide HIA services for the District Council(s) area(s). The Agency will provide office accommodation (including public access reception point where possible and practical), telephone and fax lines, Internet and email access and other office equipment necessary to provide an effective and efficient service.

4.5.2 The office is to be open to the public, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. An answering service will operate outside of these hours.

4.6 Charges

4.6.1 The Agency must make available to Clients and its funding partners its charging policy.

4.6.2 The Agency is permitted to charge a fee for the services it carries out.

4.6.3 The Agency must clearly inform its Clients of any charges that they may be liable for.

4.6.4 The maximum fee charged for Services shall not be greater than 12.5% of the net cost of grant aided building or adaptations work.

4.6.5 Where Private works are commissioned the Agency shall agree a suitable rate of fee in accordance with market practice and only in agreement with the client.

4.6.6 The charging policy for the Handyperson Services is as prescribed in Clause 3.4.6.

4.7 Staffing

4.7.1 All staff must carry identification and make proper and responsible arrangements to, as far as practicable, protect Clients’ safety.

4.7.2 The Agency will operate policies on personnel matters for staff. These should include appropriate arrangements for recruitment, checks for suitability, levels of qualification and/or experience for specific posts, training and development, lone working and supervisory, disciplinary and grievance procedures, having regard to the nature of the Services, copies of which must be provided to the Partners on request.

4.7.3 Where the provision of the Services requires any of the Agency’s staff to work with children or vulnerable members of the community, the Agency will ensure that a standard disclosure from the Criminal Records Bureau is obtained in relation to such staff. The Partners will advise against the employment of individuals who
appear unsuitable, and the Agency will notify the Partners of its subsequent
decision in relation to the employment of the person concerned.

4.7.4 The Home Improvement Agency will operate from 1st April 2005. The Agency
must, as a minimum, provide adequate resources for:

- **Project Management** – To include day to day management and strategic functions, line
management, monitoring and performance management etc
- **Case Management** – To include day to day caseload management that includes home visits,
case management, assessments, referrals and client benefit entitlement etc.
- **Technical Advice** – To include all aspects of technical advice and support.
- **Administrative** – To provide support for the Agency and staff.
- **Handyperson** – Full time Handyperson Service

4.7.5 Staffing levels should be sufficient to ensure the Agency can achieve its targets and
business outputs set by the Partners.

4.7.6 The Technical Officers must possess ONC Building or a similar qualification. Other
staff should be suitable qualified to carry out their roles.

4.7.7 The provider shall not assign its rights and/or obligations under this contract or
sub-contract the provision of the service to any person or organisation without the
previous written consent of the Partners.

5 **Agency Management**

5.1 **Performance Indicators and Targets**

5.1.1 The Agency must keep records as defined by other funding partners (e.g. to meet
ODPM/KCC Supporting People/KCC Occupational Therapy & Sensory Disabilities
Unit funding requirements).

5.1.2 The Agency must provide the information required (as requested) by Sevenoaks
District Council, Tunbridge Wells Borough Council, KCC Supporting People and
KCC Occupational Therapy & Sensory Disabilities Unit as set out in the
Performance Indicators.

5.1.3 Service Providers must comply with the Supporting People Outcomes
Monitoring Framework for long and short term services.

5.2 **Advisory Committee**

5.2.1 A local Advisory Committee for the Agency will be established and serviced by the
Agency on a quarterly basis.

5.2.2 The Advisory Committee will meet quarterly to review performance and the
development of the Agency in order to ensure that its activities and services are
properly targeted and well directed.

5.2.3 Changes to the format and structure for the Advisory Committee will be at the
approval of the Partners.

5.2.4 Membership of the Advisory Committee will include:

- Representatives from the local authorities.
- Representatives from the voluntary sector.
- A Service User of the Home Improvement Agency.
- A representative from KCC Occupational Therapy & Sensory Disabilities Unit.
• Representatives from other charitable groups who have an interest in the client groups using the services provided by the Home Improvement Agency.

6. Outcomes Monitoring Framework

Service Providers must comply with the Supporting People Outcomes Monitoring Framework for long and short term services.

7. Conclusion

The HIA Specification should be read with due reference made to other contractual and/or tendering documents setting out the management of the Home Improvement Agency.

Appendix 1

Towards defining “Vulnerability”

The typical policy framework that underpins the aims and objectives of the Home Improvement Agency would include: This list is not exhaustive.

• Housing Grants Construction and Regeneration Act 1996
• Housing Act 2004
• Chronically Sick & Disabled Persons Act 1970
• The Communities Plan
• Supporting Independence Programme
• National Service Framework
• Community Safety Strategy
• Etc

There is no commonly held view, understanding or definition of ‘vulnerability’.

With regards the Home Improvement Agencies and the need to identify ‘vulnerable’ clients the HIA might consider the following groups who have the following characteristics.

• Low Income
• Have a significant or long-term physical or sensory disability that prevents the ability to carry out normal day to day activities.
• In receipt of or eligible for Means-tested or disability benefits
• At risk of social exclusion
• At risk from the immediate environment
• Living in an ‘unfit’ home
• Older people with support needs
• Frail elderly
• Older People with Mental Health Problems/Dementia
• Have poor literacy or communication skills
• Have a learning disability
• Suffer from or be recovery from mental health problems
• At risk from Domestic Violence
• At risk from burglary
• HIA Aids
- Single Parents
- Black and Minority or Ethnic Groups (BME)
- People with Alcohol Problems
- People with Drug Problems

This list is not exhaustive and only provides guidance and an opportunity for the HIA to explore the development of new services.